

Beaches Link and Gore Hill Freeway Connection

I am a resident of Fairlight, NSW and am writing to lodge my **objection** to the Beaches Link and Gore Hill Freeway Connection proposed by the State Government of New South Wales.

There are many reasons I object to this proposed development, including but not limited to:

1. Unfiltered Stacks

The health impacts from unfiltered stacks are significant and long lasting. Pollution from traffic exhaust poses serious health risks that, when breathed into the lungs, causes respiratory diseases such as asthma, emphysema and cancer.

Gladys Berejiklian highlighted the damage in a 2008 speech in parliament when the Lane Cove Tunnel was proposed. Using Gladys own words, I would like to quote the key points from the speech:

“world’s best practice is to filter tunnels”

“if their children or children of loved ones were exposed to this level of fumes every day”

“knowing their children aren’t inhaling toxins that could jeopardise their health now or in the future”

The impact of air pollution on children’s hospital admissions is well documented. Two schools that will be significantly impacted by the proposed development will be NBSC Balgowlah Boys campus (“Balgowlah Boys”) and Seaforth Public School. The EIS model shows increased hospitalisations for children (aged 0 -14) and increased deaths (all ages) around Seaforth Public School. The EIS model appears to “conveniently” exclude data for Balgowlah Boys.

However, as Gladys also mentioned.... **“it’s not too late, the government can still ensure that filtration is a possibility”**.

2. Lack of Public Transport

The proposed Beaches Link tunnel does not include any dedicated lanes for public transport. This is a very short-sighted solution. Sydney needs to become a modern, progressive city which moves its growing population using public transport. Accordingly, no proposed development should be considered without public transport links.

This proposed development is in comparison to the Sydney Harbour Bridge which was designed to carry vehicular (including dedicated bus lanes), rail, bicycle and pedestrian traffic. Although the Sydney Harbour Bridge was designed approximately 100 years ago, its design is still more forward thinking than the current proposed Beaches Link tunnel.

It also has not gone unnoticed on the Northern Beaches that public transport options are being reduced and / or cancelled. The number of bus routes cancelled at the beginning of 2021 has been significant. The NSW state government is also trying to remove the existing Manly ferries and replace them with smaller ferries (carrying only a third of passengers).

By reducing the public transport options on the Northern Beaches, the State Government of NSW is deliberately forcing constituents to stop using public transport and rely on their own private vehicles. This in turn puts more traffic on local roads and improves the weak business case for the proposed Beaches Link tunnel.

3. Environmental Damage

The extent of the environmental damage caused by the proposed Beaches Link and Gore Hill Freeway Connection is devastating. Some of the environmental impacts will be, but is not limited to:

- critically endangered plants and wildlife will be impacted at:
 - Manly Dam Reserve
 - Burnt Bridge Creek
 - Duffy's Forest Ecological Community
 - Garigal National Park / Bantry Bay
- 400,000 litres of wastewater per day will be discharged into Burnt Bridge Creek and run into Queenscliffe lagoon
- thousands of mature trees will be removed during construction
- Aboriginal rock carvings and middens will be destroyed
- significant risk to marine environment at Middle Harbour from the disturbance of sediment
- loss of "green" space for the community

On 24 February 2021, the State Government of NSW launched the *Greener Public Spaces* initiative. The state government website states "we know that people who have access to green and public spaces are healthier and happier ... our parks and green spaces are vital to maintaining both physical and mental health".

The Beaches Link and Gore Hill Freeway Connection contradicts the *Greener Public Spaces* initiative. Residents of the Northern Beaches frequently use Manly Dam Reserve, Burnt Bridge Creek, Duffy's Forest, Garigal National Park and Middle Harbour etc for recreational activities. These locations are vital for the physical and mental health of Northern Beaches residents but they will be damaged by the NSW state government during the construction of this proposed development.

In addition, although the government is proposing to convert space left over after construction into sporting fields, these fields will be next to an unfiltered stack.

4. Weak Business Case

The business case for the Beaches Link and Gore Hill Freeway Connection is weak. The estimated cost is \$12 billion dollars to save approximately 14 minutes travel time to the CBD. The travel time savings are based on extrapolated numbers incorporating other tollways not yet built and are based on "worse case" peak conditions. The benefits of the proposed development are also short term. It is estimated in the EIS that by 2037, the reduction of traffic on Military Road will be as low as 10%.

In addition, the EIS was prepared prior to COVID-19. For almost 12 months, the majority of Australia has been "working from home". Employees have proven that they do not need to be in the office five days per week to perform their duties. Employees are also resisting returning to the office on a full time basis as they enjoy the work life balance working from home provides.

Employers also appreciate staff not returning to the office on a full time basis. This enables them to downsize their office space and therefore reduce their rental expenditure, being a considerable cost saving.

The Federal Government has also revealed it is expecting Australia's annual population growth to fall. The forecast drop is due to a fall in the fertility rate and a collapse in net overseas migration. The reduced population growth will significantly impact Sydney.

The business case for this proposed development was based on big increases in Sydney's population and on the assumption that employees commuted to the CBD five days per week. Given neither of these is going to happen for the foreseeable future, the justification of the business case for this proposed development is even weaker than it was prior to COVID-19.

That concludes my objection to the Beaches Link and Gore Hill Freeway Connection. Please contact me if you would like to discuss any of the above in more detail.