

# **Beaches Link Tunnel Project Submission**

**from Dr Geoffrey Thompson**

**13 Paris St Balgowlah 2093**

**28 Feb 2021**

In my opinion the Beaches Link Tunnel will not obtain the intended goal of relieving traffic congestion and improving travel times from the Northern Beaches and lower north shore. The design is outdated and comes at a huge financial cost and community loss for limited benefit.

The project as shown in the recently released EIS will result in adverse and irreversible changes to the local environment and will negatively impact on the amenity of our local area and the northern beaches during and after construction.

Despite some minor changes to the previous design, there has been little consideration given to alternative solutions such as public transport options. It is also apparent the EIS has not provided an accurate and transparent assessment of the tunnel outcomes.

As a resident of Paris St Balgowlah since 1984, I have enjoyed the amenity of the golf course and Burnt Bridge creek corridor on a daily basis, either playing golf or walking our dogs. As a busy doctor, access to this area has aided my mental and physical wellbeing, particularly during the Covid-19 pandemic and lockdown periods. I regularly encourage my patients, our neighbours and the close community to take advantage of the Balgowlah Golf Course (BGC) and Burnt Bridge Creek corridor (BBCC) for their wellbeing. I object to the loss of this vital community open space and green environment to a poorly conceived project which will not solve the traffic issues and will come at a huge expense financially, environmentally and socially to the community.

I object strongly to the Beaches Link Tunnel on many grounds including

- loss of amenity for the community
- poor tunnel design, especially the lack of tunnel ventilation and stack filtration with subsequent health issues
- environmental degradation and loss of wildlife habitat
- the impact of construction on the community for 5-7 years for limited gain
- lack of consideration of public transport solutions
- a poor business case based on out-of-date data.

Further analysis will reveal the BLT project is a very expensive and unnecessary infrastructure project.

## **OUTDATED TRAFFIC DATA AND PROJECTED TIME SAVINGS**

**I object** to the outdated claims by TfNSW regarding expected travel time savings for Northern Beaches residents and traffic reduction along Spit and Military Rd and traffic volumes based on their forecast traffic volumes for 2037. Many factors were not considered when the traffic forecasts were created in 2016. I request the following factors and future trends are considered when calculating the traffic volumes and time savings

- the increased congestion in areas leading to the tunnel, especially Balgowlah and Manly Vale with subsequently slower travel times to and from the tunnel
- the rapid cultural shift to work from home (WFH) which has occurred during Covid-19 restrictions, resulting in reduced traffic numbers and fewer travels in peak times due to greater flexibility of work hours and location. If the tunnel project proceeds, the WFH culture will increase dramatically and become more entrenched as the result of locals attempting to avoid the construction zone and traffic disruption for 5-7 years.
- the impact of the B-line bus and the new Dee Why to Chatswood Express Bus Service

I request that the DPIE or TfNSW commission an independent review of the traffic forecasts for vehicles travelling to the city and beyond along the corridor roads to the Spit Bridge from 2021 – 2051, with consideration of the factors listed above.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES**

The environmental impacts of construction and operation of the tunnel under the current plan are permanent and unjustifiable.

**I object** to the destruction of Balgowlah Golf Course (BGC). This is a valuable resource, which has proven itself over the past year with dramatically increased usage and membership by all ages. BGC is used for exercise and recreation at all hours of the day seven days per week, whether playing golf, walking dogs, jogging or kicking a ball. In contrast, the playing fields proposed to replace part of the golf course, will benefit fewer people in our community and the sporting fields will only be used at limited times throughout the week. The project has totally misrepresented the final impact on this most treasured community asset.

**I object** to the environmental destruction during and after construction. The loss of habitat through wanton destruction of mature trees and high value bushland is appalling and will result in loss shade and impact local microclimate and biodiversity.

**I object** to the removal of the golf course dam, which is a major source of drinking water for the local endangered grey-eared flying fox colony and provides habitat for water dragons, birds, eels and turtles. The EIS indicates there is no plan to replace the dam and its removal will have a huge impact on wildlife.

**I object** to the lack of assessment to the damage to the Burnt Bridge Creek riparian corridor extending from Seaforth to Manly Lagoon and Manly Beach. According to the EIS, construction of the tunnel will result in the permanent loss of up to 96% of the base water flow. This means the BBC corridor will essentially become a storm water drain impacting the water quality in Manly Lagoon and at times Manly Beach. This appalling degradation will disastrously result in the death of Burnt Bridge Creek with huge hydrological and ecological impacts. The EIS admits in its own publication in Appendix O, pg 45, *'the creek is a vital ecological corridor.... that provides a range of important habitats for a diversity of local flora and fauna'*

**I object** to the destruction of over 12 hectares of valuable high-quality bushland including threatened Duffy's Forest and habitat resulting from the widening of Wakehurst Parkway. The design will likely result in inadequate drainage causing contamination and sedimentation of Manly Dam, threatening endemic species such as the Gondwanan Climbing Galaxias Fish, the threatened Eastern Bent-wing Bat and the Eastern Pygmy Possum.

**I object** to the damage to Middle Harbour resulting from the Coffey Dams and the installation of the immersed tubes. The disturbance of toxic sludge will grossly impact the marine environment around Clontarf, the Spit, Sandy Bay and Middle Harbour, with subsequent detrimental impact on recreational users, despite the planned attempt to contain it with floating curtains. This will have disastrous and unacceptable and must be reconsidered.

**I object** to the number of trees impacted or potentially impacted by construction. Mature trees offer habitat and air quality benefits, help protect the visual amenity, reduce light pollution and offer some noise protection. Appendix V pg 160 of the EIS states the local area, particularly the area east of Balgowlah Golf Course will be highly impacted by light at night-time both during construction and when the tunnel is operational.

**I request** an accurate assessment is made of the current usage of Balgowlah Golf Course compared to the restricted use if developed into playing fields to allow full appreciation by all stakeholders of the final outcome. I also request TfNSW procures an independent and unbiased assessment to thoroughly assess the environmental impacts on Burnt Bridge Creek corridor, BGC, Wakehurst Parkway/Manly Dam and Middle Harbour. If the project has to proceed, I request independent experts are employed to rethink the design and come up with a design solution which does not result in the permanent degradation of these vital areas. I request the trees are recognised as a valuable resource and retained and protected through careful planning during construction. I request the BGC dam is recognised as a valuable wildlife resource and retained.

## **LOCAL IMPACTS**

**I object** to the proposed project as it will result in rat runs and significantly increased traffic congestion in Manly Vale and Balgowlah during construction and once completed. This is

acknowledged by TfNSW, along with the subsequent need to extensively upgrade local roads to cope and to recover from construction degradation. Critically, little work has been done assessing the impact on the local road network.

I request that if the tunnel proceeds this assessment is done and state government funds the necessary work, not Northern Beaches Council.

**I object** to the huge impact of construction on the local community. Excess noise, dust and vibration levels will impact the wellbeing of thousands of residents, along with potential damage to some homes. Tunnelling will occur 24/7. Truck movements will be extreme with at least 40-50 truck movements per hour at each site. The trucks will carry the tunnel spoils along arterial roads for 5-7 years adding to the reported congestion. Despite these issues, the EIS does not provide detailed information on the mitigation measures. Chapter 10 of the EIS pg 10-14 talks about “reasonable and feasible” but who determines this? As revealed in the recent parliamentary inquiry into the construction of WestConnex Stage 1 and 2, there were many breaches of rules by contractors which were only determined through reporting by local residents. Normal working hours have been established but what circumstances allow night work to be conducted “when required”? What protections have been put in place to avoid breaches of working hours, truck movements, etc with this project? Who will monitor the work sites? What construction noise mitigation is planned such as offering double glazing to impacted residents?

I request real consultation with the community to develop appropriate and enforceable restrictions that are not determined by the contractor but by an independent arbitrator then monitored by TfNSW, with appropriate penalties imposed for breaches.

**I object** to the location of the Balgowlah site road during construction and once the tunnel is operational. The road will be within 1 metre of the existing oval and within the footprint of the existing cricket nets. While the oval is the only local playing field for Balgowlah Boys High School and St Cecilia school, the EIS concedes the appeal of using the oval during construction will reduce. I believe it will also make it unsafe and unusable during this period. I request the access road is placed 15 metres further west and sunken below the proposed level to ensure safe use of the oval during and after construction and allow retention of more trees to ameliorate the increased light and noise from traffic for residents and users of the oval and scout hall.

**I object** to the height of the stack and the footprint of the buildings and the resultant visual impact. In reality the stacks will be much bigger than the scale offered in the EIS and visual impact of the project is understated.

I request revision and accurate openness with the community regarding the design.

**I object** to the clogging of local streets by construction workers car parking. This has been the reality on many projects including the Northern Beaches Hospital.

I request the provision of adequate onsite parking with parking restrictions in local streets for non-residents.

## **POOR DESIGN**

**I object** to the design shown in the EIS regarding the unventilated tunnel and unfiltered stacks despite the growing medical evidence of the health impacts of particles smaller than 2.5 as there is no safe level of exposure to toxins. The design has not fully considered the impact on the health and wellbeing of the local community including nearby schools, especially Balgowlah Boys High, St Cecilia's, Anzac Park Memorial school and Seaforth Public. Some of the schools use the oval for school sport and PE and others for competitive team sports. Who will want their children playing sport within 100 metres of an unfiltered stack?

The EIS contains many pages of justification as to why there has been fundamentally no change to the tunnel and stack design. During the Virtual Information sessions, we were advised that comparable tunnels in NSW use the same longitudinal ventilation system but no comparison was offered with other countries or states where best practice is very different.

**I request** the tunnel is actively and effectively ventilated throughout the entire length and the stacks are filtered to the highest standard available.

## **CONCLUSION**

- The proposed Beaches Link Tunnel will not solve the Northern Beaches and Mosman Council traffic woes. Consideration must be given to the changes in work culture including work from home or local work hubs which will lessen the peak hour traffic flow. The business case to justify the need and benefit of the proposed tunnel is poor.
- Building the tunnel will result in induced demand and funnelling of traffic, resulting in more congestion and longer delays on local roads, cancelling out any expected gains in travel time.
- Both during the construction phase and once operative, there will be irreparable loss of habitat and environment, impacting the amenity of the area and wellbeing of the community.
- The fundamental design including the unfiltered ventilation stacks and the unventilated tunnels is outdated and inadequate and needs to be comprehensively revised.