

Beaches Link Tunnel Project Submission

from residents of Paris St Balgowlah 2093

28 Feb 2021

Paris St Balgowlah is our treasured home and community. The vast majority of us have been residents of Paris St for decades, with residents in two houses now in their 60s who grew up in the street. Two homes have housed three generations of the same family. Remaining resident in one place is unusual these days, so the long-term residency is testament to the strong sense of connection to community and place. Paris St is a cul-de-sac which ends on Balgowlah Golf Course which is viewed by all as an extension of our street, an important area for walking dogs, playing golf, doing exercise, playing and socialising. The Balgowlah Golf Course and Burnt Bridge Creek corridor is the reason we are a close community and keep living here. The open green space and natural treed environment also contributes greatly to our wellbeing, providing a huge benefit during the Covid-19 pandemic and lockdown periods.

We believe the expensive Beaches Link Tunnel (BLT) project revealed in the recently released EIS will come at a huge cost to our community with the resultant loss of lifestyle and environment and 5-7 years of construction horror. All this loss will be for limited gain as the BLT will not solve the traffic issues for the northern beaches and lower north shore. The design is outdated and little consideration has been given to alternate solutions such as public transport. It is apparent the EIS has not provided an accurate and transparent assessment of the tunnel outcomes. The BLT project is a very expensive and unnecessary infrastructure project.

We strongly object to the Beaches Link Tunnel for many reasons including

- poor outdated tunnel design, especially the unventilated tunnel and unfiltered stack which will result in health issues
- loss of amenity and lifestyle for our community for limited benefit and huge cost
- 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- a poor business case based on out-of-date traffic forecasts.

OUTDATED TRAFFIC DATA AND PROJECTED TIME SAVINGS

We object to the outdated claims by TfNSW regarding expected travel time savings and traffic volumes based on their forecast created in 2016. As many factors were not considered when the traffic forecasts were. The following factors and future trends were not considered in calculations or the EIS and must be considered

- the huge 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

We request that the DPIE or TfNSW commission an independent review of the traffic forecasts, with consideration of the factors listed above.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

The environmental impacts of construction and operation of the tunnel under the current plan are massive, wreaking havoc and causing permanent damage. We believe this is not justifiable.

We object to the destruction of Balgowlah Golf Course (BGC), a valuable community resource, which has again proven itself over the past year with dramatically increased usage and membership by all ages. The use of BGC at all hours of the day seven days per week, contrasts with limited use of the playing fields proposed to replace part of the golf course. Fewer people will benefit 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.

We object to the environmental destruction which will occur during and after construction. The loss of habitat through unnecessary destruction of mature trees and high value bushland is appalling and will result in shade loss and will adversely impact local microclimate and biodiversity.

We object to the removal of the golf course dam, which will have a huge impact on local wildlife. The dam 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.

We object to the lack of assessment to the damage to the Burnt Bridge Creek riparian corridor, impacting 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, essentially making the creek a storm water drain. It will also impact the water quality in Manly Lagoon and 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'*

We object to the destruction of over 12 hectares of high-quality bushland 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.

We 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, despite the planned attempt to contain it with floating curtains.

We 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.

We request an accurate assessment is made of the current usage of Balgowlah Golf Course and compared to the restricted use of playing fields to allow full appreciation by all stakeholders. We 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 then a redesign which does not result in the permanent degradation of these vital areas. We request the trees are recognised as a valuable resource and retained and protected through careful planning during construction. We also request the BGC dam is recognised as a valuable wildlife resource and retained.

IMPACTS ON OUR LOCALE

We object to the BLT project as it will result in rat runs and significantly increased traffic congestion in Manly Vale and Balgowlah during construction and after completion, as acknowledged by TfNSW. While the project will result in the need to extensively upgrade local roads to cope and recover from construction degradation, little work has been done assessing the impact on the local road network.

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

We object to the huge impact of construction on the local community. Excess noise, dust and vibration levels will impact the wellbeing of Paris St along with thousands of other local residents. There is large potential for damage to some homes. Tunnelling will occur 24/7, and truck movements will be extreme with at least 40-50 per hour at each site. The trucks will carry the tunnel spoils along Military Rd and Wakehurst Parkway and Warringah Rd for 5-7 years adding to 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? During 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 and who will monitor the work sites? What construction noise mitigation is planned such as offering our residents double glazing? We 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.

We object to the location of the Balgowlah site road from Sydney Rd 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. The oval is the only local playing field for Balgowlah Boys High School and St Cecilia school, yet the EIS concedes the appeal of using the oval during construction will reduce. We believe the oval will be unsafe and unusable during and after construction and request the access road is placed 15 metres further west and sunken below the proposed level to ensure safe use of the oval. We request the retention of more trees to lessen the increased light and noise pollution for residents and users of the oval and scout hall.

We object to the height of the stack and the footprint of the buildings which are not shown to scale in the EIS. The resultant visual impact is huge and understated. We request revision and accurate openness with the community regarding the design.

We object to the clogging of local streets by construction workers car parking, as experienced in other large-scale projects such as the Northern Beaches Hospital. We request the provision of adequate onsite parking with parking restrictions in local streets for non-residents.

THE ONGOING POOR DESIGN

We object to the ongoing poor design of the BLT as shown in the EIS. Of particular concern are the unventilated tunnel and unfiltered stacks, despite the growing medical evidence of the health impacts of particles smaller than 2.5. 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 and St Cecilia who use the oval for school sport. No one will want their children playing sport within 100 metres of an unfiltered stack.

The EIS contains many pages justifying why there has been no fundamental 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.

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

IN CONCLUSION

- The proposed Beaches Link Tunnel will not solve the Northern Beaches and Mosman Council traffic issues. Factors such as changes in work culture including work from home or local work hubs will lessen the peak hour traffic flow and must be considered when revising the traffic flow data. 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 and coming at great expense to the community during construction then through tolls.
- Both during construction and once operative, there will be irreparable and unacceptable 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.
- Alternatives such as public transport must be thoroughly assessed before billions of dollars are spent on inadequate and destructive infrastructure.