

# OBJECTION TO THE PROPOSED BEACHES LINK TUNNEL - PROJECT SSI-8862

I object to the proposed Beaches Link Tunnel project as currently planned, due to the high risk of damage to public health and the environment in the areas affected by the construction and operation of the tunnel.

## Health and well-being

The health and well-being of residents in the Balgowlah/Seaforth area is at risk from several aspects of this project:

- **Airborne pollution** such as silica dust during construction from spoil storage at Balgowlah Golf Club site and from truck movements. Strong north easterly winds prevalent during summer will disperse such contaminants widely towards Seaforth and Balgowlah.
- **Increased traffic pollution from the movement of spoils.** Movement of waste material by trucks, most of which will be diesel powered, can be expected to increase air pollution. Residents along the incline from Seaforth to Clontarf Street will be particularly exposed as trucks move up the gradient in a low gear.
- **Exposure to noise and vibration from construction over many years.** Several hundred properties in Seaforth and Balgowlah will be affected by airborne and ground borne noise and vibration, many of them at levels that exceed health recommendations. The owners of the affected properties have not as yet been notified and mitigation actions not discussed.
- **Stress and anxiety from increased congestion, construction fatigue and loss of amenity.** The projected movement of vehicles from the construction site at Balgowlah Golf Club will add to the congestion and delays around existing traffic bottlenecks and will create new bottlenecks, as will car traffic and street parking by project workforce. With the increased number of vehicles on the roads in the area comes a risk of more accidents.
- **Pollution of waterways.** The risk of toxic sludge from Middle Harbour dredging reaching beaches in the area appears to be very high, making these beaches unsafe for water activities.
- **Lack of filtering of the ventilation stacks.** The lack of filtering of the stacks will expose residents within an up to 1.2km radius of the stacks to traffic air pollution in the form of nitrous oxides and harmful particulate matter when the tunnel commences operation. With no safe level for such pollution, it is likely that many residents will develop health problems as a result. The affected area includes several schools and homes within 300m from the stacks.

## Destruction of the environment

The impact on the natural environment in Balgowlah and Seaforth from the construction and operation of the tunnel will be severe.

- **Removal of up to 12 ha of healthy bushland at North Seaforth.** The affected area is home to several endangered species and all animals within the construction area, if not

directly affected by habitat destruction will be affected by construction noise/vibration. The proposed restoration at the completion of the project can not bring back the original biodiversity of this area.

- **The effect of groundwater drawdown on Burnt Bridge Creek and the adjacent Baringa Bush Reserve.** It is estimated that the water flow in in Burnt Bridge Creek will be reduced by 80% during construction and up to 96% during operation of the tunnel. This will effectively make the creek a stormwater drain and affect the vegetation and fauna along the creek as well as the quality of the water that flows into Manly Lagoon and into the ocean at Queenscliff. Groundwater drawdown may also affect vegetation in the wider Balgowlah/Seaforth area.
- **Contamination of water in Manly Dam.** Bush clearing and construction activities will allow water to flow into the Manly Dam catchment area during periods of heavy rain with little or no possibility for control. Sludge and siltation can also be expected to flow into Manly Dam from the holding pond for wastewater at Wakehurst Golf Course, as the pond will not have the capacity to cope with periods of heavy rainfall.

## **Lack of business justification**

The traffic modelling for this project as based on 2016 traffic flows fails to take into account the continued trend among Northern Beaches residents to work from home. This trend has been amplified with the COVID-19 restrictions and can be expected to be further amplified should this project go ahead due to increased local congestion both during construction and operation of the tunnel. Once established, arrangements to work from home are likely to become permanent.

The modelling also does not take into account the impact of recent popular public transport initiatives, such as the B-line bus from Mona Vale to the city and the Dee Why to Chatswood express line.

Unrealistic modelling will challenge the objective of an 11% reduction of traffic along Military Road - in any case, a somewhat modest ambition for such a costly project.

Any assumed savings in travel time between the Northern Beaches seem likely to be offset by increased congestion and delays on local roads, a problem which appears to have been left for the local council to address.

Overstated expected 2037 traffic volumes due to poor modelling also puts into question the whole justification of the Beaches Link project. The budget for this project may be better spent on improved public transport offerings and local work hubs.

## **Lack of consideration of public transport alternatives**

While many of the world's cities are taking steps to discourage traffic into city centres, this project takes the opposite approach.

It appears little consideration has been given to public transport alternatives during the concept and planning stages of this project. A thorough, independent analysis of all transport options should be made prior to the approval of this project.

## **Conclusions**

The impact and consequences of most the issues raised above have not been adequately addressed in the Environmental Impact Statement. A more comprehensive EIS with

emphasis on controls to minimise health and environment risks should be completed for public viewing before any approvals are given.

There needs to be direct communication between the project owner and individual property owners affected by tree removal, noise and vibration from this project to discuss degree of impact and mitigation initiatives.

A transparent comparison of alternative transport solutions should be conducted.