

NORTHBRIDGE

PROGRESS ASSOCIATION

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Northbridge Progress Association (“NPA”) is a 100-year-old, not-for-profit, volunteer association which advocates on behalf of Northbridge to preserve or improve for its residents, the amenity and environment of the suburb. Northbridge is a strong community with over 6300 residents, proud of the physical attractions of our peninsular suburb and indigenous heritage.

In preparing this submission, members of the NPA Committee have reviewed the extensive EIS documentation for the Beaches Link and Gore Hill Freeway construction project (Beaches Link) and other recent major roadway projects, attended Beaches Link information sessions, consulted with local associations and clubs and received some independent expert advice. The NPA held a Special General Meeting on 24th February 2021 (to a COVID safe audience of 100 residents), at which Transport for NSW virtually attended and responded to local concerns. Our committee then presented the proposed approach to the submission and received feedback by facilitating discussion and collecting survey results.

Given the proposed design and tunnel path for the Beaches Link, the construction timeline and the overarching risk profile of this major infrastructure project, the potential impact on the residents of Northbridge during and post construction is significant and undeniable.

The NPA is submitting an objection to the Beaches Link, together with clear actionable initiatives our community expects the Government to adopt to mitigate the impacts on Northbridge, should the project proceed.

In assessing the EIS for the Beaches Link, we have taken particular note of the NSW Parliament - Upper House Public, Accountability Committee inquiry into the impact of the WestConnex project. We acknowledge the response from the Minister for Transport and Infrastructure tabled 17th June 2019 in NSW Parliament. Committee Chairman, Reverend the Hon Fred Nile MLC stated when the report was tabled, 'Major infrastructure projects cannot be delivered without a certain amount of disruption. However, it is clear that WestConnex has had a significant and pronounced impact on local communities and families. I sincerely hope that some of the report's findings and recommendations may make life a little easier for those impacted'.

We acknowledge that major infrastructure projects take into account broader considerations for Greater Sydney. However, the WestConnex inquiry report's findings are aligned with the general concerns of the Northbridge community given the risk profile and potential impacts for Northbridge's residents of such a large-scale infrastructure project.

The Northbridge community has legitimate concerns given the severe impacts experienced by other communities through recent major projects in Sydney. To meet community expectations, a considerable number of the relevant recommendations from the WestConnex inquiry should be adopted and implemented in full for Beaches Link in order to minimise the impacts for the residents of Northbridge.

The measures adopted for Western Harbour Tunnel are largely consistent with the relevant recommendations from the WestConnex inquiry, however, we believe that certain aspects of the reporting framework require refinement to ensure that dissemination of information is transparent and timely.

We support the report's focus on:

- achieving greater transparency in delivering major infrastructure projects
- improving community consultation and complaints handling; and
- addressing construction impacts and preserving community amenities.

The general concerns of the Northbridge community are centered around:

- Existing contaminated landfill
- Bushland preservation
- Construction traffic
- Noise and vibrations
- Air and water quality
- Access and amenity
- Property impacts

These concerns arise across three areas within Northbridge:

- Flat Rock drive temporary construction site
- Middle Harbour temporary construction site
- Northbridge corridor (pre & post construction)

Our submission includes specific recommendations on important matters for our community including bushland rehabilitation, compensation for local organisations particularly impacted by the project, protection of aboriginal heritage and the scope of property pre-assessments. Our submission is also focussed on arrangements for ongoing monitoring and consultation to manage risks, mitigate impacts and ensure effective communication with the community through the construction and operational period.

Our community has clear expectations that material changes on key issues that impact them e.g. deterioration in air quality above threshold levels; noise during construction above agreed thresholds; water quality changes that materially impact the use of Middle Harbour (in particular; Northbridge Baths, sailing and Sea Scouts) are communicated in a timely manner).

We have noted that conditions of consent for Western Harbour Tunnel includes under Part B, Community Information & Reporting, a range of measures to communicate with local communities i.e. the Community Communication Strategy. The measures adopted for Western Harbour Tunnel are consistent with our general expectations however, we believe that certain aspects of the reporting framework require refinement to ensure that dissemination of information is transparent and timely.

We recommend the performance of the construction project in identified key risk areas is communicated regularly in accessible formats, such as dashboard information presented in public community areas and online, in order to inform and engage the community. Consistent with the Western Harbour Tunnel consents, timely communications are required for any material breaches or triggers from key issues.

Northbridge Progress Association is the most appropriate body to represent the interests of Northbridge during all stages of the Beaches Link project and request representation on all relevant committees e.g. Air Quality Community Consultative Committee.

Our community has highlighted the importance of transparency and accountability of government. We note the appointment within the Western Harbour Tunnel conditions of consent of independent Environmental Representative, Acoustics Advisor(s), Independent Auditor, Public Liaison Officer(s), Community Complaints Mediator and Air Quality Independent Reviewer and believe this needs to continue within the Beaches Link Project.

The NSW Government must monitor and publicly report on the new Community Complaints Mediator for the project to ensure that the improvements being sought regarding community engagement and complaints handling are achieved. There must be a centralised complaints management system that is accessible 24/7, transparent and empowered to respond effectively in a short time frame.

The NPA is objecting to the Beaches Link as described in the EIS.

Should the Beaches Link proceed, the NPA strongly believes the NSW Government needs to address our concerns and recommendations to ensure community expectations are met. The NPA are committed to advocating for our community through this project assessment and have set up a sub-committee skilled with government regulatory experience at the highest level, legal, accounting, community engagement and external environmental management advisory support.

The Beaches Link will be a priority agenda item at future committee meetings to ensure we are vigilant and advising our residents with regular updates to hold the government accountable going forward.

Yours sincerely



Rachel Hill
President
Northbridge Progress Association
PO Box 357

Northbridge. NSW. 2063

To appreciate the beauty of our area and the time we invest into our community please visit Northbridge.202



