

**AN ONLINE SELFIE PROTEST IS UNDERWAY
IN SUPPORT OF THE 10,000+ SIGNATURE PETITION TO STOP
THE WESTERN HARBOUR TUNNEL AND BEACHES LINK
Parliamentary Petition Debate Thursday 30th July 4pm**

The Premier's own electorate is going into battle against the Western Harbour and Beaches Link Tunnel projects. Community and parent groups – including in her own blue ribbon seat of Willoughby - are challenging the placement and need for the tunnel project due to substantial health and logistics concerns - and changing commuter behaviours.

Community groups have come together as they learned about the huge impact and doubtful benefits associated with the tunnel development. "From the beginning we were concerned there would be significant impact on the environment and traffic. But when the 9000+ paged Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) came out - our fears were validated. The route will cut right through Sydney's largest school district.

"More than 26 schools and dozens of pre-schools and child care centres are located along the tunnel route and will be impacted in one form or another.

"Proof of lack of forethought is the EIS has vastly underestimated that there are 100 pupils per school. The more accurate number (between 600-1000 students per school) is very easy information to obtain but just goes to prove how little thought has been given to the welfare of those children.

"For at least 5-10 years of construction, schools will be impacted by more than 6000 construction vehicle movements PER DAY. These trucks will move and park in and around lower north shore, beaches and inner west school zones carrying dangerous goods and potentially contaminated spoil. The EIS confirmed that there will be a vast amount of night work needed to completely reconfigure the Warringah Freeway and keep it operational. More than a dozen support sites will be built between Rozelle and Balgowlah removing hundreds of trees, bushland and precious green spaces which are already in very short supply across these areas."

"The impact on air-quality, traffic congestion, and pollution near sensitive areas is just frightening. We have estimated that over 10,000 children will be directly impacted by noise, dust and serious loss of amenity as they move between home, school and sport. To make matters worse, the tunneling and support works will happen in some of our oldest established suburbs where the risk to property damage is very real – as witnessed last week in Ashfield.

For kids, this project flies in the face of what they are learning at school – around preserving our environment and the link to increasingly extreme climate events. The EIS confirms that both Sydney and Middle Harbour will be dredged, the urban oasis of Flat Rock Gully at Northbridge will be dug up as a tunnel dive site and Manly Dam will be threatened. The first stage will see six Million Tonnes of Waste produced, one Million Litres of water used (PER DAY) and will result in considerably more CO2 emissions being produced.

"It is hard to find positives. How do we look our kids in the eye and justify this scale of impact and waste? Let alone poor farmers and bushfire affected communities".

"For communities across the tunnel route – the claimed benefits for them have not been validated. The EIS confirmed that the project will create more local traffic and increase pollution around schools, homes and parks. One of the key intersections on Military Rd will reach failure point if the project goes ahead, as will many other local intersections. In other word's, this project will not solve local traffic pain points, but will create more.

“Common-sense begs the question, why plug two tunnels worth of traffic into the busiest freeway on the North Shore rather than bypass it or look into other options? One answer has to be toll capture - with new toll gantries earmarked for all northbound Harbour crossings and for the Warringah Freeway itself. There are also questions being asked about the role development plans for the Northern Beaches have to play when the tunnel has such a poor cost/ benefit profile. Parents and school communities find it hard to accept the significant risk and cost associated with these projects when clear alternatives, such as dedicated public transport solutions, have not yet been considered and there is no publicly available business case.”

“The community communicated it’s concerns to NSW Transport during the initial consultation period and both the Premier and Felicity Wilson MP have received thousands of letters of objection to the plans. But it is clear they are not interested in the concerns of their constituents – very little has changed as the project has progressed. The 9000+ page EIS for the Western Harbour Tunnel and Warringah Freeway Upgrade was released as the COVID-19 crisis broke. The timing of consultation and the complexity contained in the documents made it very difficult for the community to collaborate and engage in genuine consultation. Ultimately our requests to suspend were dismissed”

“The thought of coming out of COVID-19 and into a poorly consulted, high impact 10 year construction project is just frightening – particularly when there are so many other projects being approved across the area.”

“We need to see the business case for this project. And there needs to be a substantial rethink with proper community consultation. Tunnel focused community groups such as Stop the Tunnels have been formed to ensure those who are most impacted by the tunnel are considered. “We want to see consideration given to our very large residential and school communities. This means investing in healthier, more viable solutions for all.”

“Poorly scoped, rushed and unsupported projects such as these carry significant risk. We have seen the West Gate tunnel projects in Victoria come to a halt because of contamination. The EIS for these new tunnels have identified high risk contaminants along the length of the Warringah Freeway, in addition to contaminated sediment in the Harbour and Middle Harbour. Further testing along the Freeway did not commence until ‘after the close of consultation’ and the outcomes of this testing is not yet known.

“A project that carries such high health and financial risk should not be rushed. “COVID has brought about rethink around how we work and traffic was already decreasing with the addition of the B-Line buses. Proceeding with this tunnel just doesn’t add up, nor do the claimed benefits justify the risks”.

As a community, ultimately, we ask: Is a ten minutes time saving worth handing over the childhoods of a generation? Is the future health of our local communities worth all this? The conclusion after much research has been a resounding No!

“This is a \$16 Billion high risk,sink hole in the wealthiest part of our state. Surely the NSW government has lower risk projects to invest in which create long term (rather than short term) jobs, in areas of high need?

Community members across the route are participating in an **online selfie protest** with Covid safe photos coming in from parents, grandparents, families and workers “It’s a great way for the community to come together, without taking unnecessary risks. The community has changed their approach due to the Covid crisis – it’s time the government did the same when it comes to these toll road tunnel projects!”

The Petition will be debated at 4pm in the NSW Legislative Assembly today 30th July 2020.
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