

# Motorways, tunnels and smokestacks in North Sydney – the facts

**Update issued April 2018 by Registry Precinct, North Sydney**

## What's happening

As far as the Lower North Shore is concerned, the NSW State Government has issued plans – so far, rather vague, with promised updates in the coming months – for **two new motorway tunnels**.

The first – known as the **Western Harbour Tunnel** – is to stretch from Rozelle, in Sydney's Inner West, 7km under Sydney Harbour (in a submerged-tube tunnel), to North Sydney probably in the vicinity of St Leonard's Park, where it will link with the Warringah Freeway / M1. This is intended to take traffic between the south (including heavy lorries from and to the Port of Botany) and the main M1 link with Newcastle and points north, adding more congestion to Australia's busiest road corridor, the Warringah Freeway.

The second – the **Beaches Link** – is planned to extend 7.5km from the Cammeray area, under Middle Harbour, to Seaforth and North Balgowlah, to link with the A8 near Balgowlah Golf Club and the Wakehurst Parkway. This is intended to provide the long, long-discussed bypass to the Spit Bridge and provide faster road links with the fast-developing area around Frenchs Forest (and the new Northern Beaches Hospital) and the "Peninsula". A rail alternative has apparently NOT been evaluated by the government despite population growth already planned for the area.

The total cost of the two tunnels – each three lanes wide – is estimated at \$14bn, or \$10,000 per cm.

**Timescale** The timescale for these works is unclear, but the Government has spoken of issuing Environmental Impact Statements (EISs) regarding the above links in mid-2018. Leaked documents (extracts published in March 2018 in the Sydney Morning Herald and by the ABC) however foresee widespread environmental disruption, including noise, severe vibration, pollution and vast numbers of truck movements 24/7 over many years. The documents speak of a number of **neighbourhood parks/reserves** (including Anzac Park, St Leonards Park and Flat Rock) **being commandeered for years** for use as works depots, tunnelling sites and spoil dumps.

**The WestConnex connection** The above works need to be seen in a wider context, however. The **Rozelle Interchange** – a kind of underground spaghetti junction, from where the Western Harbour Tunnel is planned to start – is part of the grandiose WestConnex Stage 3 project (parodied by opponents as **WestCONnex**), which is intended to link the M4 and M5 motorways through a swathe of the Inner West.

WestConnex has engendered great community opposition – supported strongly by Clover Moore and the Sydney City Council – because of the wholesale destruction of many inner suburban neighbourhoods, including much of heritage-listed Haberfield. So far no acceptable bid has been made/received for constructing

the Rozelle Interchange – and no engineering solution has yet been designed. Serious doubts have been widely expressed as to whether these projects can be delivered for the projected overall budget of \$45bn.

The EIS for WestConnex Stage 3 resulted in thousands of submissions – almost all in strong opposition. Meanwhile, new controversies – such as the multimillion dollar proposed resumption of an only recently opened branch of Dan Murphy's (on land leased by the state government) for a works depot near to a school, and the proposed resumption of Balmain Leagues Club's premises for a similar use – have aroused strong feelings and protests.

**Roads for sale** Meanwhile, to finance its plans, the NSW government has announced it will sell a 51% stake in Sydney Motorways Corporation – which is the publicly-owned builder and operator of the motorways – to private interests, with a guaranteed increase in tolls chargeable to motorists of 4% each year or the inflation rate, **whichever is higher**. This proposal has recently been referred to the ACCC and a shortlist of bidders published on 21 March. All privatised NSW motorways have gone broke, some more than once.

## Why the plans are so bad

Impacts on local residents and businesses will be felt keenly before, during and after construction work, **and will not solve Sydney's road congestion problems**.

**Immediate effects** Already, the leaked plans are feared to have put a dampener on **property prices** in affected areas, especially those near mooted construction sites and where **contaminated sediment** dredged from the Harbour may be stored or dumped, such as in Cammeray, Northbridge, Naremburn, North Balgowlah, White Bay and at The Spit (near Mosman).

**During construction** Once – IF – building gets under way, there are likely to be very high volumes of **truck movements** (60 to 120 lorries per day have been quoted) 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, in these areas. Where tunnelling takes place there will be constant **noise and ground vibration** as digging machines penetrate solid rock. **Mountainous loads of spoil** and dredged sediment – totalling more than half a million cubic metres – will be dumped, at least temporarily.

**Permanent environmental damage** No one knows yet how much land, or where, will be taken permanently to be **covered in concrete** for the new roads, or for the **building of pumping stations** for dispersing the exhaust fumes generated by vehicles in 42km of tunnels. **Smokestacks** – up to 30m (100ft, or 10 storeys) tall – will disfigure the landscape, from Rozelle to North Sydney, Cammeray, Naremburn, Artarmon and Balgowlah. The seabed floor in pristine Middle Harbour will be damaged and toxic sediments in the main Harbour dredged up. **(cont over)**

**Noise and fumes** When – after years of construction work – the new roads are opened (around 2025), local residents will be subjected to **constant traffic noise**. And – most worrisome of all to many people – **noxious fumes** containing carcinogenic particulates and poisonous carbon monoxide, benzene and nitrogen oxides will be emitted from unfiltered smokestacks (exhaust stacks, or chimneys), close to schools and homes.

(Research shows that the emissions are most intense within 500m of each stack, but that the tiny particles can be detected at a distance of up to 1.2km. North Sydney and Cammeray have the highest density of schools – public and private – in the state, with a total of some 9000 pupils. And the fact is that **children are at greatest risk** from the effects of these emissions, because they tend to breathe more through their mouths, without nasal filtration. As a result, carcinogenic emissions can become permanently embedded in their lungs and bloodstream.)

**Filtration** And – **unlike most advanced countries around the world** – New South Wales has **NO** plans to filter the emissions from these smokestacks. The additional cost of filtration would be trivial (even at inflated RMS estimates, less than 5% of project costs). Yet the state government has dismissed this process as unnecessary – despite the Premier Gladys Berejiklian (when she was in Opposition) campaigning for filtration of exhaust stacks from the 3.6km Lane Cove Tunnel, in her Willoughby electorate. Perhaps, if she gives way, she fears a backlash from other areas?

NOTE that modern long urban tunnels in such diverse locations as Madrid, Italy, Tokyo and Hong Kong all have filtered ventilation; **mainland China, India – and Australia – do not**. It is interesting to note that signage in existing Sydney tunnels advises motorists to close all windows and to switch ventilation systems to "recycle" to prevent polluted air entering their vehicles – **this is the air the NSW government, led by Gladys Berejiklian, expects our children to breathe.**

## What can you do to help?

- **Log on to the campaign web pages, to keep up to date on developments...**
  - > NORTAG (Northern Residents Tunnels Action Group): <https://nortag2017.wixsite.com/nortag>; [www.facebook.com/NBeachesHarbourTunnels/](https://www.facebook.com/NBeachesHarbourTunnels/); on Twitter: @NORTAG\_Media
  - > Registry Precinct North Sydney (covering, in the main, the Cammeray area, as far south as Falcon Street): [www.facebook.com/groups/115135071079/](https://www.facebook.com/groups/115135071079/)
  - > Cammeray/Nth Shore: What the Northern Beaches and Western Harbour Tunnels Mean for You: [www.facebook.com/groups/156383418232317/](https://www.facebook.com/groups/156383418232317/)
  - > STOP Western Harbour and Beaches Motorways: [www.facebook.com/SustainableTrans/](https://www.facebook.com/SustainableTrans/)
  - > No WestConnex: Public transport not motorways: [www.westconnex.info](http://www.westconnex.info); [www.facebook.com/NoWestconnex/](https://www.facebook.com/NoWestconnex/)
- **If not already done, sign the campaign petitions at...**
  - > Filter the Stacks and Protect our Children's Health: Go to <https://nortag2017.wixsite.com/nortag>, then click on the "change.org" link
  - > Save St Leonards Park: [www.change.org/p/st-leonards-park-stop-development-of-the-park-for-a-ventilation-building-for-the-western-harbour-tunnel](https://www.change.org/p/st-leonards-park-stop-development-of-the-park-for-a-ventilation-building-for-the-western-harbour-tunnel)
  - > Stop the Pollution Stacks: [www.change.org/p/gladys-berejiklian-premier-nsw-stop-the-stacks-seaforth-and-northern-beaches-link-project](https://www.change.org/p/gladys-berejiklian-premier-nsw-stop-the-stacks-seaforth-and-northern-beaches-link-project)
  - > Build Rail not Tunnelled Toll Roads: [www.change.org/p/premier-gladys-berejiklian-build-rail-not-tunnelled-toll-roads-build-for-a-sustainable-future](https://www.change.org/p/premier-gladys-berejiklian-build-rail-not-tunnelled-toll-roads-build-for-a-sustainable-future)
- **Write to the Premier** (and member for Willoughby, which includes Cammeray south to Falcon St) Gladys Berejiklian **and to the Transport Minister** Andrew Constance to protest at the destruction of suburbs, the noise, pollution and disruption caused by tunnels and building works, the lack of mass transport solutions, and the continuing menace of unfiltered smokestack pollution (particularly to kids).
  - > Gladys Berejiklian MP, 52 Martin Place, Sydney, NSW 2000, or [www.gladys.com.au/contact-gladys](http://www.gladys.com.au/contact-gladys) and/or (if you are a constituent) 280 Willoughby Road, Naremburn, NSW 2065
  - > Andrew Constance MP, Level 16, 52 Martin Place, Sydney, NSW 2000

**Back this up with a letter to Luke Foley**, Opposition leader, urging him to promise to rescind the present government's plans should Labor win the 2019 state election. Write to:–

  - > Luke Foley MP, Mezzanine Level, 92 Parramatta Road, Lidcombe, NSW 2141
- If you are resident anywhere in North Sydney, **get involved by attending your local Precinct meetings**. See North Sydney Council's website for details of meetings and a map of precincts:– [www.northsydney.nsw.gov.au/Council\\_Meetings/Community\\_Engagement/Precincts](http://www.northsydney.nsw.gov.au/Council_Meetings/Community_Engagement/Precincts)
- **Lobby your councillors** to join the campaign – check the North Sydney Council website for names
- **Spread the word** to friends, family and neighbours to get involved
- **When the EISs are issued** promptly submit strongly-worded objections