

## **6.2. MM02: Call on the NSW State Government to urgently halt, review and reassess the Western Harbour Tunnel and Northern Beaches Link projects**

On Tuesday 21 June 2022, the State Government handed down the 2022/2023 Budget and allocated \$4.1 billion over 4 years for planning the Western Harbour Tunnel (with connections from Cammeray to Rozelle) (“WHT”) and the Northern Beaches Link (“NBL”).

The State Government recently advised that the NBL project has been “delayed.” Yet, it would seem that the delay is only a result of the WHT project running late. Indeed, \$1 million has been allocated for planning for this “delayed project” over the next financial year. North Sydney local government area bears the enormous burden of these projects and there are no demonstrable benefits. Recently, Stop the Tunnels – a community group focussed on the tunnels projects - documented the unacceptable risks of these projects including:

### **Climate:**

- Almost 1 million kms of additional road trips PER DAY induced by the project (EIS estimates)
- no dedicated public transport lane and no ability to adapt to rail later
- 3,500 trees, mangroves and seagrasses lost with their carbon exchange and cooling effect gone for a generation
- Road tunnels are far larger than public transport tunnels and these tunnels have a particularly long span - the embodied emissions profile is unacceptable.

### **Environment:**

- contamination of harbour and waterways with toxic sediment
- toxic air to be vented, unfiltered back into the surrounding communities including the mostly densely populated school zone in Sydney
- polluted water for swimming and water sport activities including for tourists visiting our iconic Sydney Harbour would be affected. Toxic “forever” chemicals like PFAS have been detected.
- A large amount of waste is to be dumped at sea and toxic sludge to be dealt with at unknown locations further affecting water, air and land
- devastation of bushland and public parks (including Cammeray Park and Flat Rock Gully)
- additional threats to endangered species like the last mainland penguins in Australia
- 20 significant aboriginal sites are to be put at further risk from dredging, vibration, and drawdown

### **Public transport:**

- no alternative public transport or sustainable options considered or costed by government.

### **Fiscal Accountability and the Business Case:**

- The business case for the Beaches Link has never been published and the Western Harbour Tunnel Business Case is outdated based on pre-Covid figures. The corridor is

highly susceptible to changes in work and travel patterns and with a BCR of only 1.2 the project needs to be stopped and re-assessed

- Infrastructure Australia have taken the Western Harbour and Warringah Freeway project off their priority list however the budget requires substantial Federal Funding and INSW have called for all megaprojects to be reassessed not only in terms of priority but in terms of need (page 177, SIS 2022). The Western Harbour tunnel should be included in that re-assessment

Meanwhile, the wholesale destruction of trees and habitat at Cammeray Parklands for the Early Works for the WHT and Warringah Freeway Upgrade continues unabated. On 10 June 2022 Transport for NSW (“TfNSW”) and their contractors advised Council staff that they intended to remove a further 655 trees from Cammeray Park in addition to the approximately 100 trees that have already been removed. TfNSW advised that the tree removal was scheduled to start on Thursday 16 June 2022 and the majority of the trees would be removed within a two-week period.

TfNSW advised that there are 1,330 trees currently on Cammeray Park and that 487 will be removed in the western portion of the park (construction footprint) and a further 168 trees will be removed to allow for the reconfiguration of the golf course. The tree loss is significant, unnecessary at this scale and unacceptable to our community and for the environment.

The first tranche of these wonderful, mature trees - vital habitat and an important wildlife corridor – have already gone. More will go, along the whole of the corridor for these “early works” from High Street and Arthur Street, North Sydney to Cammeray.

Adjustments to the plans could save a significant number of trees, reducing future impacts of the tree loss and creating a better platform for rebuilding habitat when the project is complete.

**I therefore recommend:**

**1.THAT** Council calls on the NSW State Government to immediately halt, review and reassess the Western Harbour Tunnel and Northern Beaches Link projects.

**2.THAT** Council write to the Premier, Treasurer, Minister for Roads, Minister for the Environment, the Opposition Leader and Shadow Treasurer, Shadow Ministers for the Environment and Roads seeking an urgent halt, review and reassessment of the tunnels projects in terms of need and priority.

**3.THAT** Council write to the Prime Minister, Federal Treasurer, Federal Minister for the Environment and the Federal Member for North Sydney seeking that no federal funds be provided to the tunnel projects without a risk assessment and an assessment of priority and need for the project being undertaken.

**COUNCILLOR ZOË BAKER  
MAYOR**