



BEECROFT - CHELTENHAM

CIVIC TRUST

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## SPECIAL BULLETIN

### Dispelling the Myths on the Proposed F3 - M7 Corridor Link Using a Tunnel Under Pennant Hills Road

#### What is Proposed

In January 2001, Federal and State Transport Ministers announced a study to investigate options for a new National Highway connection between the M7 corridor and the F3 to replace Pennant Hills Road. Throughout this investigation the concerns of residents along Pennant Hills Road were largely ignored and in May 2004, the Federal Government endorsed a fully tunnelled link from the F3 at Wahroonga under the Pennant Hills Road alignment to the M2 at Beecroft. With this, Pennant Hills Road would be reduced to two lanes in each direction. The result does not replace Pennant Hills Road but adds to the congestion in this narrow corridor with long established residential land use.

#### Why the Tunnel is No Solution

##### **Myth 1 - It will reduce traffic congestion on Pennant Hills Road**

The tunnel, with two lanes in each direction, after the reduction of the surface road, will only result in one extra lane in each direction. This will not alleviate traffic congestion, which through traffic induction, is continually increasing - mainly from heavy truck freight movement requirements.

##### **Myth 2 - It will get trucks off Pennant Hills Road**

Trucks will not be forced to use the tunnel and will be prohibited from doing so if carrying dangerous goods. As the surface road will remain toll free, it will be preferred by larger trucks wanting to avoid lane space constraints in the tunnel.

##### **Myth 3 - It will help local traffic**

Federal funding for the project requires a continuous tunnel with no openings for local traffic between the F3 at Wahroonga and the M2 at Beecroft. Local traffic will still use Pennant Hills Road and will compete

with trucks for the reduced road space. (Once approved it is likely that the NSW RTA will ignore this requirement.)

##### **Myth 4 - Toxic emissions will be filtered**

It is also a requirement of Federal funding that 'best practice filtration' be used. Experience with other Sydney road tunnels means that this will be interpreted as no filtration. The health of all residents along the corridor, especially the young and elderly, is at risk.

##### **Myth 5 - The cost**

The recent Pearlman report estimates the cost of tunnel construction alone to be approx \$3.5 billion (\$400m per km at current costs). We know from the Lane Cove Tunnel that the actual cost was over ten times more, at around \$1billion, than the estimated cost of \$90 million. Construction costs are notoriously underestimated by the NSW RTA to get projects approved. Commuters end up paying huge tolls to use these roads. The cost of retrofitting a tunnel to a busy road corridor like Pennant Hills Road and the disruption to traffic and transport would make final costs well above current cost estimates.

##### **Myth 6 - The tunnel will be safe**

Many examples from Europe, USA and Australia, most recently the Burnley Tunnel fire in Melbourne, outline the dangers of accidents and fires in road tunnels. If built this will be the longest road tunnel in Australia at some 8.4km. We have already had a bomb scare on Pennant Hills Road on 11Sep 07. What if this happened in the tunnel?

#### What is the Real Solution

In her recent review of the process to recommend the tunnel, The Hon Marla Pearlman recognised the futility of the tunnel proposal and stated that it was **not a long-term solution**. Pearlman stepped outside the narrow and unsatisfactory terms of reference to recommend that **'a type C (Western) corridor be planned now'**. Federal Minister for Roads, Jim Lloyd in his 14 Sep 07 Media Release on the Pearlman Review, repeated this recommendation. Pearlman appears to understand that **only a western route will provide a real solution for the missing link in the National Highway**.

### What are the Benefits of a Western Option.

1. It is a more direct route taking traffic from the M7 at Dean Park near Blacktown to the F3 at Karingong near Gosford. This is where traffic from the newly developing industrial, warehouse and distribution facilities in Western Sydney needs to go. With the closure of Sydney Harbour as a working port, more road freight will be expected from the port of Newcastle.
2. It is some 20km shorter than the proposed tunnel.
3. It by-passes mainly residential suburbs and avoids the steepest and most congested sections of the M2, Pennant Hills Road corridor and the F3.
4. It is a surface road which minimises the impacts of pollution and noise, improves road safety, and reduces congestion and energy use from heavy trucks.
5. It requires a new crossing of the Hawkesbury River which is essential for a growing Sydney, especially when bushfires and accidents frequently block the F3. This strategic need is widely recognised by many including Judy Hopwood, Member for Hornsby in the NSW Parliament.
6. This new bridge could be combined with new rail freight lines to avoid the need for additional freight lines from Strathfield to Hornsby. The Main North Line is old infrastructure with steep grades and tight curves making it unsuitable for the modern long, fast freight trains. It is now at full capacity and quadruplication of the lines has been proposed.

It must be realised that if the proposed tunnel is built, the more sensible Western option is unlikely to proceed. Federal Member for Berowra, Philip Ruddock stated at a public meeting in May 2005 that there would only be Federal funding available for one option.

### What are the Health Risks of Road Tunnels.

Health experts are seriously concerned about the impact of pollution and toxic emissions concentrated in stacks from road tunnels. It is known that this pollution is not dispersed into the air but falls to ground and is then spread by the prevailing winds, affecting people for some 2 km radius from the stacks. Stacks built for the Lane Cove and M5 East tunnels are inadequate and far too short to disperse pollution. Residents of Beecroft and Cheltenham together with our neighbours in Pennant Hills, Thornleigh and Normanhurst will suffer this pollution. Not only will people who live and work along the corridor be affected, there are some six high enrolment schools along the corridor so our children's health will be adversely affected. Research has shown that twice as many people die in Sydney from the effects of vehicle emission than from road accidents yet these social costs are not considered when road tunnels are planned.

Health impacts of vehicle emissions include:

- Cancer causing (carcinogenic) ultra fine particles from diesel emissions

- Increased incidents of asthma and lung diseases
- Increased risk of heart disease

### A CAUTIONARY TALE

A study by Dr Nicholas Mills and others (in the New England Journal of Medicine on September 13, 2007) investigated why exposure to traffic pollutants causes unfavourable responses in the heart and blood vessels.

### THE INSIDIOUS NATURE OF DIESEL FUMES - A brief outline of Dr Mills article

Volunteers with stable known coronary heart disease had their heart muscles, vessels and clot-reducing agents monitored while breathing dilute diesel exhaust fumes at a concentration routinely experienced when driving in traffic.

The effect on the heart muscle was measured immediately by ECG traces during the tests. Changes in calibre of the vessels and the tendency for clot-formation were measured six hours after the exposure.

Researchers found that, when the test participant was breathing diesel fumes, the heart was less able to keep up with its oxygen requirements and the blood vessels' natural defences against clot-formation were reduced.

**Mills findings have an obvious significance for public health.** The world health organization (WHO) estimates that air pollution is responsible for 800,000 premature deaths worldwide each year. This study recommends: **"Environmental health policy interventions targeting reductions in urban air pollution should be considered in order to decrease the risk of adverse cardiovascular events."**

Commenting on the study's findings, Dr Murray A. Mittleman (M.D., Dr.P.H.) sends a simple cautionary message:

Be careful where you exercise.

### AIR POLLUTION, EXERCISE, AND CARDIOVASCULAR RISK

"A recent scientific statement from the American Heart Association concluded that **transient changes in air pollution are associated with a short-term increased risk of cardiovascular disease and death.**"

Perhaps the contaminants cross the lung lining, and get into the blood directly to cause the harmful effects. Perhaps lung reflexes alter the calibre of the coronary artery, increasing the risk of irregular heartbeat and the risk of dislodging plaque that can block the artery. Or the increased risk (which starts early and can last for days) may be due to stressed lung tissue causing inflammation elsewhere and re-setting the blood's tendency to maintain clots.

These acute responses to an episode of particulate air pollution occur in addition to any chronic cardiovascular problems arising from other background pollution.

Whatever the mechanism might be, the study suggests that breathing high levels of air pollution during exertion heightens the risk of triggering a sudden heart attack. The study specifically investigated the effect of concentrations of particles and gases that are typical of diesel fumes in urban traffic flows, on subjects who had already suffered heart attacks of varying severity.

Since a first heart attack can be fatal and since a predisposition towards clot formation often goes unnoticed, even the fittest are wise to avoid wherever possible any unusual exertion close to traffic.

### **How this is relevant to the proposed 'No Solution' tunnel link in the National Highway of the F3 and the M7 corridor.**

If health matters to us, reductions in urban pollution must be urgently achieved, not merely considered. Diesel fumes are a direct and immediate threat to our local community, especially to those with a history of heart disease. The inevitable traffic induction, increasing the number of diesel powered heavy trucks for freight movements and their highly carcinogenic pollution has not been properly considered. Above all independent health authorities need to keep promoting the need to apply the precautionary principle as a public health safeguard. Government authorities (especially the NSW RTA) must adopt the precautionary principle and not wait for evidence to pile up of these adverse medical conditions which can take up to 40 years to manifest.

We have a responsible, well educated community in the North West area of Sydney that appreciates this issue. Our unique local environment and healthy lifestyle deserve protection. As no leadership seems forthcoming on these critical issues from elected parliamentarians, the community needs to demonstrate leadership from the grass roots. The Beecroft Cheltenham Civic Trust (BCCT) aims to bring into focus the underlying issues that are driving projects in our local area. At present, this process is clearly not working for community benefit

### **Where do our Elected Representatives Stand**

In a letter to the Northern District Times, Sept 21, 2007, Hornsby C Ward Councillor Andrew Isaac, stated that 'The M2 to F3 review was a regurgitated futile number crunching exercise which I believe fails the common sense rule. The review lacks engineering sense and robust analysis for such an important national link. History will judge harshly those who are pushing for a tunnel....The Western Option linking the M7 to the F3 is urgently overdue and not in 20 years time. It will provide an important redundancy in the system by way of a second crossing and another rail link over the Hawkesbury. Therefore, the Western Option makes good engineering and economic sense. When it is to be done then it must be done right the first time.'

Hornsby MP Judy Hopwood has always opposed the tunnel in favour of the Western Option. Baulkham Hills Council now opposes the tunnel. Despite continued community representations, Federal Member for Berowra, Philip Ruddock has not so far even mentioned this critical issue in his recent electoral publicity.

Unfortunately not all our local politicians seem ready to understand the full implications and adverse impacts the tunnel proposal would have on our electorate. We need robust and vocal representation. The health and wellbeing of residents and children in our suburbs depends on building the western option as the only solution to the current problems of Pennant Hills Road. The proposed tunnel would only aggravate these problems.

So far some of our elected representatives have failed to engage with the community they are meant to represent. We need and deserve visionary leadership to solve these problems. **Ask your representative to axe the No Solution Pennant Hills Road tunnel in favour of a real solution through the Western Corridor (Option C) route.** Write to Philip Ruddock, Federal Member for Berowra, PO Box 1866, Hornsby Westfield 1635.

The BCCT *Groundstrike* DVD, based on the public meeting address given by Dr Ray Kearney on 10 September 2006 is available now. To order your copy of the DVD for \$20 please contact Malcolm Powell 98762980 or visit the Trust website [www.2119.org.au](http://www.2119.org.au) to download an order form. Map of alternative Option C (Western) routes corridor for F3/M2 connection is also available on the website.

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## **Before Supermarkets - 2 Powell's store**

*No. 9 in a series of articles on the history of Beecroft and Cheltenham*

From 1938 until it closed about 1960, the major grocery in Beecroft was operated by Jack and Birdie Powell. In 1929 Jack Powell moved from the south coast of New South Wales and worked for some years for his brother-in-law Thomas Clark, who owned the Beecroft grocery store on the corner of Mary Street. After its sale Jack Powell opened a grocery store at 103 Beecroft Road in a former butcher's shop. A few years later he built a new two-storey double-fronted shop and a residence on a sloping site on Beecroft Road next to the post office (now a restaurant). Behind the shop were the family's living quarters and a storage area. There was more storage beneath, accessed via a trapdoor, and a garage for the new van Jack purchased. Above were bedrooms for the family of five. The shop was open five and a half days a week, and Friday night late shopping was introduced during the 1940s. The two Powell boys, Tom and Frank, helped their parents in the shop and had to lug bags of wheat, chaff and oats from the storerooms. Two female sales assistants were also employed and a man

who helped deal with the orders. Jack was well-known as a horseman. He was instrumental in founding the Hornsby Pony Club which held camps at Castle Hill and Glenhaven for keen young girl riders like his daughter Margaret and kept his own horses on land next to the Methodist, now Uniting Church.

Companies sent out window dressers to create impressive window displays. Bushell's, for instance, would organise a display of their teas, sent out from their warehouse in the city. Within the store, a long counter stretched on each side with shelves behind. The right hand counter was for the sale of groceries but the shop was not thronged with customers as the core business was taking orders by phone or by Jack, riding a horse, or another staff member calling personally at customers' homes in the mornings. The orders were then made up and the groceries were delivered in the afternoons in Jack's van to customers in Beecroft and Cheltenham, or next day to homes in West Pennant Hills.

As well as Bushell's, another city warehouse sent out sugar, flour and similar staples, which the staff and family bagged into brown paper bags by weight. Sugar, for example, was delivered in hessian bags weighing 72lb (a little over 32 kg) and had to be weighed out on scales and packed into 2lb or 4lb bags. Grocers' assistants were skilled in twirling a paper bag by either side of the top and then folding it so that the bag was tightly sealed. All prices had to be memorised and Birdie Powell, an expert in swift additions, kept the account books and was the final arbiter on prices. Some accounts were settled monthly but most customers paid on delivery. There were very few bad debts.

Arnotts delivered biscuits in large tins with hinged lids, from which they were weighed and packaged for sale, also in brown paper bags. Children would ask for a bag of broken biscuits, which were sold at a big discount. Cheese arrived in a large round block with a thick calico mesh around it, from which pieces were cut as needed. Eggs, supplied by a poultry farmer at West Pennant Hills, were sold wrapped in newspaper. Sometimes, children found that a bag of boiled lollies had been inserted into the box of home-delivered groceries. During World War II, butter and tea were rationed and to buy these restricted items, customers had to produce coupons. If you ran out of coupons, you went without, so people were careful with their consumption - which is exactly what the government wanted, as so many resources were devoted to the war effort. Cigarettes, also rationed during the war years, were an important part of the business.

Produce, hardware and kitchenware, including buckets and mops, were sold from the counter on the left. Produce did not include fertiliser, as most people used poultry manure. Many people had chooks in their back yards in the war years. While Beecroft had butcheries and pharmacies it had only one greengrocer, as many

people grew their own vegetables, fertilised with poultry manure and Mr Small travelled the streets and sold fruit and vegetables from his horse-drawn cart with a canopy. Milk carters and bread carters delivered daily.

However, the Powells had to contend with three rival groceries in Beecroft: one on the Mary Street corner near the school and two along Wongala Crescent between the Fire Station and Sparks Shoe Store. Jack Powell kept an eye out for new residents moving into the area and went around to solicit business. Among his best customers was Beecroft Grammar School in Copeland Road East, run by the Rev. Albert Booth. Mrs Booth did the housekeeping for the 40 to 50 boys, so she was an important client. Jack and Birdie's son, Frank, still a Beecroft resident, recalls some Methodists asking his parents to send one of their children to Sunday School so that they and others from that church could in conscience switch their business from the local Methodist grocer, whose prices were higher. The Powells did not comply.

After more than thirty years of grocery retailing in Beecroft, the Powells retired. Self-service grocery stores with fewer staff and lower overheads replaced businesses like theirs and groceries were no longer delivered without charge. In the mid 1950s the Colonial Sugar Refining Co provided sugar pre-packed in sealed paper bags and Arnotts soon followed with biscuits in packets. There were no more broken biscuits at the bottom of the tin to provide bargains for children.

In the 1950s and 1960s new homes replaced the last of Beecroft's nurseries, orchards and dairies. A service station was built on the site of Powell's grocery but it too closed about four years ago, too small for modern high-volume retailing requirements. In its place an apartment building with shops facing Beecroft Road is currently being constructed on the site.

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## Six Month Trial of Revised Bus Route 623

We have recently publicised the survey being conducted by Sydney Buses and the proposed cancellation of this route. It is pleasing Sydney Buses have decided on **a six month trial of a revised route, commencing 4<sup>th</sup> November**. This route will run from Beecroft Station to Oakes Road via Beecroft Road, Murray Farm Road and North Rocks Road. It extends to Westfield Shopping Centre at North Rocks on weekday off-peak where passengers will have to change to another service to go to Parramatta. It is stressed that **school services are not changed**.

**If during the six month trial passenger numbers do not improve, the service will be lost.** The nearest bus for people in Murray Farm Road will then be in Ray Road and Pennant Parade. These services go to Epping not Beecroft. To keep this important local bus service, **residents are urged to use the bus**.