

Great Western Highway Upgrade Program

Blackheath Co-Design Committee fact sheet

October 2020



The Blackheath community have provided valuable feedback on proposed route options

Community feedback has been vital in the development of the Great Western Highway Upgrade Program between Katoomba and Lithgow. It has informed design options and helped us to consider and appreciate the importance of impacts such as social, noise, and the environment.

Working with the Blackheath community

The Blackheath Co-Design Committee (BCC) was formed by Transport for NSW in March 2020, following feedback from the community. The committee included stakeholder group representatives, selected community representatives, as well as representatives from the Blue Mountains City Council and emergency services.

The purpose of the BCC was to involve

representatives of the community in working with Transport for NSW to refine route options for Blackheath. The BCC was not a decision making body, but the outcome of the BCC is an important input into the Government's decision-making process for determining a preferred route option and design as the program progresses.

Assessment of route options

After five meetings and additional site tours the BCC assessed six broad route options, including a new tunnel alignment suggested by the Committee. The routes were assessed against the following criteria, which align to the upgrade program's objectives:

- Improve safety
- Minimise impacts to the environment
- Enhance amenity, connectivity and liveability
- Resilience
- Improve congestion and travel time reliability.

The Committee's unanimously preferred option is for a long tunnel underneath Blackheath.

A report on the BCC process and findings has been produced by independent facilitators KJA, and is available to download on the project website at nswroads.work/greatwesternhighway.

The minutes of each BCC meeting have also been published on the website following each meeting.

BCC Stakeholder Group and Community Representatives

as at launch of Committee

Blackheath Public School P&C:

Ally Drinkwater

Blue Mountains Historical Society:

Ross Ingram

Blue Mountains Cycling Safety Forum:

Damien Mah

Save Centennial Glen:

Juliet Bourke

Save Station Street:

Sally Hollis

Blackheath Area Neighbourhood Centre:

Gary Moore

Blackheath Community Alliance:

Eva Johnstone

Blackheath Streetscape Group:

Adele Colman

Blackheath Chamber of Commerce:

George Vergotis

Blackheath Highway Action Group:

Gary McCue

Community Representatives:

Mick Beltran

Gregory Nankervis



Members of the BCC undertaking a site visit in Blackheath



Aerial view of Blackheath

Transport for NSW is extremely grateful to the BCC for their time and efforts over the long process. The Committee were respectful, collaborative and positive, and contributed deep local expertise and knowledge to the process.

I support the long tunnel (East preferably, but East or West), to get all through traffic away from Blackheath and make it a much safer place for everyone to live, and for others to drive through. And hopefully this will also mean that the current highway, between Evans Lookout Road and Mount Boyce, can become a local road with a 50km speed limit, which will also improve safety outcomes. In comparison, the other options, (such as the short tunnel and highway expansion), would have a negative impact on the lives and livelihoods of Blackheath residents and businesses. Currently some truckers are tempted to run the traffic lights, but if we have a long tunnel this risk will be removed. When the entire highway upgrade is finished between Lithgow and Katoomba, which will include a dual carriageway, there will no longer be an hour and 20 minutes trip between Mount Victoria and Blackheath, which I and many residents have had to endure on Sundays and long weekends.

Greg Nankervis – Community Representative

The Save Centennial Glen group vehemently opposes the outer bypass option as it will destroy pristine flora and fauna, people's homes, recreation areas and Blackheath's heritage, and pose a significant risk to safety through high winds, fog and black ice. We support the long tunnel (from Evans Lookout Road to Mount Boyce Weigh Station) for three reasons: safety, the environment and liveability. Safety: The long tunnel, with a dual carriageway, is the option that creates the biggest safety improvement, by taking through-traffic away from Blackheath for the longest distance and providing a viable alternative route for dangerous weather conditions and emergency situations. Environment: The long tunnel has the least impact on the environment, preserving our significant natural, tourist, recreation and built areas. Liveability: The long tunnel is the only option that enhances the liveability and attractiveness of our unique Blackheath township, does not destroy houses (as do the Centennial Glen, Station Street and Short Tunnel options) or gardens and public spaces (as does the expansion of the GWH), divide the town or involve building stacks (as does the Short Tunnel option).

Juliet Burke – Save Centennial Glen

Through my experience with an independent engineer and using this knowledge alongside the TfNSW experts I came to the conclusion that specifically a longer tunnel was the absolutely best option for Blackheath. One starting from east of Evans Lookout Road and finishing near the Weigh Station (approx 4.6km) is both feasible and requires no loss of our heritage, culture, economy, houses, businesses or environment in the long term.

The route of the tunnel needs to be designed for the least impact on any underground environmental issues and above ground disturbances. Due to the depth there should not be any major issues regarding house disturbances.

Sally Hollis – Save Station Street

The long tunnel options with appropriate locations for portals, services facilities and any ventilation stacks, should not result in the loss of properties, public domain and recreational spaces. Compared to other options presented by TfNSW to the BCC, the long tunnels would best maintain the social, economic and environmental wellbeing of Blackheath.

Gary Moore – Blackheath Area Neighbourhood Centre



View of Fort Rock and Centennial Glen

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