



MEDIA RELEASE

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PLANS FOR GWH TUNNEL FORGING AHEAD EIS on display - submissions due

Plans for the Great Western Highway are forging ahead with [Transport for NSW \(TfNSW\) today releasing the Environmental Impact Statement \(EIS\)](#) for the proposed 11km tunnel from Blackheath to Little Hartley, despite [Federal funding currently being withheld, and construction delayed](#).

"The Blue Mountains Society is particularly concerned about impacts the proposed tunnel and its construction might have on the World Heritage Area," explained Madi Mclean, President, Blue Mountains Conservation Society.

"There is a significant risk that the tunnel's construction could negatively impact aquifers supplying groundwater to groundwater-dependent ecosystems, and their dependent species, along both sides of the proposed tunnel corridor, including within the World Heritage Area."

"We are particularly concerned by the threat of reduced groundwater to the Commonwealth-listed Peat Swamps that align the corridor and their populations of endangered Giant Dragonfly and Blue Mountains Water Skink, both groundwater dependent species. Both species have been recorded in the swamps between Medlow Bath and Mt Victoria, including in the Greaves Creek, Govett's Leap, Popes Glen, Porters Pass, Centennial Glen, Hat Hill Creek, Victoria Creek, upper Grose River, and Kerosene Vale catchments."

"The tunnelling may also negatively impact aquifers supplying moist cliff-face communities, including the endangered *Epacris hamiltonii* - a locally endemic groundwater dependent shrub restricted to moist rock overhangs along Greaves, Katoomba, and upper Govett's creeks."

"It's absolutely critical that a detailed hydrogeological study is undertaken along the tunnel corridor to characterise the aquifers which tunnel construction might impact, and their relationships with the swamps and moist cliff-face ecological communities."

"Despite this EIS being released for comment, we are continuing to call on the Federal Minister for a full EIS across the entire Great Western Highway project upgrade to ensure that matters of national environmental significance are addressed.

The piecemeal approach currently being taken is an injustice to our unique environment and won't provide a true understanding of the overall impact and long-term consequences of the upgrade."

The [EIS can be viewed here](#). Submissions are open until Wednesday 1st March.

- Ends -

**To arrange an interview or for further information please contact Bridget Jackson
on 0411 160 293.**