

INQUIRY INTO CROSS CITY TUNNEL

Organisation:

Name: Mr Michael Gormly

Telephone:

Date Received: 23/01/2006

Theme:

Summary

23/1/2006

Submission to Cross-City-Tunnel Parliamentary Enquiry

Attached: Woolloomooloo map

Summary

1. There has not been enough time for people to make submissions given the Christmas disruption to normal business -- I returned from overseas to find submissions were due. There had been no call for submissions distributed to residents in the affected areas. This casts doubt on the public accountability of this enquiry. I have obtained an extension from Laura at your office.

2. I speak on behalf of residents and businesses in McElhone Street, Woolloomooloo between Brougham Lane and Reid Street, numbers 172–186. Council Engineers tell us we are about to lose all our resident street parking. This is an indirect result of traffic changes caused by the Cross City Tunnel.

3. Woolloomooloo, already divided by a Railway and the Eastern Distributor, is suffering further extreme traffic impacts because of the CCT. **Road closures and diversions designed to funnel traffic into the CCT are crippling our suburb.** This comes after we were denied access to the Eastern Distributor for two years to enable CCT construction. We were promised better above-ground traffic conditions in return for this long-term inconvenience. The opposite is proving to be the case. I have documented these traffic impacts photographically.

4. Relegating this major public infrastructure to private enterprise has resulted in serious planning flaws in the whole project. The pursuit of profit has over-ridden sensible traffic planning, resulting in an overpriced, under-used white elephant which has spread traffic chaos both on surface routes and also around the tunnel exits. Residents and motorists have been sacrificed for the purpose of funnelling traffic (ie dollars) into the tunnel. The government has betrayed the communities it is supposed to represent and serve.

Body:

1. Explained in summary point [1] above.

2. CCT traffic impacts on McElhone St and Brougham Lane

2 (a) The closure of Palmer Street/Sir John Young (SJY) Crescent to the harbour crossings means that all toll-avoiders, and local traffic from 2010 and 2011 postcodes, and users of the Domain Parking Station, have to travel either through Woolloomooloo or the city to get to the North Shore. As the City route gives access only to the one-lane Bridge route, and presents many more traffic lights than the Woolloomooloo route, the latter is by far preferable especially as it offers access to both harbour crossings.

This means Palmer Street is now a 'freeway to nowhere' and most of the displaced traffic uses residential streets along three primary routes -- Crown/Cathedral/Bourke; Macleay/Wylde/Cowper Wharf Road (CWR); and Brougham Lane/McElhone/Reid/Cathedral. (see map)

These are for the most part residential streets now carrying noticeably more through traffic. In addition, the closure of Bourke Street south at William has constricted egress from Woolloomooloo, displacing more traffic to Crown and McElhone Streets.

2. (b) Since the CCT was opened, the effect in McElhone Street has been, apart from increased traffic, a more disturbing and dangerous increase in speeding traffic (notwithstanding a 40k speed limit). Wheelspin marks abound at either end of our stretch of narrow street and it seems every motorist in a hurry uses it as a racetrack. Many rear vision mirrors are knocked off parked cars in the process.

This street is the only pedestrian route between Kings Cross and Woolloomooloo, so it is heavily used. Further, Australia's oldest childcare centre is located at the corner of Reid Street so high numbers of parents with children use the street.

The pavements are also very narrow and are blocked by parking meters and street signs to the extent that most parents with pushchairs, and people in wheelchairs, and many pedestrians, use the roadway.

The street is also one of the few egresses onto William Street and the evening blockages on Bourke and Palmer Streets into William generate an overflow of 'ratrunners' in McElhone Street, often generating long queues during the evening peak. Many of these vehicles execute an illegal left turn into William, crossing several lanes to enter the Kings Cross Tunnel, meanwhile worsening the congestion in McElhone as they wait for these several lanes of William Street to become free. Considering the massive roadworks being undertaken in the area by the RTA, it is astounding that this traffic anomaly has been left to run. One supposes this is because all the changes have been driven by tunnel funnelling priorities rather than sensible traffic planning.

Recommendation: The traffic island on William Street separating the KX tunnel from the KX entry ramp should be extended to prevent the illegal and dangerous left turns into the KX tunnel from McElhone Street. (see map)

2 (c) Brougham Lane carries all traffic from Kings Cross into Woolloomooloo PLUS all the pedestrian traffic. The lane is extremely narrow and there are no footpaths. Pedestrian/vehicle conflicts in this lane are becoming more frequent and more dangerous given the greater number of vehicles racing through the Woolloomooloo 'short cut' to the Harbour crossings.

Residents of McElhone street approached Council to fix the problem, asking that Brougham Lane be converted into a shared zone with four raised thresholds at its intersections with Victoria Street, Brougham Street and McElhone Street, with prominent signage and a very low speed limit. (see map)

We also asked for traffic calming devices in McElhone Street north of Brougham Lane, to slow speeding traffic. Speed humps already exist closer to the childcare Centre but more are now needed due to the effects of the CCT.

Instead, Council Engineers have now responded by informing me that " parking (will be) removed on the eastern side of McElhone street north of Brougham Lane to comply with the Australian Road Rules."

Residents and businesses are furious and are serious about blockading the street if this inappropriate measure is enforced.

The measure is inappropriate because it would merely open up the street to further speeding. The removal of parked cars would also completely expose pedestrians to this dangerous traffic.

Opening up McElhone Street would also tend to draw more traffic down Brougham Lane, and encourage more evening peak 'ratrunners' to make the illegal turn into William St and the KX tunnel. It would only worsen the very problem it purports to fix.

The hairdresser and other businesses near the corner of Brougham Lane and McElhone street depend on this close parking for its customers, many of whom are elderly.

Residents, who include parents with young children, and single women, would be forced to park at night in the depths of Wolloomooloo and they have justified concerns that they will be attacked and mugged while walking great distances between parking spot and home. None of the occupied dwellings has a garage.

Furthermore their distantly-parked cars would be at far greater risk of break-ins and vandalism, both extremely common in this area (refer KX Police).

This stretch of street is used by Residential Parking Permit holders for Council 'Area 28' who live in other streets including William Street, and is a one-hour parking zone serving nearby businesses and Kings Cross. Simply removing the parking is a body-blow to both locals and businesses. Council also intends to extend the metered parking across the road (not available to residents) to a seven days a week basis thus removing residents' weekend parking 'safety valve'.

Unfortunately we find this is typical of Council's heavy-handed contempt of residents, despite Clover Moore's constant assertions that she is representing residents in this area. There are no traffic counts being done on these streets despite a commitment by Council and the RTA to conduct traffic studies pre- and post-CCT.

Recommendation: that Brougham Lane be converted into a shared zone with four raised thresholds at its intersections with Victoria Street, Brougham Street and McElhone Street, with prominent signage and a lowered speed limit.

We also ask for traffic calming devices in McElhone Street north of Brougham Lane, to slow speeding traffic. The devices should not reduce the already limited parking. (See map)

3. CCT traffic Impacts on Woolloomooloo

The left-hand turn from SJY Crescent to the Cahill Expressway has been artificially blocked but a huge proportion of traffic disobeys the Right Turn Only sign and executes an illegal left -- except for a few days when a Police Officer was placed at the intersection (presumably at public expense, an officer being paid full-time to force vehicles into the privately owned CCT).

The only way to enforce the Right Turn Only will be with a red light camera as the roadway must be kept open for traffic progressing across the intersection from CWR, and cannot be physically blocked.

In effect, motorists will then be fined for not using the CCT. The scale of civil disobedience evident at this intersection is atypical of Sydney drivers and an indication of the inappropriateness of this clumsy tunnel-funnelling measure.

Further, the left turn from SJY to the City/harbour crossings could be easily reinstated with few traffic impacts as the traffic lights already stop CWR traffic in favour of SJY traffic turning right into CWR.

Recommendation: That Palmer Street/Sir John Young Crescent be re-opened to traffic accessing the Harbour tunnels.

3 (a) Bourke Street closure

The closure of Bourke Street South at William has made it far more difficult to get anywhere in that direction by car from Woolloomooloo. Our only exit south is now via Crown Street which is very congested and narrow. Its intersections with William and Oxford are extremely steep, dangerous and slow because left-turn, right-turn, through traffic and pedestrians all get a simultaneous green light.

The arguments for the Bourke Street closure are extremely flimsy -- the RTA public consultation on the matter never once presented an open-option. People were given a choice of three options to access the Eastern Distributor (ED) including the unpopular 'G-Loop' via William, Palmer, Cathedral and Bourke, which they voted against. All three options had Bourke Street closed, but a separate motion from the floor during a Woolloomooloo public meeting produced a clear 'no' vote to the Bourke St closure. This has been ignored.

The RTA uses false argument to justify the closures. They say allowing access across William to the ED would slow traffic on William Street. Why this concerns them escapes me as all their other measures, including the closure of Druitt St and the narrowing of William St, are designed for the opposite effect, tunnel-funnelling.

In any case the delay would be minimal for two reasons: First, the pedestrian cycle across William will cause stoppage anyway, during which vehicles could also make the South/North crossing. Second, opening Bourke Street to the ED would reduce traffic and congestion on William as all the extra traffic that would cross William at Bourke now has to detour via William anyway and so would be REMOVED from William street, mitigating the problem. None of the pro-closure arguments take this into account.

The closure does not even benefit East Sydney generally -- all the traffic diverted from that end of Bourke St has to use equally residential Stanley Street or Liverpool Street so there is no net gain. None of the pro-closure arguments take this into account.

In addition, all traffic from that part of Darlinghurst/East Sydney to the ED now has to use long, complex, congested detours (see map), thus increasing kilometres travelled and causing extra pollution. SCEGGS School likes the closure but two communities suffer as a result. Locals pay higher taxi fares and emergency vehicles take longer to access neighbouring suburbs.

A large majority of local communities oppose the closure as evidenced by comparative attendances at public meetings and two extensive petitions. Ask Fiona Court from the RTA -- she has seen the numbers.

Recommendation: That Bourke Street be re-opened at William Street south.

4. PPP planning flaws

The need for separate tolling of the ED and the CCT has produced glaring flaws in the CCT concept, flaws that need not have occurred if both projects were owned by the State or even by the same private consortium. Now there are two eastern portals side-by-side at Woolloomooloo, one for the ED and one for the CCT, with separate tolling -- a clear duplication of assets and a waste of real estate. Presumably this precluded any room for a north-to-east portal to the CCT.

As a result, the morning peak can travel underground to the City and North Shore but the returning evening peak is disgorged into the streets of Woolloomooloo.

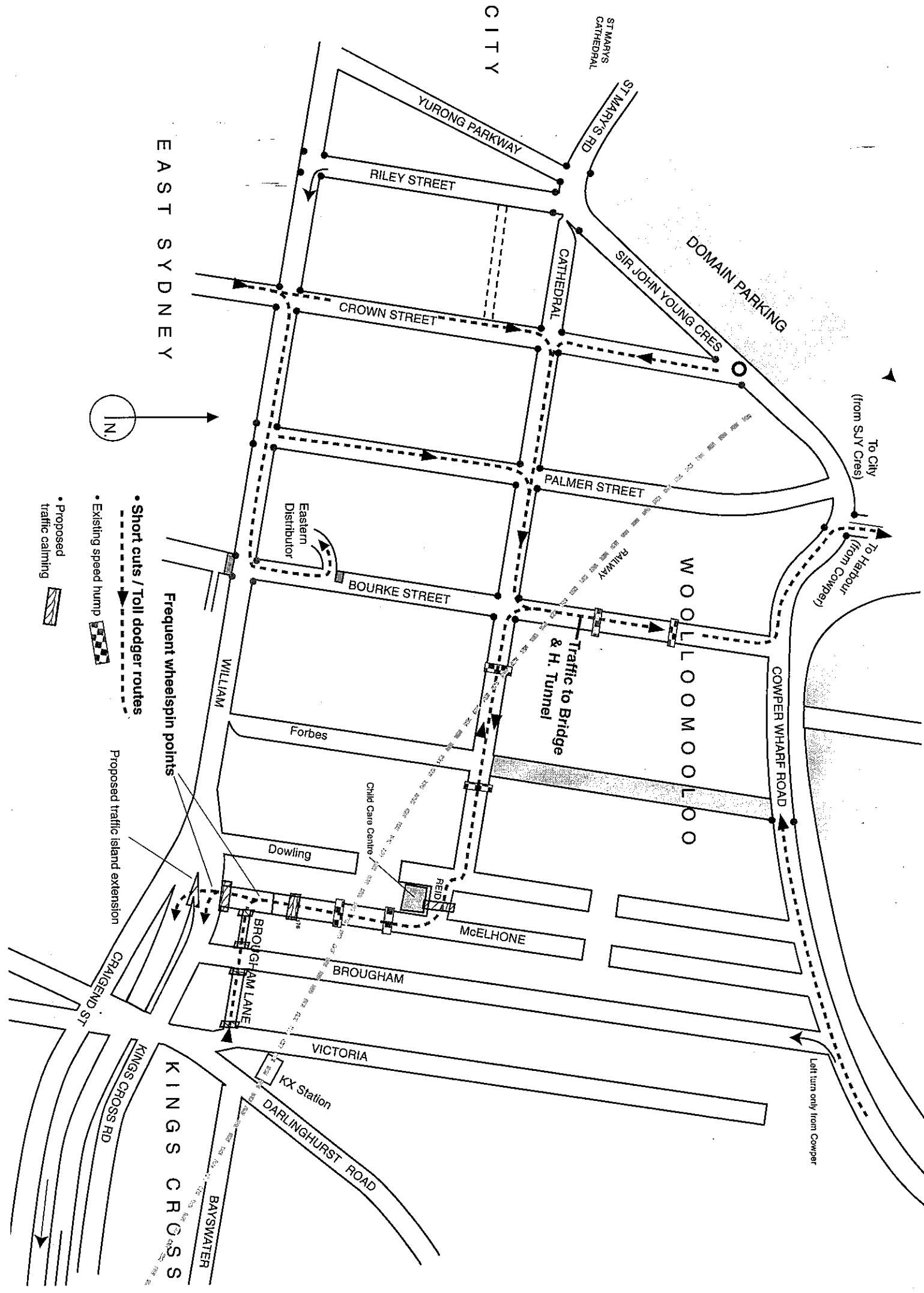
Because of the narrowing of William Street east of Palmer, Palmer Street banks up in the evening peak. The overflow detours via Cathedral to Bourke, both of which also bank up extensively. (I have the photos.) Some overflow also uses the Cathedral/McElhone run as previously mentioned.

While I personally support the narrowing of William Street and the introduction of bike and transit lanes, Woolloomooloo again suffers the backlash in the form of these evening peak bank-ups in residential streets. I see no way out of this anomaly except to build a new North-to-east portal into the CCT.

A compromise solution would be an extra traffic lane in William east of Palmer. Perhaps the bike and bus lane could be shared from that point as is the case in the CBD.

Recommendation: A north-to-east underground portal should be built into the CCT. Alternatively, an extra traffic lane should be provided in William street east-bound from Palmer Street to relieve back-ups in Woolloomooloo. This could be achieved by a shared cycle/bus lane for that stretch only.

Yours sincerely,



EAST SYDNEY

CITY



• Short cuts / Toll dodger routes

• Existing speed hump

• Proposed traffic calming

Proposed traffic island extension

Frequent wheelspin points

KING'S CROSS

KING'S CROSS RD

BAYSWATER

DARLINGHURST ROAD

KX Station

VICTORIA

BROUGHAM

BROUGHAM LANE

McELHONE

Chile Care Centre

DOWLING

Forbes

WILLIAM

BOURKE STREET

Eastern Distributor

Traffic to Bridge & H. Tunnel

RAILWAY

PALMER STREET

WOOLLOOMOOLOO

COWPER WHARF ROAD

Left turn only from Cowper

To Harbour (from Cowper)

To City (from SJY Cres)

DOMAIN PARKING

SIR JOHN YOUNG CRES

ST MARY'S CATHEDRAL

ST MARY'S CATHEDRAL

YURONG PARKWAY

RILEY STREET

CROWN STREET

CATHEDRAL