

## **INQUIRY INTO CROSS CITY TUNNEL**

Organisation:

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Theme:

Summary

## **Submission to the Cross City Tunnel Inquiry**

**Norman L Thompson**

**18 January 2006**

I am a member of the Darlinghurst Residents Action Group and the Darlinghurst Business Partnership. However, this is a private submission and only contains my personal views.

There are three main points I plan to cover in this submission: The Cross City Tunnel as a public – private partnership, the consultation process about the CCT with the residents in eastern Sydney and the traffic chaos caused by the street closures and changes associated with the tunnel.

### **Public – Private Partnerships**

Now that we have seen most of the details of the contract between the RTA and the Cross City Motorway consortium, we see that this public – private partnership has been a disaster for the public.

Rather than a situation where the consortium is taking the risks, these risks have been put back on the public. The public pays as traffic is funneled into the tunnel due to street changes, the government appears to shoulder the risks if traffic numbers aren't adequate and the consortium stands to make enormous profits.

Certain government officials argue that private companies can build and maintain infrastructure more efficiently and cheaply than can the government. If this is correct, it is an indictment on the competence of our government.

Had this tunnel been built by the government the tolls would have been lower since there was no private company wanting to make huge profits. Our publicly owned streets would remain open to all citizens since there would be no need to increase traffic through the tunnel to ensure profits for the Motorway consortium.

I hope one recommendation from your committee will be that our future infrastructure projects should be built and owned by the government.

## **Consultation with Residents in eastern Sydney**

I bought a house and moved into Darlinghurst approximately five years ago. During that entire period I only heard of two consultation meetings about the Cross City Tunnel.

The first was organised by South Sydney Council and held at the Millennium Hotel in Kings Cross. I attended this meeting and almost the entire discussion focused on filtration of the tunnel's stacks. I'm certain there was no discussion of any street closures or street changes at that time.

The only other meeting of which I later became aware was one held in Woolloomooloo about the best way for traffic to enter the Eastern Distributor at Bourke Street. I was not notified of this meeting, and my neighbours tell me they weren't as well. I understand only certain areas of East Sydney and Woolloomooloo were letter boxed. It was only after the meeting had occurred that I heard of it.

More importantly we were never consulted on the street changes at "Queens Cross" – the top of Kings Cross where Darlinghurst Road and Victoria Street cross. It was only after the confidential papers were released in late 2005 that we found out about these changes.

I find this lack of consultation by the City of Sydney and RTA on street changes which have such a negative impact on traffic amazing. It is totally inappropriate to make such changes without community input before they can take place.

## **Impact of Traffic Changes**

The roadworks narrowing several streets in the "Queens Cross" area began a few months ago. These are creating total chaos during peak hour and most likely will become even worse when school holidays are over. Craigend Street heading west is now 3 lanes. Traffic from the eastern suburbs which uses Craigend heading for Kings Cross, Potts Point, Elizabeth Bay and Woolloomooloo has to turn from a lane that has parking meters almost to the traffic lights, allowing two cars per set of lights to turn. Journeys in this area have doubled because of the street narrowing. It has increased taxi fares and the buses run late due to the traffic backed up in peak hour.

The closure of Bourke Street south at William Street by the RTA at the request of the Lord Mayor has exacerbated the problem for residents in our area. This closure denies residents in East Sydney, Darlinghurst and Paddington important access to William Street, the City and Woolloomooloo. In addition, businesses are suffering and we stand to lose important services in our part of the city.

I can't understand how a few people can close publicly owned streets with little consultation of the **broader** community and large scale traffic studies.

Obviously all these street changes and street closures must be reversed for the good of the entire community.

Norman L Thompson