

INQUIRY INTO CROSS CITY TUNNEL

Organisation: Owners Corporation
Name: Mr Richard Gration
Position: Chairman
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Date Received: 8/01/2006

Theme:

Summary:

Consultation with the community ahead of local road closures and other traffic changes was minimal and there was a lack of any clear information provided to residents about the changes being considered and what the practical consequences of those changes would be.

The views of residents put forward during the poorly advertised and minimal community consultations that did occur appear to have been largely ignored, particularly in relation to the closures of the northbound harbour crossing access points.

We invite the Inquiry to find that:

1. the community consultation process was inadequate and did not provide residents with either sufficient facts on which to form a view or sufficient opportunity to express their views;
2. the views of the community that were expressed were largely ignored; and
3. the primary motivation of the closures was not the benefit of the local community but to increase profits by funnelling traffic into the Cross City Tunnel through forced local road closures.

**SUBMISISON TO NSW PARLIAMENT JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE
INQUIRY INTO THE CROSS CITY TUNNEL**

Organisation: Owners Corporation of Strata Plan 58068 (the Horizon)

Name: Mr Richard Gratton

Position: Chairman

Introduction

The Horizon (SP58068) is located at 184 Forbes Street, Darlinghurst and has 260 apartments and about 500 residents. The Executive Committee of the Horizon makes this submission to the Inquiry on behalf of the residents and owners of the Horizon.

This submission is directed towards Terms of Reference 1(b):

the extent to which the substance of the Cross City Tunnel contract was determined through community consultation processes,

Background

Many Horizon residents have found that the closure in August 2005 of Bourke Street on the southern side of William Street makes it extremely inconvenient and awkward to access the Eastern Distributor southbound onramp, particularly during peak traffic periods.

Residents are also no longer able to access the harbour crossings northbound by any reasonably practicable route. Residents are forced to either travel a considerable distance in the opposite direction back through the secondary streets of Paddington to be able to enter the eastern entrance of the Cross City Tunnel or to travel via Macquarie Street in the city causing significant increases in travel time and adding to the considerable congestion which now plagues Macquarie Street.

Bourke Street Closure

There seems to be little logic in having Bourke Street closed on the southern side of William Street as it is also closed in the northbound direction 50 metres to the other side of William Street (after the Eastern Distributor onramp) and there could therefore be no danger of cars using Bourke Street as a toll avoidance "rat run" through to the Cowper Wharf Road access to the Harbour Bridge or Harbour Tunnel. If the intersection were reopened on the southern side, any traffic heading northbound on Bourke Street and crossing William Street would still be forced onto the southbound Eastern distributor.

Similarly it is unnecessary and inconvenient when coming off the Kings Cross exit at the start of the Eastern Distributor southbound (ie. at the end of the Cahill Expressway) not being able to turn left into Cathedral Street and then right into Bourke Street to be able to access Darlinghurst. Instead, cars are forced to travel to William Street, turn left, and then take the Kings Cross exit ramp up to Victoria Street. Victoria Street is often very busy with cars, people and other congestion and the "sidewalk cafe ambience" is detrimentally affected by having heavy traffic along that road. This problem could be easily rectified by removing the current closure and allowing traffic heading southbound on Bourke St to cross over William Street and continue along Bourke.

The closure also prevents traffic head west along William Street from turning left into Bourke Street and is having a significant detrimental affect on local businesses in that area. For example, Carroll's Hardware store at 161-165 William Street is now difficult to access for customers driving from Potts Point, Elizabeth Bay, Rushcutters Bay and Paddington and the store owner, Mr Peter Carroll, has stated that he is facing a significant threat of closure. This will leave the entire area of East Sydney through to Rushcutters Bay without a hardware store.

Closure of Access to Northbound Harbour Crossings

The closure of access from Palmer Street and Sir John Young Crescent to the northbound harbour crossings have now made travel from the East Sydney and Darlinghurst areas to the northern side of the harbour extremely difficult and awkward. For those residents of the Horizon working on the northern side, it has substantially increased their travel time each day, in some cases more than doubling the time it takes for them to get to work.

The only rationale for the closures of the northbound harbour crossing access points appears to be to force vehicles into the Cross City Tunnel. While this may be an understandable objective in respect of vehicles travelling in from the suburbs further east than Rushcutters Bay, it has made the journey to the northern side of the harbour intolerable for residents who live in the East Sydney and Darlinghurst area. It has had the effect of bringing Macquarie Street in the CBD to an almost complete standstill during the morning and afternoon peak traffic periods as all traffic coming from the East Sydney and Darlinghurst areas is forced onto Macquarie Street in order to access the harbour crossings.

Consultation with the Community

In our view, the consultation with the community by the RTA and the CCT consortium ahead of the local road closures and other traffic changes was minimal and there was a lack of any clear information provided to residents about the changes being considered and what the practical consequences of those changes would be.

Further, the views of residents put forward during the poorly advertised and minimal community consultations that did occur appear to have been largely ignored, particularly in relation to the closures of the northbound harbour crossing access points.

With the lack of any apparent rationale for the closure of Bourke Street on the southern side of William Street and the only apparent rationale for the closure of the Palmer Street and Sir John Young Crescent accesses to the harbour crossings being to force traffic coming from the Eastern suburbs into the Cross City Tunnel, we would invite the Inquiry to find that:

1. the community consultation process was inadequate and did not provide residents with either sufficient facts on which to form a view or sufficient opportunity to express their views;
2. the views of the community that were expressed were largely ignored; and
3. the primary motivation of the closures was not the benefit of the local community but to increase profits for the CCT consortium by funnelling traffic into the Cross City Tunnel through forced local road closures.

Community Consultation Going Forward

I wrote to the RTA on 28 September 2005 expressing concerns about the road closures that had occurred in connection with the opening of the Cross City Tunnel. On 23 December

2005 I received a reply from Mr Garry Humphrey, General Manager, Motorway Construction stating:

The RTA has undertaken to closely monitor this arrangement and conduct a review of the measures installed, six months after the CCT opens to traffic.

However, we are very concerned that the road and footpath works commenced in January 2006 on the southern side William Street, particularly at the intersection of Bourke and William Streets will make the road closures that have occurred to date permanent and that they will therefore become a "fait accompli", without the promised monitoring and review having taken place.

I would therefore invite the Inquiry to recommend that:

1. the upgrade of William Street in the vicinity of the intersection with Bourke Street not proceed until after the RTA has completed its review of the measures already installed in connection with the Cross City Tunnel and has held further community consultations regarding its findings and its proposed response or changes to those measures.

I would be happy to provide you with more detailed information or to elaborate further on any of the issues raised in this submission. Please feel free to contact me at the telephone numbers or email address at the top of this submission.



Richard Gratton
Chairman, Owners Corporation
Horizon Apartments