

**Submission
No 5**

INQUIRY INTO CROSS CITY TUNNEL

Organisation:

Name: Mr Alan Limbury

Telephone:

Date Received: 15/12/2005

Theme:

Summary

Submission to the NSW Parliamentary Enquiry into the Cross City Tunnel

This submission respectfully asks this enquiry to find that there is no justification for continued denial of direct access to the Harbour Tunnel for traffic traveling north along Sir John Young Crescent, Woolloomooloo and to recommend to the Government that such access be restored immediately.

Such traffic is presently directed, at the intersection with Cowper Wharf Road, to turn right, away from the newly excavated lane under the Art Gallery overbridge that leads directly to the Harbour Tunnel.

There are two grounds upon which I submit such access should be restored:

- (1) the lower than expected traffic volumes on the CCT mean that it will be a very long time before there could possibly be a congestion problem, so access should be restored until any such problem arises;

- (2) the RTA has not demonstrated that there would be a congestion problem even at previously anticipated CCT traffic levels.

In an email dated 25 February 2005, Mr. Garry Humphrey, the spokesman for the RTA in dealing with the community, said:

“The RTA is not in a position to amend the current approved traffic arrangement.

* Traffic volumes would increase significantly on the ramp to the Cahill Expressway if this change were made. There is insufficient road capacity to safely accommodate these traffic volumes (between the Domain Tunnel and the Cahill Expressway/Macquarie Street exit point)”.¹

The dot point is presented as the explanation for the first sentence. Although, as we now know, the RTA had contracted with the CCT consortium to close certain connections to the tunnel², this was not the explanation presented by Mr. Humphrey. This submission therefore addresses the issue of alleged congestion.

At a meeting with me at Parliament House, arranged by my local member, Ms. Clover Moore MP, Mr. Humphrey refused to disclose the RTA’s modeling figures upon which his explanation was based. Compliance with an FOI request by Ms. Moore was estimated by the RTA to cost \$750, an amount I have been unwilling to pay for what I contend should be information freely available to the public.

I have therefore been unable to determine whether the RTA’s figures were derived from modeling conducted before the decision was made to widen the road by excavating the

¹ The full text of the email is set out later in this submission.

² In Submission No. 1 to this enquiry, the RTA said: “The Project Deed also nominates other traffic arrangements that CCM may be entitled to relief for if they are changed. These include the removal of traffic connections to the tunnel shown in the environmental impact statements...”

new lane. If so, they would be of no relevance to the present road configuration and the conclusion would be open that the RTA, through its spokesman, may have given the public misleading and incorrect information as to the reason for the closure.

Here is one of the explanations given by Mr. Humphrey (before the opening of the CCT), with my comments by way of interpolation:

“Access to Sydney Harbour Tunnel from Sir John Young Crescent – why hasn’t access been provided?”

There is limited space in the Sir John Young Crescent road corridor from immediately north of Palmer Street to the Domain Tunnel. Currently northbound traffic merge and weave in the corridor to gain access to the Domain Tunnel (and the Sydney Harbour Tunnel). These movements further reduce the capacity of the corridor.

[Comment: now that there is an additional lane and lane dividers have been installed to prevent merging and weaving, ‘currently’ this problem has disappeared].

Traffic forecasts have predicted that if there was no change to this situation, traffic congestion in the CCT and ED tunnels as well as nearby streets would result shortly after the CCT opens.

[Comment: (1) traffic volumes are well below the forecasts so there is presently no need to continue to deny access; (2) it remains to be established whether these forecasts took the newly excavated lane into account].

To address this problem, the RTA, in its Supplementary EIS, proposed:

- banning the right turn movement from Cowper Wharf Roadway to the Cahill Expressway (northbound).
- redirecting northbound traffic in Sir John Young Crescent to Macquarie Street only.

However, in response to strong concerns raised by the community during the Supplementary EIS exhibition period for access across the harbour from Woolloomooloo via the Sydney Harbour Tunnel, the RTA modified its proposal by introducing a new lane that would allow motorists in Cowper Wharf Roadway to access the Cahill Expressway directly. This lane would merge with the CCT (northbound) lane approaching the entrance to the Domain Tunnel.

[Comment: this makes it clear that merger between the new lane and the CCT lane is now acceptable to the RTA even at the previously anticipated traffic volumes].

However, due to the limited road space through the area, northbound traffic in Sir John Young Crescent remained restricted to Macquarie Street only.

[Comment: this is the critically important point that has not been substantiated publicly by the RTA. Specifically, the RTA has failed to answer the obvious question: why would use of the new lane for access to the Harbour Tunnel by traffic from Sir John Young Crescent create unacceptable congestion while traffic using the same new lane from Cowper Wharf Road (regulated by the same traffic light) would not?]

The approved arrangement is predicted to provide the following reduction in daily average traffic through Woolloomooloo (modelled in 2016):

Location	No CCT	With CCT
Sir John Young Cres (N of Palmer St)	42,720	18,040
Palmer Street (N of William St)	38,590	16,090
Bourke Street (S of Cathedral St)	13,340	8,870
Cowper Wharf Rd (E of Bourke St)	31,110	24,100

Traffic in Crown Street is predicted to be higher, increasing from 8,630 without CCT to 12,510 with CCT. However, traffic will remain much lower than the pre-Eastern Distributor traffic volume which were as high as 38,660 vehicles per day in 1996”.

[Comment: these figures are not shown to be relevant to the issue we are discussing. It is not a question of ‘with or without’ the CCT but whether, with the CCT, there would be unacceptable congestion by allowing the access requested].

In response to that explanation from Mr. Humphrey and noting that the RTA modelling took 2016 predictions into account, I posed to him the following questions, through Ms. Felicity Calvert of Clover Moore MP’s office:

1. Once the CCT opens, how many lanes of traffic (including the CCT) will there be in Sir John Young Crescent between Palmer Street and the intersection with Cowper Wharf Roadway?
2. As to each of those lanes, what will be the direction and permitted destination of traffic flow?
3. Will there be a traffic light regulating traffic from Sir John Young Crescent going to Cowper Wharf Roadway and traffic from Cowper Wharf Roadway going to the Domain tunnel?

4. Under the present plan whereby traffic from Sir John Young Crescent will not be allowed to alternate with traffic from Cowper Wharf Roadway in the newly constructed lane leading to the Domain Tunnel:
 - (a) what are the estimated volumes at various times of the day of traffic from Cowper Wharf Roadway merging with northbound traffic from the CCT approaching the entrance to the Domain Tunnel in each year until and including 2016?
 - (b) what are the estimated volumes at various times of the day of northbound traffic from the CCT merging with traffic from Cowper Wharf Roadway approaching the entrance to the Domain Tunnel in each year until and including 2016?
5. If traffic from Sir John Young Crescent were allowed to alternate with traffic from Cowper Wharf Roadway in the newly constructed lane leading to the Domain Tunnel:
 - (a) what are the estimated volumes at various times of the day of combined traffic from Cowper Wharf Roadway and Sir John Young Crescent merging with northbound traffic from the CCT approaching the entrance to the Domain Tunnel in each year until and including 2016?
 - (b) what are the estimated volumes at various times of the day of northbound traffic from the CCT merging with combined traffic from Cowper Wharf Roadway and Sir John Young Crescent approaching the entrance to the Domain Tunnel in each year until and including 2016?
6. At what predicted volume of traffic would the merger of northbound CCT traffic with other traffic approaching the entrance to the Domain Tunnel produce unacceptable congestion?
7. In what year is it estimated unacceptable congestion would be reached under each of the scenarios in 4 and 5 above? Would such congestion be limited to certain times of the day? If so, which?
8. If the RTA's traffic forecasts do not permit answers to any of the above questions to be given, upon what specific information and assumptions has the RTA decided not to permit access from Sir John Young Crescent to the Domain Tunnel via the newly constructed lane?
9. Will the RTA permit traffic from Sir John Young Crescent to use the newly constructed lane to the Domain Tunnel until the volume of traffic merging near the entrance to the Domain Tunnel approaches an unacceptable level of congestion?

10. If it is estimated that unacceptable congestion will occur only at certain times of the day, will the RTA permit traffic from Sir John Young Crescent to use the newly constructed lane to the Domain Tunnel at other times?

Mr Humphrey responded as follows:

"HUMPHREY Garry R" <Garry_HUMPHREY@rta.nsw.gov.au> 25/02/2005
8:11:32 pm >>>

Dear Felicity

Thanks for forwarding the community requests regarding access to the Harbour Bridge [sic] via the Cahill Expressway from Sir John Young Crescent. My apologies for the delay in responding.

To explain the currently approved project being constructed:

- § A right turn from Cowper Wharf Road will connect to the Cahill Expressway and Harbour Bridge. This right turn will not connect to the city (Macquarie Street).
- § There will be three lanes northbound on Sir John Young Crescent.
 - o The kerbside lane that connects to the city via Macquarie Street (and the Harbour Bridge via the Cahill Expressway).
 - o The exit lane from the Cross City Tunnel that connects to the Cahill Expressway and Macquarie Street.
 - o A third northbound lane from which traffic on Sir John Young Crescent can turn right into Cowper Wharf Road.
- § A set of traffic signals will direct traffic flow at the intersection of Sir John Young Crescent and Cowper Wharf Road.

We understand your request to have these signals alternate traffic flow such that Sir John Young Crescent traffic and Cowper Wharf Road traffic can each access the Harbour Bridge and Harbour Tunnel lanes.

The RTA is not in a position to amend the current approved traffic arrangement.

- § Traffic volumes would increase significantly on the ramp to the Cahill Expressway if this change were made. There is insufficient road capacity to safely accommodate these traffic volumes (between the Domain Tunnel and the Cahill Expressway/Macquarie Street exit point).
- § Traffic would queue back from the Cahill Expressway ramp. This would cause congestion at the portal exiting the Cross City Tunnel (possibly queuing traffic back into the tunnel).

§ Traffic would queue across the Cowper Wharf Road intersection. This would do two things -

1. Stop or reduce the right turn movement from Cowper Wharf Road.
2. Block traffic trying to turn right from SJYC into Cowper Wharf Road.

With the approved arrangement traffic flow can be regulated so that this does not occur. This is not possible with the suggested change.

Local area traffic management is an attempt to balance local and regional needs. Allowing access for Sir John Young Crescent traffic to the Cahill Expressway and the Harbour Tunnel will attract more regional traffic through Riley, Crown, Palmer Streets and Sir John Young Crescent.

We understand your question about night-time movements. During night-time (off peak) Woolloomooloo traffic can conveniently use Cowper Wharf Road to turn onto the Cahill Expressway. Access is available via Bourke Street for those living in the western section of Woolloomooloo.

Local access to the Cahill Expressway was provided as a result of community requests - via Bourke Street and the Cowper Wharf Road ramp. This provides the best overall outcome for residents and the travelling community.

I would be happy to meet with you to discuss this further. Please call me if you wish to arrange a time.

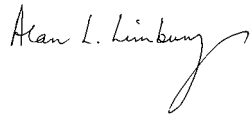
Regards
Garry Humphrey

Following this, a meeting was held at the Parliament House office of Ms. Clover Moore MP at which Mr. Humphrey said the issue of denial of access to the Harbour Tunnel from Sir John Young Crescent was 'not negotiable' and refused to provide the traffic modelling figures upon which his previous written explanations were based.

Accordingly, there has been no public substantiation of the claim that traffic would queue back from the Cahill Expressway ramp if access were allowed from Sir John Young Crescent to the Harbour tunnel.

It is respectfully submitted that the Parliamentary enquiry investigate this issue and determine whether there is any basis for the RTA's explanations and, if not, (a) whether the RTA has any legitimate ground for resisting making access available and (b) whether the RTA has misled the community as to the reasons for denying access.

I would be happy to appear before the Committee in elaboration of the above should the Committee so desire.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Alan L. Limbury". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping tail on the letter 'y'.

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