

## INQUIRY INTO CROSS CITY TUNNEL

Organisation:

Name: Mr John Oultram

Telephone:

Date Received: 18/01/2006

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Theme:

Summary

John Oultram,  
4/29-31 Waratah Street,  
Rushcutter's Bay,  
NSW 2011

JSC CROSS CITY TUNNEL

1 8 JAN 2006

RECEIVED

Joint Select Committee on the Cross City Tunnel,  
Parliament of New South Wales,  
Parliament House  
Macquarie Street  
Sydney,  
NSW 2000

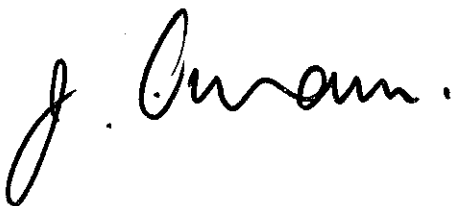
Attention: Rachel Simpson

Dear Sirs,

**Re: Inquiry into the Cross City Tunnel**

Further to your letter dated 8 December 2006 please find enclosed a written submission on the above

Yours faithfully,



John Oultram

ENCLS

## **Inquiry into the Cross City Tunnel**

Name: John Oultram

Address: 4/29-31 Waratah Street  
Rushcutter's Bay  
NSW 2011

To: Joint Select Committee on the Cross City Tunnel

### **1.0 Introduction**

1. Thank you for your letter dated 8 December 2005. The following is a submission based on the terms of reference noted in the attachment.

### **2.0 Background**

2.1 I have been a resident at the above since June 1999. When the Cross City Tunnel (CCT) was mooted I joined the local residents group CCTAG in opposition to many aspects of the scheme. I supported the tunnel in principle and appreciated the benefits to traffic flows in the city centre and William Street.

2.2 Following the approval of the amended plans I joined the Community Liason Group (CLG) and was a member of this committee from inception till August 2005 when I resigned. I also attended several sub committees that were formed under the CLG to address issues such as the portal design, safety and traffic movement.

2.3 I considered that a major flaw in the proposal was that, unlike other tunnel projects, the CCT did not discharge at the eastern end onto another motorway system but onto an existing suburban road system. No upgrading was planned beyond the tunnel. It was apparent that the tunnel and its construction would have a major, and negative, impact on the area where I lived.

2.4 The following comments relate only to my own experience and views and do not seek to represent the views of other members of CCTAG or the CLG. I have only addressed the terms of reference that are relevant to my experience/involvement. The tunnel consortium is referred to as BHBB.

2.5 Although much of the community consultation process was fruitless, the existence of the CLG's over the whole of the project period is to be applauded. At least there was some community knowledge of what was happening.

### 3.0 Terms of Reference

a. I have no knowledge of the negotiation process

b. Community Consultation and CCT Contract

3.2 Once the tunnel project was unveiled, I examined the proposals at the local library and attended an RTA presentation on the tunnel details. The first scheme had the tunnel exit via the existing Kings Cross Tunnel. It was clear from the plans that little consideration had been given to the design beyond the western mouth of the Kings Cross tunnel and that the impact on Rushcutter's Bay and beyond had been given no attention. I raised these points at a public meeting to the two representatives of the RTA. The only issue they responded to was the idea that speed cameras be placed at the portal. This was not done and the speed in the tunnel was later raised to 80kn/h. It was revealed on questioning that it was the intent to allow fumes from the tunnel to be funnelled, untreated, out of the eastern portals.

3.3 Following public consultation an amended scheme was brought forward with a separate tunnel for the CCT and the existing Kings Cross tunnel retained. This was presented as a better option, but it was clear that the impact on Rushcutter's Bay would be considerably worse. It is not credible that this scheme was the result of the public consultation process but was done at the behest of the tunnel consortium.

3.4 This scheme was advertised and amended again with an additional ramp access from Ward Avenue and the bridge feature moved from the western side of the Kings Cross Tunnel to the east. The fumes from the tunnel were not to be expelled from the tunnel mouth. It was rumoured at the time that this had been done in the face of legal action from the residents of Altair, the building above the eastern portal.

3.5 I attended a presentation of this scheme arranged by Clover Moore. I made strong comments opposing the changes as the tunnel had now expanded by five lanes and the traffic speed increased to 80km/h. The impact on Rushcutter's Bay in terms of traffic congestion, noise, safety and construction barely merited a mention. The RTA did not even have the current plans on display. I found their behaviour arrogant and dismissive and their lack of concern over the impact of the tunnel astonishing.

3.6 In my opinion this public consultation process did not provide for any serious benefit to the local community and the impact of the tunnel at the eastern end was probably multiplied several fold.

3.7 It is my opinion that the RTA did not act in the public interest and that their public presentation of the scheme was disingenuous and self serving.

c. I have no knowledge of the contract process

d. I have no comment on this in general terms only in consideration of the release of information to the CLG as noted below

e. Communications and Accountability

3.8 One serious incident merits recording in this regard.

3.9 During the course of the tunnel construction it was proposed to tunnel from the eastern portal. This was put to the CLG in a very disguised manner but BHBB admitted it was to speed the tunnel process.

3.10 This was vehemently opposed by the CLG. Considering the tunnel was sold to the public on "no above ground works", I immediately wrote to DIPNR and the Minister requesting they reject this, indicating that such a change from the approved method should require public advertising.

3.11 Subsequently I received a call from BHBB asking whether I could meet to discuss the matter. I was outraged that the content of my letter was passed to them without any contact coming from DIPNR or the Minister's office. It was a serious breach of trust and I complained to the Minister's office.

3.12 At a meeting with four CLG members it was made clear to BHBB that the proposal would be opposed and the matter was dropped. I received confirmation of this from the Minister's office several weeks later.

g. Other related matters

### **Post Approval Community Consultation**

3.10 Following approval of the tunnel I joined the CLG in the hope that some input from the local community might generate positive changes to the approved scheme.

3.11 I attended nearly all the CLG meetings. I also attended many sub meetings to discuss:

- The design of the portal
- Traffic movement and safety

3.12 From the outset it became clear that the:

- Little consideration would be given to community views by the RTA and its consultants
- RTA would not provide information willingly
- CLG was being used as a sign off for the various management construction plans (ECMS's)
- RTA would give no consideration to the safety and traffic issues raised by the CLG
- No further local traffic studies would be carried out apart from those in the conditions of approval
- No changes to the approved scheme would be supported by the RTA
- There would be little design development to the eastern portal and approaches

3.13 The meetings were attended by an outside planning consultant and DIPNR but the role of these seemed limited and restricted.

3.14 In contrast was the attitude of BHBB. They were blunt in terms of the information they would release. Changes would cost money and somebody would have to pay for them. It was clear that if there was a benefit that was in their remit to provide they would do so.

3.15 The process was frustrating and wearing. There was constant friction and the meetings were often heated. Several members resigned during the process and it was apparent that other CLG groups had similar concerns. The junior staff of the RTA were polite and easy to deal with but were obviously limited in their role. No decision, or information was provided without the consent of senior staff. The senior RTA representative was unhelpful, rude, dismissive and scornful of the community concerns. The RTA's lack of concern over basic safety and lack of knowledge of local traffic issues was astounding.

3.16 Despite this, the community achieved some positive changes in the scheme:

- The design of the tunnels portals was improved
- The proposal to tunnel from the eastern portal was halted

3.17 This took an immense amount of time and effort from the community group. The latter took a letter to the minister (see above). However, there were many instances where community feedback over the construction process or upcoming works was acted upon to the benefit of the project.

3.18 Following the appointment of Clover Moore as Mayor of the City of Sydney there was a considerable increase in the attention given to community concerns and the issues were thrown open to a wider audience. From this:

- A safety barrier was installed along Waratah Street
- The design of the Ward Avenue intersection was improved

3.19 I still consider that traffic movement at the eastern tunnel portal is dangerous and that the issues raised in the RTA's own analysis of this have not been addressed.

3.20 The CLG became largely redundant at this point.

3.21 I resigned in April 2004 in frustration at the significant drop in safety that had occurred at the tunnel site due to the speeding up of the work to meet the announced opening date. The RTA did not seem to share any of the concerns raised at that time. As an example, their representative was unable to confirm if there were any standards relating to scabbled road surfaces, or changes in road levels for the safety of motorcycles or bicycles. BHBB assumed responsibility for correspondence over these issues.

3.22 I consider that the RTA did not act in the public interest in their management or handling of tunnel project.

3.33 The concept of the CLG's is sound but only if serious consideration is give to the issues raised by the community and the government agency overseeing the project is sitting on the community side of the table.

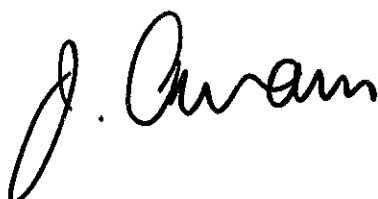
#### **4.0 RTA involvement of privately funded road projects**

4.1 The involvement of the RTA in this type of project in the manner demonstrated above is fatally flawed from the aspect of protecting the public interest and ensuring that issues that are raised by effected communities are addressed. By becoming a proponent of the scheme the RTA are too concerned with protecting their own interests and those of the private consortium particularly where their funding is linked to use and traffic calculations become commercial in confidence. The quality of the design, consideration of traffic impacts outside of the project zone and the safety of the road are inevitably compromised.

4.2 It is clear from the concern over road closures following the opening of the CCT that undue consideration was given to ensuring that the tunnel was a commercial success rather than a good piece of panning that served the public.

4.3 The RTA's involvement should be limited to road planning, safety, design excellence, buildability construction monitoring and the like.

4.4 The RTA should be the keeper's of the public interest not of the commercial interests of private companies

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Oultram'. The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial 'J'.