

INQUIRY INTO WINDSOR BRIDGE REPLACEMENT PROJECT

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SUBMISSION TO THE UPPER HOUSE INQUIRY
INTO THE WINDSOR BRIDGE REPLACEMENT
PROJECT

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BACKGROUND

This submission is submitted from a long term resident of the Hawkesbury as an individual who will be affected by the proposed bridge replacement. I am not trying to present technical argument, but rather a common sense approach to the problem.

I am a retired civil engineer who has spent over forty years working in local government engineering. I have been engaged in many aspects of local government engineering including design, construction and maintenance of roads, bridges, drainage and other assets, traffic planning, flood mapping, and development and planning, including reviewing Development Control Plans issued by the NSW Department of Planning and assisting UrbanGrowth (formerly Landcom) develop engineering standards for development within the North West Growth Centre, and more specifically, within the Blacktown Local Government Area..

I live at Colo Heights. My parents bought this property in 1969 as a weekend retreat. The family built a house on the property and in 1990 I purchased the property from my mother following my father's death, and moved there permanently.

I have watched western Sydney expand over the ensuing years, and the once pleasant daily commute from Colo Heights to Blacktown become a struggle against increasing traffic and sub-standard infrastructure. Upgrades to Windsor Rd and Richmond Rd have helped, however the traffic congestion through Windsor has increased significantly over the last few years to the point where queues of up to five kilometres long during peak times are not uncommon.

SUMMARY

It does not take an expert to see that the current proposal to replace the existing bridge, in basically its existing location, will not fix Windsor's traffic problems, will have little effect on providing a flood free route to the north west of Windsor, does not provide for future development in the area, and will forever RUIN the oldest public square in Australia.

The reports back up these outcomes, yet common sense has not prevailed. A bypass of Windsor and Thompson Square is the OBVIOUS solution.

TRAFFIC

I have been travelling by motor vehicle over the Windsor bridge, twice a day, almost daily, for the past twenty seven years. I KNOW what the traffic delays are. Never mind the reports, never mind the modelling, I have lived it. The current traffic situation through Windsor cannot cope with the current traffic volumes, let alone the obvious increase which will occur with time.

The southbound morning peak is usually at least a few kilometres long, and regularly traffic banks back Wilberforce Rd as far as King Rd, a distance of six kilometres. No accidents, no breakdowns, no reason except traffic volumes. Just a forty minute delay, or longer, to travel what should take a matter of minutes.

The afternoon westbound traffic into Windsor can be even worse. Even after the completion of the flood free route via the Jim Anderson bridge, traffic volumes continued to grow and delays across the McGraths Hill flat to Windsor continue to grow. Currently, the afternoon peak regularly banks up on Windsor Rd from Park Rd, a distance of four kilometres, but often even further. And due to the addition of traffic from Pitt Town Rd and others, the time delay can be in excess of an hour to clear the delay. A delay of only a half hour during the afternoon peak is considered a “good run”!

I am not going to enter into a lengthy technical argument, but using my extensive knowledge of traffic planning, I can assure you the current proposal will not “fix” these traffic issues. The delays modelled are wrong. Just drive the roads on any day and you will see the current delays have been understated.

Traffic capacity, given that sufficient lanes are provided, is totally dependant on the intersections within the traffic network. The current proposal does little in the way of reducing the number or type of intersections on either side of the proposed bridge. The current proposal will not fix even the current traffic issues in the area, let alone make any allowance for increases in traffic volume with time.

The obvious long term solution to the existing Windsor traffic issues are to provide a bypass for traffic heading across the Hawkesbury and travelling to the northwest.

FLOODING

I have the UBD street directory open beside me.....Map 86.

In red letters, beside the Windsor Bridge, it says “Road Subject to Flooding”.

Further along, beside both Wilberforce Rd and Freemans Reach Rd, again in red letters, it says “Road Subject to Flooding”.

Back towards McGraths Hill, again in red letters, “Road Subject to Flooding”

Again, plain common sense will tell you that no matter how high Windsor Bridge is built, if the roads on either side of the bridge are below flood level, the route will be cut.

The standard usually adopted for any main road is for flood free access up to the 100 year ARI Flood level as a minimum. Just check any standard publication such as “Australian Rainfall and Runoff”, “Floodplain Development Manual”, or any standard Development Control Plan

Why don't the people of the Hawkesbury deserve the same standard as everywhere else in NSW?

Why aren't we looking to the future needs of the area?

Other than the F1, the Putty Rd is the only alternative route north from Sydney. Surely it makes sense to design to at least allow for future floodproofing of this route? A bypass bridge built to a 100 year flood level, with roads which can at least be raised above the flood levels in the future, should be the minimum considered.

FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

Unfortunately, Sydney is not going to stop growing anytime in the immediate future. Even given the current rate of infill development to the northwest of Windsor, traffic volumes are only going to increase. No Public Transport is likely to be provided anytime in the near future. The Putty Rd provides an alternative northern route for Sydneysiders, particularly on long weekends and other times when the F1 Freeway is busy. The use of this alternative route north will continue to grow as traffic on the F1 increases. Sand mining at Tinda Creek is likely to provide construction sand for Sydney's development for years to come. The large numbers of trucks transporting sand will continue to increase.

The current bridge proposal will not fix existing traffic issues, let alone prepare for the future.

I recently climbed the Sydney Harbour Bridge. A great experience. Bradfield designed for six lanes of motor vehicle traffic at a time when two would have easily catered for the existing vehicle traffic. THAT'S PLANNING! Even so, in less than 100 years, we have had to build a tunnel under the harbour, and more crossings are needed now.

Plan for the future!

Why channel all the traffic into Windsor just to cross the Hawkesbury River? This can be done elsewhere. A bypass is the common sense solution to any Windsor Bridge Replacement.

HERITAGE

Again, I do not intend to try and present a detailed heritage argument. This I can safely leave to the experts.

But again, common sense must surely show the existing Option to have the worst possible heritage outcomes.

Just stand in the middle of Thompson Square. Block out the noise of the traffic heading over Windsor Bridge (particularly the trucks), and imagine the people moving about are in appropriate attire. Look at every building surrounding the Square. You are looking back in time. Anyone can see that these buildings are essentially as built almost two centuries ago. The Oldest Public Square in Australia!!!! Older than Port Arthur in Tasmania!

What would we say if the Tasmanian Government planned to build a highway through Port Arthur Historic Site?

The existing bridge, itself Heritage listed, and capable of continuing to carry light traffic for many years to come. Why not leave it? If a sensible bypass is provided, and a load limit imposed, traffic volumes through the square can again be reduced to manageable levels. People can once again enjoy the space.

PLEASE, don't ruin Windsor.

SUMMARY

You don't have to be an expert to see that the current proposal will not fix any of the existing problems, yet will forever destroy the character of the oldest town square in Australia. The only sensible solution is to plan for the future and build a bypass!