

INQUIRY INTO WINDSOR BRIDGE REPLACEMENT PROJECT

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As a result of the Call for Papers from the Department of Planning and the Premier in late 2013 regarding the Windsor Bridge replacement project, Mr David Shoebridge MLC had access to the papers classified as being confidential. He produced the following timeline of the approval process conducted by the Department of Planning.

14 November 2012: The RMS released the EIS for the Windsor Bridge replacement project. (my addition)

1 July 2013: After due process the Department of Planning internal Summary of Project did not support the application for Option 1 finding repairing the existing bridge was in the public interest. It recommended the refurbishment and strengthening of the existing bridge to carry T44 loading with a load factor of 2 which would be sustainable for the next 25 to 50 years, and not new bridge at this stage. Then at some time in the future a bypass alignment could be identified, approved and built which would avoid all the damage to property, heritage values and meet the needs of the increasing traffic flow.

22 July 2013: Following pressure from Coalition backbenchers, the Acting Chief of Staff of the NSW Premier's office contacted the COS of the Roads Minister and the Planning Minister ensuring, "....they are fully aware of the importance of delivering the road and that local MPs....are very supportive of the need to improve the region's roads and at the heart of this is Windsor Bridge."

1 August 2013: Despite being in receipt of draft expert reports from its own heritage, traffic and bridge condition consultants not supporting the project the Department of Planning and Infrastructure produced a draft report recommending approval.

16 August 2013: The final reports from heritage, traffic and bridge condition consultants were received not one of which supported the project.

20 September 2013: The final recommendation in support of the project was signed off by the Director-General of Planning. 20 December 2013: The Minister of Planning issued a press release approving the application by the RMS to replace a two lane bridge with a two lane bridge.