Submission No 48

INQUIRY INTO WINDSOR BRIDGE REPLACEMENT PROJECT

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SUBMISSION

To: Portfolio Committee No.5 – Industry and Transport

Inquiry into the Windsor Bridge replacement project

BACKGROUND

We have resided in the Hawkesbury LGA since 1972. During that time we have witnessed a significant growth in local industry and a significant increase in population density.

However, other than the addition of electrified rail to Richmond, the construction of Hawkesbury Valley Way and the sealing of most local roads there has been no significant infrastructure to improve resident or commercial vehicle access to or through Windsor and surrounds.

The planned Windsor Bridge replacement project is of concern to us for the failure of the project:

1. to recognise the significant heritage value of Thompson Square,
2. address any mid-to-long term traffic improvement and,
3. provide significant flood immunity.

ISSUE/S

- Heritage impacts
- Traffic benefits, including justification for demolition of the current Windsor Bridge.
- Flood immunity

COMMENT ON ISSUES

Heritage impacts

Windsor Bridge Replacement Project Independent Heritage Review August 2013 (Casey et al 2013). A Key Issue identified in this review is that "RMS's heritage consultants in Working Paper 1 state the proposed impacts on Thompson Square Conservation Area are so major the Windsor Bridge Replacement Project should not go ahead. But RMS has chosen not to accept this advice because they had already chosen to explore only Option 1 in the EIS. The Built Heritage and archaeological landscape investigations report (August 2011) examined the various options. It was very much a proforma examination of the statutory issues. While it stated that its aims were to 'address all heritage values – historic landscapes, built heritage, archaeological evidence' (October 2009, published 2011:2) it does not do this. " Pg 8-9

In response to the announcement by the Govt of the approval of the new bridge design The National Trust stated that it "was shocked to hear that Planning Minister Brad Hazzard has approved the demolition of the Windsor Bridge and roadworks that will impact on the nationally significant Thompson Square, the oldest public square in Australia".

"The Trust believes Thompson Square and particularly its pre-Macquarie era settlement archaeology must be kept intact. The Trust is urging the construction of a by-pass to Windsor as the adverse heritage impacts on Thompson Square, to the historic buildings to the north of the Square and to the archaeological heritage in the Square are unacceptable." reference www.nationaltrust.org.au/initiatives/thompson-square-windsor

The National Trust strongly condemns this decision which flies in the face of the original advice from the Planning Department (as revealed in July in State Parliament). The decision also discounts the advice of Government Heritage bodies (State and Federal), the National Trust, and massive local opposition (including the business community).

This decision confirms how little weight is placed on community views, expert heritage advice, the state and national significance of this place and the key independent advice from former Roads Department senior engineers.

Traffic benefits, including justification for demolition of the current Windsor Bridge

The *NSW Transport Roads and Traffic Authority Community Update August 2011* provides justification for proceeding with their preferred Option 1 "to improve traffic and transport efficiency by minimising queue length/delays ... and ... to meet community needs for the long term by providing an efficient connection for local and regional traffic". Pg 4

However, the *Hawkesbury Gazette, January 15, 2014*, quotes the RMS as stating "that in 2026 the performance of the Bridge St/Macquarie St intersection at the evening peak will be poor, indicating the intersection would be operating at capacity. The project has never claimed to solve all traffic problems in this area." Pg 11

Cambray Consulting (Traffic Engineering and Transport Planning) FINAL REPORT Prepared for NSW Department of Planning and Infrastructure 15 August 2013, found "many of the options investigated (including the preferred Option 1) involve the major traffic route running through town, where there are significant constraints upon upgrades to the intersections which would 'feed' the bridge. These options may therefore only defer the need for an alternative river crossing further out of town, not do away with it all together. This has been acknowledged by RMS in a number of the documents that have been prepared to support the application for the bridge replacement.

In our opinion there may be alternatives to the preferred option warranting consideration, which involve retaining and refurbishing the existing bridge in the short term, and seeking to provide an additional river crossing (or bypass) in the longer term". Pg.9/10

In summary they "suggest that it may be prudent to 'step back' and undertake a broader study to investigate long term solutions ..... to avoid investing substantial funds into a traffic route which will have limited 'life' due to constrained intersection capacity on the roads feeding the bridge." Pg. 70

Commuters travelling Northbound in the pm peak can testify to the congestion along Bridge St/Windsor Rd with Option 1 providing no improved traffic flow along the single lane route or at the Macquarie St/Bridge St and George St/Bridge St intersections. Cambray Consulting identify that "whilst the

proposed ultimate configuration of the bridge is one northbound lane and two southbound lanes, the highest volume forecast by RMS is in fact the northbound volume during the PM peak. This implies to us that the additional southbound capacity may be intended to accommodate the southbound queue back from the George Street intersection, rather than purely to provide additional capacity over the bridge itself". Pg 11

Cambray Consulting show that the 2009 Manual Traffic counts at the Macquarie St/Bridge Intersection, shown below, are significantly greater than that of the 2011 SCATS Count (1581 and 1647 respectively) suspecting "that this may be due to the congested conditions at the intersection". Pg 30

AM Peak	1,663
8:00am – 9:00am	
PM Peak	1,958
4:15pm – 5:15pm	

In correspondence (20/12/2016) received from Dominic Perrottet, Member for Hawkesbury, we were advised that the preferred Option 1 "would reduce queue lengths on Bridge St by up to 320 metres in the evening peak and 730 metres in the morning peak", but given the questionable reliability of projected traffic flow we have no confidence that this modest improvement will materialise and is indeed of any mid-to-long term significance.

It is apparent to any unbiased observer that upon reading the independent documentation and that provided by the RMS documentation that Option 1 will do nothing to improve traffic flow for those either travelling Northbound or Southbound across the proposed new 2 lane/3 lane bridge.

Dominic Perrottet's correspondence further promulgates the view that "the existing structure (i.e. the current Windsor Bridge) has deteriorated and no longer meets current road design standards so it needs to be replaced".

It is interesting to note that with lane width of 3.0 metres, the existing bridge compares favourably with, if not better than Sydney Harbour Bridge (2.8m), Victoria Rd (2.6m) Parramatta Rd (2.8m).

Peter Stewart Consulting: Report on Structural Condition of the existing Windsor Bridge, 16 August 2013 advised that "while the bridge is deteriorating from various ailments, it is not about to collapse in the short term. The bridge can be refurbished at a cost that it can function for the next 50 years with little ongoing maintenance. Then at some time in the future a bypass alignment can be identified, approved and built which avoids all the damage to property, heritage values, etc. So with relatively modest expenditure (approx. $14.5m) the bridge can be serviceable for the next 50 years within which time an alternative route will have been identified and agreed. It is clear however that the documentation does not show a strong resolve to preserve the existing bridge for an alternative use, with a continuing theme throughout the documentation that it will be replace by a new bridge. This was clear when a decision was made within the then RTA (now RMS) to replaced the bridge sometime before 2003. Subsequent to this decision no expenditure on maintenance or repair of damaged fabric is evident except where public safety might be endangered. Despite this neglect it is remarkable that no great deterioration has taken place in the past 10 years." Pg. 4

Flood immunity

Windsor Bridge replacement project Environmental impact statement Volume 1 Main report November 2012 attempts to provide justification for Option 1 by stating that "the existing bridge has a lower flood immunity than the surrounding roads". Pg 4

The report further advises that "the low point of the replacement bridge at deck level would be around 9.8 metres Australian Height Datum (AHD), making it around 2.8 metres higher than the lowest point of the existing bridge. This would give the replacement bridge a slightly higher level of flood immunity than the existing bridge. Specifically, while the existing bridge is overtopped in a one in two year flood, the replacement bridge is predicted to remain above water for the one in two year flood but be overtopped in an event just smaller than the one in three year flood". Pg. 83

"The project is not intended to be a new flood evacuation route". Pg 462

It is apparent to the writers that any attempt to justify Option 1 on the basis of providing any significant "flood immunity" is flawed.

Appendix A showing likely flood levels as provided by Hawkesbury City Council's Flood Risk management Strategy clearly demonstrates the inadequacy of the proposed Windsor Bridge replacement project as providing improved traffic access in times of even modest flood events.

CONCLUSION

It is evident that to proceed with Option 1 will not bring any benefit to traffic flow to and through the Hawkesbury area in the immediate and long term and will destroy the heritage value of an historic Macquarie town.

A decision to proceed with Option 1 will be shown to be short term, ill conceived and a waste of taxpayer's money.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the following occur:

1. The Windsor Bridge replacement project cease immediately,
2. Archaeological "salvage" cease immediately, and that
3. RMS begins comprehensively exploring all alternative Hawkesbury river crossings that bypass Windsor and that will better serve the long term needs of the Hawkesbury community.

Christopher Cameron

5 January 2018

Janelle Cameron

5 January 2018

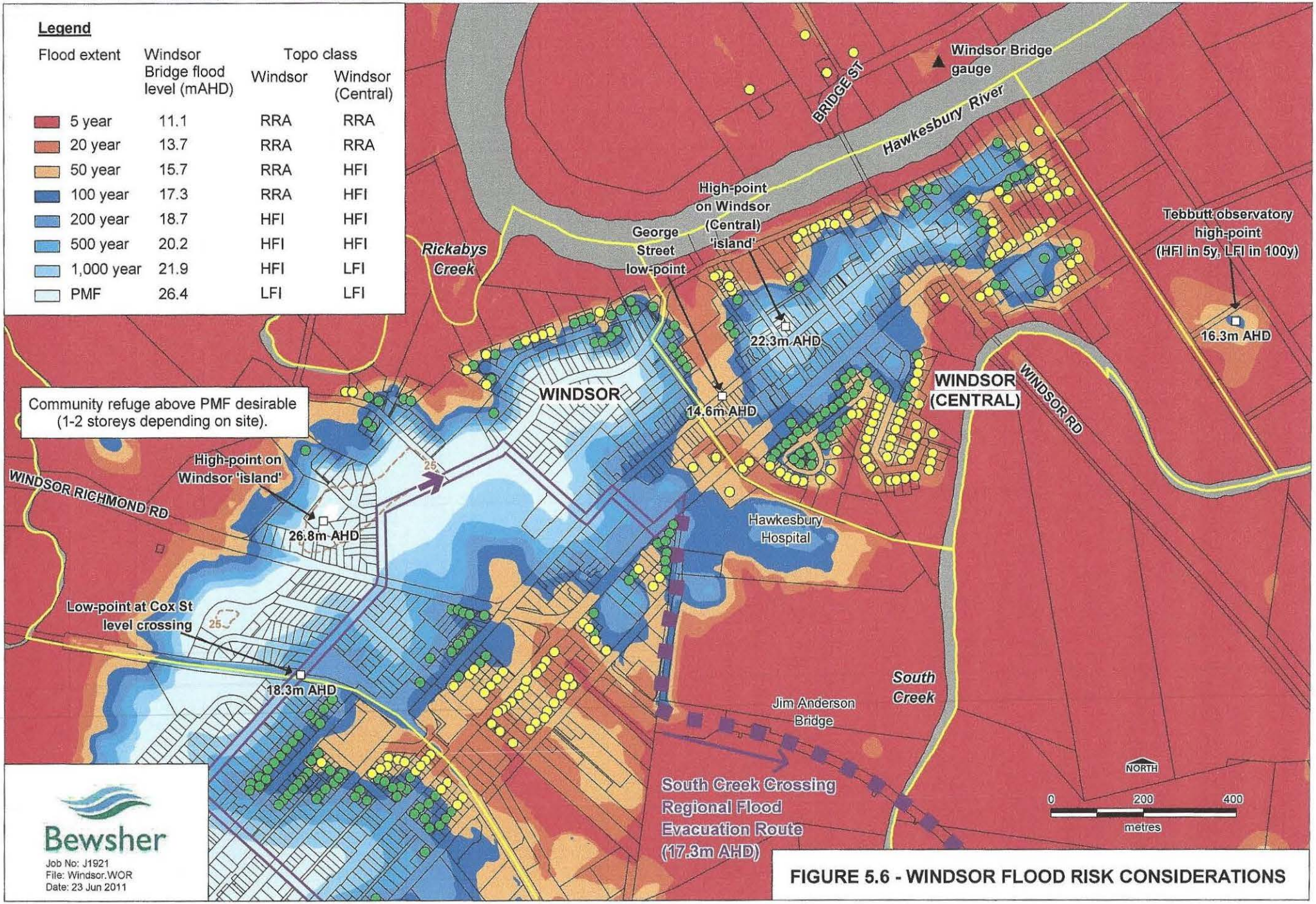

FIGURE 5.6 - WINDSOR FLOOD RISK CONSIDERATIONS

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Cr T. Cameron