

## **INQUIRY INTO WINDSOR BRIDGE REPLACEMENT PROJECT**

**Organisation:** Colo Heights Progress Association

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## COLO HEIGHTS PROGRESS ASSOCIATION

President Mr Peter Kassis

Secretary Ms Janice Ross

### INQUIRY INTO THE WINDSOR BRIDGE REPLACEMENT PROJECT

At a meeting of the Colo Heights Progress Association on Friday, December 8, 2017, a motion was passed unanimously to make a submission to the parliamentary inquiry into the Windsor Bridge replacement project supporting the cessation of the current project and relocating the bridge to an alternative location to provide a bypass of Windsor, thereby solving the current traffic congestion, saving the unique heritage of Thompson Square, and providing future positive strategic planning outcomes to the Hawkesbury area.

Colo Heights is a small rural community consisting of approximately 100 families situated 35 kilometres to the north west of Windsor. A large percentage of workers in the community commute through Windsor to their various places of employment, and most families drive through Windsor to shop or travel. The proposed Windsor Bridge replacement therefore directly affects nearly every resident of the area.

The principal objection to the current project is that through traffic will continue to be funnelled through the heart of Windsor.

The current traffic volumes in the area are causing significant delays during both the morning and afternoon peaks. The current bridge replacement will have the same intersections and connecting roads either side of the bridge and it is clear that overall traffic congestion will not be addressed. Continuing population growth in Sydney as a whole, and the Hawkesbury in particular, will lead to continuing increases in traffic volume and future upgrades to road capacity on the road alignment through Windsor will be impossible without complete destruction of the heritage buildings surrounding Thompson square. A properly planned bypass will not only address the current traffic situation, but if located correctly, will be able to cope with future traffic. Windsor Bridge and the

Putty Road form the only alternative route north to the Sydney Newcastle Freeway, and is an important route, particularly during holiday periods, and its use will continue to grow. It is understood that the original draft report stressed the importance of a bypass, however this was reduced in importance in the published report. This aside, it is common sense that a bypass is the only viable option which will adequately allow for future traffic volumes.

As an important alternative main road north, the route should be designed to be flood free to at least the 100 year ARI flood level. This is the minimum adopted flood level for most main roads, however the current bridge proposal does not meet this criteria. The route through Windsor could never achieve this level of flood protection without completely destroying the heritage in the area. A bypass of Windsor could be constructed with a bridge at a 100 year flood level, even if the connecting roads were currently constructed at a lower level, but a suitable road reserve could be created to allow for future raising of connecting roads and provision of flood free access. Long time

residents of the area can remember when access to Colo Heights was cut by flood waters a number of times each year. Recent drier times have led to a false sense of security with regard to flooding within the Hawkesbury catchment, but it will occur again in the future. Increases in population in the area will mean even greater numbers of people will be affected. Surely the Hawkesbury deserves the same level of flood free access as other communities?

The current bridge proposal will be unlikely to cater for existing traffic volumes, and will definitely not allow for significant traffic growth, yet the current proposal will permanently destroy the heritage value of Thompson Square, the oldest public square in Australia. This Square should be a tranquil meeting place where it should be possible to sit and relax. Even with current traffic volumes, and in particular, the proportion of heavy traffic, it is impossible to sit and enjoy the area. The construction of a new, modern, concrete structure through the site, bisecting the two sides of heritage buildings, will forever ruin the heritage potential of the area. Important heritage items, including Australia's oldest brick barrel drains, will be destroyed by the project. Families in our area are proud of the heritage of the Hawkesbury. We do not want to be accused of being the generation which allowed the destruction of some of the most important heritage items in the area, and the permanent change to the character of Thompson Square. With the construction of a bypass, the existing bridge, itself heritage listed, could be retained and used for light traffic only. This, in conjunction with a bypass bridge, even of only two lanes, would adequately cater for existing traffic and return Thompson Square to tolerable traffic volumes. A two lane bypass bridge could be duplicated in the future to cater for increased traffic volumes and provide traffic routes well into the future. The heritage character of Windsor could be preserved.

It is understood that even the RMS reports show that a bypass could be provided for a relatively modest increase in overall cost. A proper cost benefit analysis, taking heritage values into proper account, and looking to provide for future development of the area and allow for future traffic volumes, must surely conclude that a bypass is the only viable solution. Every other regional town in New South Wales affected by road upgrades seems to be given a bypass. Why are the residents of the Hawkesbury being neglected?

Kind Regards

Peter Kassis

President

Colo Heights Progress Association