

**Submission
No 67**

**INQUIRY INTO WINDSOR BRIDGE REPLACEMENT
PROJECT**

Name: Ms Sandra Kelly

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Please accept my submission for the Inquiry into the Windsor Bridge, which expresses my opposition and objection to the proposal for a new \$35,000,000 bridge to be built in place of the existing one.

I have only been a resident of the Hawkesbury area for around 3 years, and have been delighted by the beauty of the area, including the heritage aspects of the towns of Richmond and Windsor. In regards to Windsor, I have often enjoyed a meal and drink at one of the cafes and restaurants overlooking Thompson's Square, including that lovely old pub, The Macquarie Arms. I always think it a great pity that the peace and tranquility in these places has to be spoiled by the noise and pollution of the many large trucks that lumber through the area constantly - up to three thousand trucks every day according to a survey done by the Community Action for Windsor Bridge (CAWB) group in 2017. I am finding out slowly about the history in and around Thompson Square and am horrified that a new bridge will be built which will allow even more trucks to pass through this beautiful old town. There are so many issues concerning the construction of a new bridge, a few of which I will touch briefly on in this submission.

HERITAGE IMPACTS

"Thompson Square is one of the oldest public squares in Australia and notable for the large number of Colonial Georgian buildings which surround it. It is the only public space remaining from the original town and has played an important part in the history of the town. It is the only remaining civic space as laid out by Governor Macquarie and is a vital precinct in the preservation of the early Colonial character of Windsor. The Square reflects Macquarie's visionary schemes for town planning excellence in the infant colony". Quoted in Austral Archaeology, 2011, p140. <http://www.cawb.com.au/history-of-the-square-and-andrew-thompson.html>

In an article in The Sydney Morning Herald, dated the December 4 2013, it is pointed out that The Department of Planning and infrastructure's "Early drafts of the department's report refer to "long-term irrevocable impacts" on the heritage value of the Thompson Square conservation area "and the heritage of Windsor".

The probable damage to the area has been recognized by the department, why then did it recommend that "... the project go ahead despite its own assessment finding little justification for the project"?

The destruction of the old bridge and the building of a new one was found to be problematic in other ways, including in terms of costs, and it was stated that it would be feasible to do upgrades to the current bridge. One has to ask why the backflip on this earlier assessment and why "those references have been removed from the final version of the report". What other factors are in play here?

As for heritage value regarding the bridge itself, the Office of Environment and Heritage states: "The Windsor Bridge has a high level of historic, technical, aesthetic and social significance as an important historical and physical landmark in one of the State's pre-eminent towns, and in the wider Sydney region..." <http://www.smh.com.au/nsw/windsor-bridge-replacement-gets-green-light-despite-questionable-legality-20131203-2yooa.html>

Excavations for the new bridge have only recently begun, and already, sections of an 1814 brick barrel drain have been uncovered. There is likely to be so much more to be discovered, including ancient Aboriginal artifacts. Finds of this kind are of national and regional importance. Sites such as these would be of great interest to visitors to the area, therefore good for tourist dollars. A

fence could be placed around the excavation site and plaques erected giving the story of what is on show.

In a letter written to Josh Frydenberg MP, MPs Tony Bourke and Susan Templeman requested that an application for Emergency Heritage Listing of the area be granted. It makes sense on every level to bring this about as soon as possible. Conversely, allowing "irrevocable impacts" on such an historic area makes no sense. Does this government have no respect or caring for our history and heritage?

IMPROVEMENTS TO TRAFFIC FLOW?

A report prepared by Cambray Consulting for NSW Planning and Infrastructure whose main job was "...focusing on the traffic issues relating to the proposal", recommended not "...investing substantial funds into a traffic route which will have a limited 'life' due to constrained intersection capacity on the roads feeding the bridge". This company suggests that a bypass would be a better

solution. [https://majorprojects.affinitylive.com/public/73c09e5a9e90d23f750d8d5447be63be/001.%200001 Windsor%20Bridge Traffic%20Review%20Report.pdf](https://majorprojects.affinitylive.com/public/73c09e5a9e90d23f750d8d5447be63be/001.%200001%20Windsor%20Bridge%20Traffic%20Review%20Report.pdf)

A BYPASS SOLUTION

As there is already an inordinate amount of heavy traffic going through Thompson Square, it would seem that a bypass is a more sensible idea than destroying a historically important bridge and increasing the discomfort of tourists and locals who visit the area?

Many other small towns in NSW have received bypasses. To protect businesses in the community, large signs could be placed at the turn off to the bypass, announcing the town of Windsor as an historic town and indicating what's on offer, such as restaurants, cafes, the oldest pub in Australia, etc. Tourists will always visit Windsor to experience the feel of an old, historic town. It's to everyone's benefit if the charms of the place remains unchanged.

Towards the end of 2017, a surplus of \$5.7 billion was announced – the NSW government can well afford to pay for a bypass:

<http://www.smh.com.au/nsw/nsw-budget-surplus-grows-to-57-billion-20171024-gz7d3m.html>

COMMUNITY OPPOSITION TO THE PROJECT

Grassroots organizations have sprung up, operating online and in public to fight against the project. One such group is CAWB, who, since July 2013 have manned a tent in Thompson Square as a centre for protest. Members of CAWB are there 24 hours a day, seven days a week in all kinds of weather. This initiative has captured the hearts and minds of people here and abroad, and 45,000 signed letters from individuals in the local community and tourists from around the world have been sent to the Premier of NSW.

The Wobblers are another passionate and committed group of people. Very active and visible in their protests, they are out in all sorts of weather as well, standing on streets sporting placards to bring awareness and gain support for the cause. This group have suffered abuse from some members of the community who remain doggedly ignorant of the facts. Recently, the Wobblers received unnecessarily brutal treatment at the hands of local police as they exercised their right to demonstrate.

These people are not fringe dwellers. Members of CAWB and the Wobblers alike, are "...made up of independent, local people from a wide variety of backgrounds including lawyers, engineers, financial advisers, business owners, teachers, architects, builders and

academics. <http://www.cawb.com.au/about-us.html>

An Aboriginal Elder who has lived in the area for nearly 79 years, Aunty June Hanlen points out that: "No respect has been shown by the State Government or the R.M.S. to this Sacred Area and to both cultures". She states that on her mother's maternal side, she is ". a descendent of a convict who came out on the First Fleet and his wife to be came out as a convict on the Second Fleet and was granted land by the river". Aunty June feels it is "her duty", to participate in ongoing action to fight against this project, as an Aboriginal woman and in having ties to early European settlers.

CONCLUSION

It has to be asked - why is the NSW government hell bent on going ahead with this project when community groups, companies, the government's own departments as well as heritage organizations point to this being the wrong way to go on many levels. Who stands to gain by this project? Not the community. We will lose one of the most important settler sites in this country. We will never know what Aboriginal relics lay buried deep in Acolian sands – treasures lost forever under an unwanted and useless structure. Who will want to come here when an oversized, unsightly bridge disturbs the view of Thompson's Square, and burgeoning traffic disturbs the enjoyment of relaxation time in one of the venues the town has to offer?

RECCOMENDATIONS:

Immediate, Emergency Heritage Listing of the area.

Build a bypass.

Stop excavation work immediately.

That government start listening to the voice of the people.