

INQUIRY INTO WINDSOR BRIDGE REPLACEMENT PROJECT

Name: Ms Gae Parmenter

Date received: 19 January 2018

The Director,
Portfolio Committee No. 5,
Parliament House,
Macquarie Street,
Sydney NSW 2000.

Dear Director,

Re: Inquiry into the Windsor Bridge replacement project

Please accept this correspondence as our submission to the Windsor Bridge Inquiry. We wish to register our opposition and objection to the NSW State Government's proposal to build a replacement bridge and destroy the existing historic Windsor Bridge and Thompson Square.

As you are aware, the current plan by the RMS sees the demolition of the historic Windsor Bridge, the construction of a three lane replacement bridge, and a major arterial road through Australia's oldest public space, Thompson Square. Not only is this proposal destructive to Australia's heritage it is an ineffective solution to the traffic issues currently being faced.

There is no justification for the replacement of the bridge and the economic, social, and heritage impacts of the proposal are horrendous. Despite what our personal opinion is all of the State Governments own independent expert studies do not support this project going ahead, yet the current State Liberal Government has chosen to ignore the independent expert advice given to it and in some cases blatantly lie about the current condition of the bridge and what the new bridge will achieve with respect to improved traffic flow.

We would like to see the project stopped, the historic Windsor Bridge renovated and a new bridge constructed on a Windsor bypass.

Structurally the current bridge is sound (otherwise we would not be travelling over it)

The Report on Structural Condition of the existing Windsor Bridge indicates that structurally the current bridge is sound and can, with ongoing maintenance, be serviceable for many years to come and as such does not need to be replaced. The report further indicates that at "some time in the future a bypass can be built which avoids all the damage to property, heritage values etc. So with a relatively modest expenditure the bridge can be serviceable for the next 50 years within which time an alternative route will have been identified and agreed." Report on Structural Condition of the existing Windsor Bridge, pg.31

Traffic issues that cant be resolved by the replacement bridge

To suggest that the replacement bridge will do anything to alleviate the current traffic congestion is refuted by the State Governments own report , CAWB's traffic counting and any local like ourselves who are currently forced to sit in long traffic queues.

Cambray Consulting, Windsor Bridge Replacement Project, Traffic Review of Information Provided by the Applicant (Roads and Maritime Services), Prepared for NSW Department of Planning and Infrastructure, 15 August 2013 suggests that with respect to traffic volumes the new bridge will not address any of the current traffic issues, see page 24 "Rather than constructing a three-lane (ultimate) bridge which has more traffic capacity than the roads and intersections feeding it, we would suggest considering alternative bridge crossing locations which may provide adequate traffic capacity for a longer period of time (e.g. a bypass option)." ... "RMS does state however that 'an alternative route around Windsor may be considered in the future depending on growth in traffic numbers and local congestion.' In our opinion, such a route should be considered as part of this project."

That was in 2013 and the latest CAWB 2017 traffic survey shows "Up to three thousand trucks cross Windsor Bridge every week day on average" ... "Over the 2012-2017 five year period, while light vehicle movements on Windsor Bridge only increased by 7%, total heavy vehicle movements increased by 48%. Rigid trucks had a 45% increase, while articulated trucks had a 59% increase."

Back in 2013 again Cambray Consulting could see then (page 67) "If the current bridge was to be retained for local traffic, this could offer a good result all-round. The new bridge could take B-doubles and heavy vehicles away from town, allowing a load limit to be imposed on the existing bridge to possibly extend its life, minimise the effects of heavy vehicles on the town, and retain local connectivity."

Again on page 70 Cambray Consulting state "We suggest that it may be prudent to 'step back' and undertake a broader study to investigate long term solutions, and once a preferred long term solution is identified, consider a staged approach or interim treatments to progressively deliver that long term solution. This would avoid investing substantial funds into a traffic route which will have a limited 'life' due to constrained intersection capacity on the roads feeding the bridge. "

Flood immunity benefits – a dry bridge?

There is not much one needs to say with respect of this issue other than sure the replacement bridge may a bit higher than the existing bridge but it will be standing like

an island as you wont be able to get on or off the bridge as there is no proposed changes to the height of the roads that lead you on and off the bridge, and as locals we all know these go under water during floods.

Heritage impacts – nationally significant site that needs to be saved

With respect to maintaining the heritage of the area one can only relate and support what the heritage experts have had to say.

As with the other independent reports prepared for this project the Windsor Bridge Replacement Project (WBRP) Independent Heritage Review August 2013 recommends not progressing with the project. On page 8 "This proposed design is not based on a full understanding of the significance of the heritage values of the place, nor on any heritage design principles or conservation policies, on which to base a future design. Therefore it is not mitigating impacts on heritage but an additional impact." ... "Working Paper 1 says impacts are so major WBRP should not go ahead. RMS's heritage consultants in Working Paper 1 state the proposed impacts on Thompson Square Conservation Area are so major the WBRP should not go ahead. But RMS has chosen not to accept this advice because they had already chosen to explore only Option 1 in this EIS." (page8) ... "If the WBRP were to be approved DP&I would approve the excavation of a potential archaeological site of State significance and possibly of National heritage significance. This would be against the advice of the NSW Heritage Council and their specialists and the consultants who wrote Working Paper 1." (page38)

In its submission on the Windsor Bridge Replacement Project the Heritage Council of NSW states "It is unequivocally opposed to the project for the 'irrevocable damage' it will do to Windsor and Thompson Square. The Heritage Council of NSW reinforced its preference for a bypass option. It argues the project should be refused on heritage grounds." ... "There has been inadequate recognition that the State Heritage Register listing for the Square includes the open space and all of the buildings which surround it. Thus the relationship not only within the open space, but between the buildings and the Square, or the entire setting of the Square is of importance. The placement of a new major road along the side of Thompson Square will sever the relationship between the buildings along Old Bridge Street to the Square, and also with the buildings on the opposite side of the Square." ... "Thompson Square thus comprises a series of interrelated components – the setting, historic plantings, monuments, fencing, roadways, surrounding buildings and connections to the River. Such squares are rare in NSW and in Australia."

The RMS is currently destroying the archaeology of the third oldest settlement in Australia. Findings onsite to date (that we know about) have been significant (eg barrel drains) and the way it is being “salvaged” is appalling. It is being destroyed

Conclusion

To date, Treasury documents indicate expenditure of around \$34 million, prior to a construction contract being let we hope your enquiry will ascertain where this money has been spent.

The Windsor Bridge replacement project is not a solution for the Hawkesbury and its not even a bandaid. The current bridge is not unsafe, the replacement bridge will not provide a solution to the current traffic congestion as it's the roads leading to the bridge that are the problem, and the new bridge will do nothing toward flood immunity.

The NSW Government needs to invest in a bypass, get the heavy vehicles out of Windsor, improve residents health and safety with improved air quality and lesser noise and retain the important National heritage of the area.

Recommendation

It is simple as they say ... The Windsor Bridge Replacement Project must stop immediately including all archaeological “salvage”. Planning must begin for a Windsor bypass and proper maintenance of the existing bridge begin.

Yours sincerely,

Gae and John Parmenter