

INQUIRY INTO WINDSOR BRIDGE REPLACEMENT PROJECT

Name: Dr Miranda Coulson

Date received: 19 January 2018

SUBMISSION

To:

Portfolio Committee No.5 – Industry And Transport

Inquiry into the Windsor Bridge replacement project

Submitted by: Dr Miranda Coulson,
NSW 2756 18 January 2018

I am a General Practitioner living in the area, and I travel daily over the Windsor Bridge. I have an interest in the future of the Windsor area. I have noted, with concern, the following issues related to the Windsor Bridge Replacement Project:

ISSUES

1. Lack of clarity and apparent obfuscation by the Roads and Maritime Service (RMS) concerning the plans for this project.
2. The absence of transparency relating to the 'salvage' of archaeological relics.
3. The effect of this project on long term outcome for the future of Windsor with respect to traffic management and heritage values of Thompson Square.

COMMENT ON ISSUES

1. There have been claims made regarding the safety of the current Windsor Bridge. The 'safety' issue has been used as a reason for the removal of the bridge. Having read the reports that have been produced, it would appear that any safety issues are questionable given that there fails to be any concern about the weight of vehicles crossing the bridge, and the lack of any clear weight limit. If the bridge was unsafe why has there been no effort made to protect the public? In addition, there has been no clear documentation of a maintenance regime from 2003-2013 or for any refurbishment regime despite the safety claims. In spite of this, this 19th century bridge is able to withstand 21st century loads and suggests remarkable engineering heritage.

The various options presented for the alternatives to removal of this bridge do not appear to have been thoroughly considered. For example, there has been no mention of keeping the current bridge for light local traffic and/or for pedestrian use. There has not been a well considered plan for a bypass. Why has this option not been properly considered for Windsor when so many other

towns and villages have been afforded this benefit? There is also lack of clarity regarding the proposed cost of the replacement bridge and the lack of clear benefit in terms of reduced traffic burden from heavy trucks (1800 per day). Flood mitigation has also been used as a reason for a new bridge but fails to address the fact that the levels of the approach road are below flood level.

2. The historic value of the area has been well documented. The approach to the bridge and its proximity to Thompson Square as well as the original use of the crossing for a punt raise numerous questions about the archaeological value of the area. Why has there not been more emphasis on the importance of this issue to State and National history? A concerted effort to have an independent and scientific study into this historic value of this area is sorely missing. Why is the current 'salvage' operation shrouded in mystery rather than being open and transparent? Currently, heavy machinery is rolling over this area and the area is shielded from the scrutiny of the public eye.

3. Thompson Square is the only 18th century square in Australia. Many of the buildings which edge Thompson Square are on the register of the National Estate and retain true historic value, which is rare in this country. The bridge itself is also of rare value with its unusual cylindrical pier structure, having been built in 1874 and the only bridge ever built in this area. The original timber spans were replaced in 1922 with precast concrete, the first time that this had been used in this country. Surely this has great importance for Australian national heritage? Why has this not received closer attention? The square is feted as the birthplace of a 'fair go' for the people of Australia. Andrew Thompson was a convict who was raised to the level of a Justice of the Peace and Chief Magistrate by Governor Lachlan Macquarie, despite the social barriers of the day. How ironic that today we should have to demand similar just treatment for the square which holds Thompson's name.

CONCLUSION

The Windsor Bridge Replacement Project raises more questions and concerns, than solutions. It is a national disgrace for this process to be allowed to continue without thorough examination by an independent body such as the Portfolio Committee.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is suggested that the current 'salvage' work is suspended. The people of Windsor and surrounds require a considered plan for a bypass and a plan for the care of the unique heritage which requires preservation.

Dr Miranda Coulson

19 January 2018