

**Submission
No 109**

**INQUIRY INTO WINDSOR BRIDGE REPLACEMENT
PROJECT**

Name: Mr Mike Blakeney

Date received: 22 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 a submission to the Windsor Bridge Inquiry. In making this submission I wish to register my opposition to the Government's proposal and to detail my arguments for preserving the Old Windsor Bridge, thus extending the historic significance of Thompson Square, the surrounding buildings and the importance of Windsor in Australia's early European history.

All over the world, countries cherish their past, the legacy of buildings - churches, houses, bridges, prisons, gardens, barracks, and a manifold range of structures reflecting the lives and history that has gone but is recalled in all that is conserved. The tapestry of life with all its warts, beauty, art and vitality is presented and recounted in museums, old courts, chateaux, etc which uplifts all those who visit. The result is, not just wonderful cities and towns, embracing the past and the new, which people visit in their thousands, benefitting both local and national economies.

Yet, here in NSW, the State Government wishes to destroy some of the precious little heritage left in Windsor by building a bridge that will wreak damage during its construction on both the Square's buildings and Thompson Square itself. Furthermore, **it will not** solve the dire problems related to heavy traffic nor make the lot easier for long-haul drivers, and many thousands of locals confronting the traffic jams each and every day.

Thompson Square is the oldest and only Georgian Square in Australia and the nearby cafes, businesses as well as visitors to the Square have suffered persistently for many years from the non-stop heavy traffic passing through this part of Windsor, with the ensuing high pollution. A number of buildings are in jeopardy, including 10 Bridge Street - a fine example of early Colonial architecture - built in 1856. It later became St Katherine's School for Young Ladies and five years later became Windsor Grammar School. This and other buildings close to the junction of Bridge and George Streets will sustain damage from the construction of the new bridge, spoiling the landscape view of the Square surrounded by beautiful old architecture.

Additionally, as acknowledged by Government experts, the project will have catastrophic and irreversible impacts on the Heritage significance, tourism potential and public amenity of the oldest Town Square in Australia. Many trees have already been removed and we fear for more in the Square itself.

Prior to the **Bicentenary** the buildings around Thompson Square and the Square itself were renovated. The restored square was opened by then Premier Nick Greiner in 1988.

There are currently no weight restrictions on Windsor Bridge, the design of which was modelled on a bridge, built in southern Spain by the Romans 2000 years ago, and which exists to this day!

The number of large heavy vehicles using the bridge are already at levels which the RMS predicted for 2026, and are increasing at three times the rate anticipated. 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. 70% of traffic using the bridge does not stop in Windsor – a bypass would enable most of this traffic to avoid the town altogether.

Traffic flow, noise (people sitting in the Square can hardly conduct a conversation) and pollution are the issues. Option 1 will not solve these problems and traffic will still be stuck with the log-jams on Bridge Street, George and Macquarie Streets.

In addition, what has not been taken into consideration is the already increasing growth of the area and the **forecast population explosion** over the next 4 years – namely in Kellyville, Rouse Hill, Pitt Town, Glossodia and N. Richmond, etc.

Government Traffic Engineers have already said “***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***”. The same engineers say that the existing bridge can be **easily and economically renovated for around \$15 million and it will last for 50 – 100 years.**

The projected costs of destroying the old Bridge and building a new bridge have escalated enormously. It would be a better allocation of resources, given the knowledge now of traffic level increases and population growth, to direct the funds to a third crossing (bypass).

It is disappointing to note that, despite more than 40 thousand signatures testifying to both expert and community opposition to this project, the New South Wales Government has continued with a plan which will permanently force industrial vehicles through residential, recreational and retail urban space.

As a resident of the Lower Blue Mountains who has attended RMS information sessions, read project documents and provided feedback regarding the project I have been frustrated and angered by the refusal to respond in any meaningful way to the numerous and easily identifiable problems with the proposed Windsor Bridge replacement project.

In conclusion, one of the most dispiriting aspects for those campaigning for the preservation of Thompson Square is the response of international visitors who overwhelmingly react in disbelief that a State Government could embark on such a project. Then, when appraised of the issues, simply exclaim “Are they Philistines?”.

This is a project that fails abysmally on heritage preservation, financial expenditure and no resolution of the very heavy through-traffic problems.

Now the RMS appears to be happy destroying historical artefacts at the site beside Bridge Street. Given the project’s obvious shortcomings, I would like to see the project stopped, the historic Windsor Bridge renovated and a new bridge constructed on a Windsor bypass.

Yours sincerely,
Mike Blakeney,

NSW 2773

22/01/18