

**INQUIRY INTO WINDSOR BRIDGE REPLACEMENT
PROJECT**

Name: Ms Catherine Mitchell

Date received: 23 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 your Inquiry into the Windsor Bridge replacement project. I wish to register my opposition and objection to the project, with particular reference to its adverse Heritage, economic and social impact, as well as its failure to provide any significant flood mitigation or traffic congestion benefits.

My overriding objection to this project is because of the adverse Heritage impact it will have (and is already having) on the culturally significant buildings and features in, around and including Thompson Square (the oldest town square in Australia). I have an Honours degree in Australian archaeology (Aboriginal & European), and could not be more horrified at the way in which the advice of numerous Heritage experts has been, and is being, completely ignored by the NSW Government and its agents.

The Thompson Square/Windsor Bridge precinct is too fragile and irreplaceable a Heritage resource to have ever-increasing traffic (especially heavy vehicle traffic) directed through it. Neither is it an area where a few small artefacts can just be excavated and removed in a salvage operation to then allow development to proceed. The earliest colonial brick barrel drains that have been uncovered in recent weeks are an absolutely priceless part of our Heritage that are only truly meaningful if left *in situ*. These need to be preserved and protected **where they are**, and made accessible to the public as an exhibit (in a manner similar to the remains of our First Government House in Bridge Street, Sydney).

Please see the Hawkesbury Gazette article of 18th January 2018 at the following URL for a brief summary of just how significant these barrel drains are, and how important it is that they be left *in situ*:

<http://www.hawkesburygazette.com.au/story/5161805/brick-drains-australias-first-report/>

This Bridge replacement project, including the new, higher level bridge approach through Thompson Square, will not only result in the destruction of highly significant Heritage features, and cause damage to nearby Heritage buildings through construction and traffic vibration, it will also destroy the amenity of the Square itself for locals and discourage tourists from coming and exploring the area. Heritage tourism is economically important to Windsor. Damaging the Square and its surrounding buildings - instead of enhancing its tourism appeal (see below) - will be harmful to Windsor's economy, especially the businesses surrounding Thompson Square and in that end of George Street.

The social impact of the Bridge replacement project is also very negative for two reasons. Firstly, its destructiveness causes heartbreak for those people who have deep ties to that area of Windsor through being locals and/or having ancestors who lived there in colonial

times. For me it is both. I grew up in the Hawkesbury and spent countless hours in Thompson Square and its surrounds; and I am a descendant of the convict and influential Hawkesbury settler, William Singleton, who was resident in the area from 1792. The second negative social impact of the project has been to divide the community into those who care about the destruction of Heritage; and those who just want a new bridge at all costs, because they believe it will provide flood-free access and fix the dreadful traffic congestion in the area.

The proposed new bridge is expected to flood marginally less often than the current bridge (one in three floods will go over it, instead of one in two). However, since none of the low-lying roads leading to it are being raised, the new bridge might be left high and dry, but there would not, in fact, be any better flood access for people. Similarly, the slightly increased traffic capacity of the proposed bridge is not expected to have more than a marginal impact on current levels of traffic congestion (both of these suggested outcomes are confirmed in the Project EIS),

In summary, the Windsor Bridge replacement project is highly destructive, and is a huge expenditure of money for minimal gain.

I would like to see the project stopped immediately to prevent further damage to the Heritage of the area from construction or the use of salvage archaeology techniques. Salvage archaeology is a relatively quick and dirty approach, designed to recover at least some information and artefacts when there is absolutely no alternative to destruction, and time is of the essence. There is still an alternative here, and the clock should be stopped because this Inquiry is in progress.

It is my hope that this Inquiry will see the project stopped permanently. We need to protect this early colonial Heritage and make Thompson Square more favourable for tourism and public use (not less) by moving heavy through traffic away from this area.

The only way to properly address the traffic and flood access issues of the Hawkesbury is to build a raised bypass and river crossing away from this historic precinct. The Windsor Bridge could then be retained as an additional river crossing for local traffic only; and the wonderful brick barrel drains (aka smugglers' tunnels) could become a further important tourist drawcard.

Thank you for your time and efforts.

Yours sincerely,
Catherine Mitchell

23rd January 2018