

**Submission
No 121**

INQUIRY INTO WINDSOR BRIDGE REPLACEMENT PROJECT

Organisation: North Richmond and Districts Community Action Association
Date received: 23 January 2018

Inquiry into the Windsor Bridge Replacement Project.

Portfolio Committee No. 5-Industry and Transport

North Richmond & District Community Action Association (NRDCAA).

Executive Summary

NRDCAA was established to protect resident's lifestyle from large residential developments west of the Hawkesbury River with no supporting infrastructure.

There is no justification for demolishing historic Windsor Bridge which, despite minimum maintenance is perfectly adequate for traffic.

The option supported by RMS/Government, Option 1, offers a new bridge funnelling all traffic through the oldest town square in Australia, severely damaging the iconic square.

Post construction we see no benefits in terms of increased capacity or reduced delays across the HLGA.

We are unaware of any cost benefit analysis evaluating economic impacts. Without improvement in traffic flows and with the diminished attraction of the Thompson Square precinct it is hard to see any economic benefit.

There is medical evidence of adverse health effects caused to commuters by traffic congestion.

The heritage impacts are significant with the destruction of Australia's oldest public square. This major issue is ignored by the RMS despite Heritage consultants' opinion that it should not proceed initially.

The proposed construction provides no flood immunity as all access roads will be inundated.

The project assessment process has been flawed in that any community consultations have amounted to the community being told what RMS proposes to do.

We know that similar problems in other communities have been rectified by providing a bypass.

Submission:

The NRDCAA is a progressive and active group which values the heritage, environment, and the quality of life for residents and appreciation of the rural outlooks of the Hawkesbury Local Government Area by residents and visitors.

Our members and supporters base is predominately North West of the Hawkesbury River in Villages such as North Richmond, Grose Vale, Grose Wold, Bowen Mountain, Kurrajong, Kurrajong Heights, Bilpin, Blaxland Ridge, East Kurrajong, Wilberforce, Freemans Reach and Glossodia.

The NRDCAA opposes growth that affects our heritage, our environment and our rural landscapes. Growth increases the unbearable traffic congestion that is reflected in huge delays now as a result of only two crossings of the Hawkesbury River at Windsor and North Richmond/Richmond in the HLGA.

The NRDCAA will continue to oppose rezoning of land north west of the Hawkesbury River until our excessive traffic congestion is addressed.

In a petition along those lines over 4,400 petitioners called on the 2012-2016 Hawkesbury Councillors, the Premier, Road Minister and local politician that there should be no rezoning of land west of the river until our excessive traffic congestion is addressed.

Other Submissions.

The NRDCAA has read submission 32 by Mr Chris Hallam (traffic expert for 40 years) and supports and adopt his submission.

We have also read submission 53 from the National Trust (NSW) Far South Coast Branch and support and adopt their submission.

The inquiry terms of reference

1. a) the current Windsor Bridge, including its maintenance regime, renovation methods and justification for demolition:

The NRDCAA relies on RMS reports which reveal Windsor Bridge's maintenance regime is negligible. It follows that renovation methods were not

implemented, despite their own evidence, the RMS and other experts cannot sincerely justify its demolition.

The NRDCAA strongly supports its retention for light traffic (up to sixteen tonne), when a second crossing/bypass of the Hawkesbury River is completed.

b) i Options presented to the community;

At the time of the consultation the NRDCAA was deeply involved in opposing planning proposals North West of the river which now have been approved, 197 over 55's homes, 1399 home sites at Redbank, North Richmond and 580 home sites at Jacaranda Ponds, Glossodia plus other smaller planning proposals.

CAWB, The National Trust and others raised concerns with option1 during the consultation period and the NRDCAA is in lock step with the community and CAWB in opposition to option 1.

The NRDCAA suggest to the inquiry one of the recommendations should be, a plebiscite to determine support or otherwise for Option one V retention of current heritage bridge/Thompson Square and the construction of a by- pass which will address traffic congestion around Windsor, Richmond and North Richmond.

This is essential in view of our local politicians claiming the community wants option 1 and no by-pass.

The NRDCAA is not aware of any informed persons who support option 1.

The proponents of the Windsor Bridge project have ignored common sense to date.

b) ii. Post construction strategic outcomes, including traffic benefits, transport and network service capacity.

The NRDCAA repeats we rely entirely on submission 32, Mr Chris Hallam, traffic expert for 40 years.

b) iii. Economic, social and heritage impacts

Economic – the NRDCAA cannot see any value in option 1 when this option will not address the traffic congestion at the Windsor and Richmond Bridges.

Has a cost benefit analysis been made available?

In addition, the additional time spent for commuters to get to and back from their employment and appointments is enormous. Delivery trucks and vans are delayed, again adding to the cost of goods and services.

This loss of productivity and time, must amount to thousands of dollars per day if not millions.

Social – At a meeting of the NRDCAA (2012) with over 130 attendees a medical doctor in the audience relayed stories of patients attending the surgery because of stress related causes. The doctor advised a significant contributing factor to their condition was traffic congestion.

This also adds to the economic cost to the patient, with the loss of productivity, time off and the cost of medical treatment.

In addition, members and supporters have reported missing trains and unable to keep appointments due to traffic congestion.

Heritage- the NRDCAA adopts and supports Mary Casey contribution to the debate as detailed at p4 of submission 0007d by Mr Harry Terry: *The Mary Casey Report included the following statements: *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. *The Urban Design mitigation measures must be examined closely as they do not relate to heritage significance, or heritage design principles and conservation policies. The mitigation measures do not alleviate the implication that appears to be acceptable to RMS that the WBRP can have such a major impact on a SHR conservation area and State significant archaeology.*

The urban design report's assessment has concluded that all visual impacts within Thompson Square are High, the highest level of impact. The heritage report's assessment has stated that the only real mitigation for the proposed

impacts relates to archival recording, archaeological excavation of the site, reporting and interpretation. The main mitigation for the built heritage appears to be a design which consolidates the park and undertakes planning for a redesign of Thompson Square and the Terraces.

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.

Further, the NRDCAA adopts and endorses Submission 20 from Mr Philip Knobs (a committee member of the NRDCAA), in particular: *Thompson Square, an historic, tourism, goldmine. Where else would you find a treasure such as this being trashed by an uncaring state and federal government? The priceless aboriginal and European artifacts that are being secretly unearthed to make way for a bridge monstrosity, must be preserved and turned into a nationally significant museum of actual examples of how things were done in the very early days of Australia's history. We believe this is what Windsor needs to ignite more interest in this historic town. You can't just make history, it's here.*

In addition, the NRDCAA representatives attended Council Meetings in the 2012-2016 periods, where the Council majority ignored recommendations from the Council's Advisory Heritage Committee which opposed any construction that would interfere with the Heritage of Thompson Square and Windsor Bridge.

The minutes of the Heritage committee 9 February 2012 record: *i That the minutes of the Heritage Advisory Committee held on 9 February 2012 as recorded on pages 69 - 77 of the Ordinary Business Paper be received and in regard to the item of General Business concerning Windsor Bridge/Thompson Square, the Committee be advised that as Council has previously resolved to support Option 1 in respect of the proposed replacement of Windsor Bridge, it does not consider that there is any need for a further presentation from the Committee in this regard."*

- *Ms Barkley Jack raised grave concern at the resolution, citing Councillors had not yet been presented with the new historical information regarding Thompson Square and therefore may not fully understand the implications of*

Option 1. The Committee displayed disappointment that their appeal to Councillors for a presentation had not been favourably received.

Professor Ian Jack, Graham Edds and Ms Barkley Jack and other heritage experts were on that committee.

Option 1 will not address the Economic, Social and Heritage impact on the HLGA and Australia as a whole.

Accordingly, the inquiry should recommend the project cease immediately and the project team meet with Roads Minister, Council, community leaders and traffic experts to find a holistic solution to traffic congestion in and around Windsor, Richmond and North Richmond.

b) iv. Flood immunity benefits: No doubt the flood records will show that roads, like Windsor Road at McGrath's Hill, George St Windsor, Wilberforce Road Wilberforce and Freemans Reach Road Freemans Reach, all roads that connect to Windsor Bridge are inaccessible during most floods.

The NRDCAA emphasises the Hawkesbury Valley is a flood plain and Option 1 will not prevent those Roads being inaccessible in future floods.

b) v. Project Assessment process: the NRDCAA representatives were invited and attended community briefing organised by the RMS on occasions.

It was clear there was a large gap between fact and hearsay. Experts in their fields, especially heritage were very critical of claims made by the RMS, their advisers and were challenged to no avail.

The NRDCAA is very concerned of the large gap, resulting in mistrust, between the Government/RMS and the HCC, CAWB and the community with regards to this project.

The mistrust that has eventuated leads the NRDCAA to ask the inquiry should the Assessment process be referred to ICAC.

NRDCAA representatives also attended most Council meetings that discussed the options for Windsor Bridge.

The period 2008- 2016, Council majority supported Option 1.

The newly elected Council (2016) have reversed that decision to now oppose Option 1.

Six Councillors were members of the Liberal party in the last Council. This Council has four Liberal Councillors.

The NRDCAA believes the reduction in their numbers on this Council can be directly attributed to the Windsor Bridge/ Thompson Square decision and allowing massive development North West of the river without adequate transport infrastructure.

The community lodged their protest through the ballot box.

b) iv. Planning and Procurement strategies and associated project costs.

b) Vii. Cost benefits analysis process.

The NRDCAA believes it is more than appropriate that the Local Member Mr Perrottet MP who is also Treasurer and the RMS be call to appear before the Inquiry to explain and justify the planning and Procurement strategies, associated costs and any cost benefit analysis. We recommend that the Chair of the inquiry call Mr Perrottet MP/RMS to account for the Governments/RMS decision.

c) Any other related matter.

As a result of a questionable development (considered by ICAC, see Operation Spicer at p155/156 p) approved by the Council in the previous term (2012-2016) a Voluntary Planning Agreement was agreed which included a crossing of the Grose River. The amount allocated was approximately 23.9 million dollars.

The Richmond Bridge Study indicates that a four lane bridge and other improvements will be “built” in 2036.

Plus, the Government/RMS decision to construct the *no common sense* Windsor Bridge project that will not address traffic congestion.

The NRDCAA firmly believes there must be a holistic approach to address traffic congestion in the HLGA and repeats the recommendation made earlier that the inquiry should recommend the project cease immediately and the

project team meet with Government, Council, community leaders and traffic experts to find a holistic solution to traffic congestion in and around Windsor, Richmond and North Richmond. Whilst this process proceeds no further action should be undertaken in relation to the Grose River crossing, Richmond and Windsor Bridge.

Prepared by the Committee of Management

On behalf of the North Richmond & Districts Community Action Association Inc

23 January 2018.