

**INQUIRY INTO WINDSOR BRIDGE REPLACEMENT
PROJECT**

Organisation: Australia ICOMOS

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Australia ICOMOS Secretariat
Faculty of Arts and Education
Deakin University
221 Burwood Highway
Burwood Vic 3125
Ph: +61 3 9251 7131
austicomos@deakin.edu.au
www.icomos.org/australia
ABN: 85 073 285 798

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

Via submissions website: <https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/committees/inquiries/Pages/inquiry-details.aspx?pk=2468#tab-submissions>

By email: portfoliocommittee5@parliament.nsw.gov.au

Dear Director,

Windsor Bridge Replacement Project (WBRP) - Thompson Square and Windsor township

ICOMOS – the International Council for Monuments and Sites – is a non-government professional organisation that promotes expertise in the conservation of cultural heritage. ICOMOS is also an Advisory Body to the World Heritage Committee under the World Heritage Convention. Australia ICOMOS, formed in 1976, has over 600 members in a range of heritage professions and is amongst the largest of the over 100 national committees of ICOMOS.

The Thompson's Square precinct is an important heritage site in Australia and includes intact examples of town planning, archaeology and built heritage dating from the earliest Colonial period to the present day. The Windsor Bridge Replacement Project (WBRP) will have negative and irrevocable impact on the heritage of Thompson's Square and the Windsor township.

Australia ICOMOS notes that the WBRP has attracted criticism from heritage and environmental groups and respected authorities who are concerned that significant values of the Thompson's Square precinct may be jeopardised. We also wish to raise our concern that best heritage practice may have been compromised during the design and approvals process. We are also concerned about the lack of transparency during the approvals process and that alternative options for the river crossing and bypass road to the north of Windsor appear to have not been given due consideration. Inconsistencies with the Strategic Conservation Management Plan and the implementation of policies in providing a blueprint for conservation of the heritage fabric of the place also should be resolved.

A particular concern is that community consultation appears to have only occurred only after the decision to construct the WBRP through Thompson's Square was enacted. Australia ICOMOS notes that Community Against Windsor Bridge (CAWB) has been in occupation of Thompson's Square, now for 4 years, 24 hours a day in protest and have collected more than 40,000 signatures of objection from locals, state, national and international visitors, including many Australia ICOMOS members.

The Hon Josh Frydenberg, Minister for the Environment and Energy, is expected to make an announcement regarding the emergency national listing of the Thompson Square application early in 2018, which is supported by Australia ICOMOS. Letters of support for recognition at Thompson Square at the National Level have also been provided to the Federal government by the Australian Institute of Architects, the National Trust and the Royal Australian Historical Society in addition to individual conservation practitioners.

Objections to the WBRP have been raised from the NSW Heritage Council, the Government Architect's Office, members of Australia's heritage and historical associations, the Government's own traffic

engineering independent consultants' reports, over 40,000 signed letters of objection, and the RMS's own heritage consultant reports since 2009. In spite of objections raised to date, the NSW Government is persisting with the project.

The Hawkesbury Valley is a unique place in the world where original structures have not been subject to substantial change over time. Hawkesbury City Council area is special as the third established settlement in Australia, and it is rich with its early European settlements and sites. Thompson's Square an important heritage precinct dating from the colonial era which contribute to Windsor's position as one of the richest and most intact of the original European settlements in Australia that also includes the following:

- The oldest civic square in Australia from the 18th century, Thompson's Square;
- Australia's oldest purpose built hotel in Australia, the Macquarie Arms Hotel established 1815;
- The first purpose built court house in Australia, Windsor Court House 1822;
- The first church, Ebenezer Church 1810;
- The first Anglican Church, St Matthew's Anglican Church 1817;
- Many early 19th Century timber rural structures, particularly the slab barns throughout the Hawkesbury;
- The archaeology uncovered in the salvage operation of the brick barrel drain dating from the early 19th century.

Therefore it is of great concern to Australia ICOMOS that a site of such exceptional heritage significance, has been subjected to a new road and bridge proposal with potential for severe negative impacts. We question whether the process of assessment has been in the public interest, and whether best possible outcomes are assured to preserve and present this unique precinct for future generations.

If the currently planned major road is re-routed to avoid the Square, then the potential for the heritage values of the Thompson Square precinct to contribute to economic and social sustainability of Windsor and the region can be realised.

Australia ICOMOS commends the NSW Government for holding a Parliamentary Enquiry into the Windsor Bridge Replacement Project and urges that the exceptional heritage values of the site be given consideration in accordance with the Burra Charter, which is recognised internationally as being heritage conservation best practice. Please contact Australia ICOMOS if you have any queries.

Yours faithfully

Mary Knaggs
Vice- President, Australia ICOMOS

CC:

Brian Powyer, Vice-President National Trust, NSW

The Hon Josh Frydenberg, Minister for Environment and Energy

The Hon Gabrielle Upton, NSW Minister for Environment and Heritage

The Hon Robert Brown MLC, Chair, Inquiry into the Windsor Bridge Replacement Project (WBRP), NSW Legislative Council