

**Submission  
No 188**

## **INQUIRY INTO WINDSOR BRIDGE REPLACEMENT PROJECT**

**Name:** Mrs Noelene Lindop

**Date received:** 27 January 2018

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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. As a Hawkesbury resident of 35 years, I am writing to voice my opposition and objection to the Government's proposal to replace and then demolish the existing historic Windsor Bridge with a modern bridge 35m downstream.

The RMS has circulated the fallacy in their Community Update, March 2017, that "the existing Windsor Bridge is deteriorating and has reached the end of its useful life." However, since 2008 the weight restrictions on the bridge have been lifted three times to an unrestricted weight limit enabling B-Double trucks, heavy commercial traffic and numerous cars to traverse it without any structural failures.

Renovation tasks performed over the last 10 years to the Windsor Bridge have been minimal with the RMS responding that "no specific interventions had taken place to reinstate the fabric of the bridge, other than the removal of spalling as part of bridge maintenance." From RMS advice to the Department of Planning & Infrastructure, it has been found that their average spending per year only amounted to \$6,371.89. Despite this neglect there has been no great deterioration during this period.

Peter Stewart, independent bridge condition engineer commissioned by the DP & I to review RMS documents on Windsor Bridge stated: "The conclusion that the whole bridge is in a poor condition" is not supported by the Level 2 Inspection Report Ratings (B8). It was concluded also by retired RTA bridge engineers Ray Wedgwood and Brian Pearson's report that the bridge could be refurbished economically for an equivalent cost to that of its demolition (CAWB EIS Submission, pg. 112-115).

Independent engineers have all agreed that for a modest expenditure of approximately \$14.5m, there is no justification in demolishing the historic Windsor Bridge, which will be perfectly serviceable for light traffic and that it could function for the next 25-50 years with little ongoing maintenance.

The options presented to the community amounted to 9 differing traffic routes, the great majority being completely unworkable, as none diverted traffic away from the town of Windsor. The RMS and our local MP, Dominic Perrottet, have always touted Option One despite community opposition to it. Over the past 4 years 45,000 letters of opposition by the community have been delivered to 3 different Premiers who, despite invitations to come to visit Thompson's Square, have never met with Hawkesbury community representatives and heritage groups to further discuss and review any alternatives. The only acknowledgement from Perrottet and several other Liberal MPs is that of utter dismissal and comment that only a small 'fringe group' opposes this Option!

Option One is a completely flawed plan, which directs traffic coming from Windsor Road to its commencement at Bridge Street through Thompson's Square traversing the Windsor Bridge and northwards along Wilberforce Road. This area of town consists of single lane roads, all leading into Thompson's Square, with traffic queued up for kilometres both sides of the river during peak hours. Frustration over this traffic gridlock forces motorists to seek alternative routes through the shopping area in the centre of Windsor in an effort to avert long traffic queues, and is increasingly becoming more dangerous for pedestrians. So much for the RMS quoting Option One "as a safe and reliable crossing of the Hawkesbury River" in their Community Update of 2017! How can the RMS make the claim of a 'reliable' crossing when they are planning to have a main arterial road running onto a flood plain! The RMS and local State politician also wished to convince us that by adding an extra lane to the new bridge

(announced last year after public outrage) that this would provide the complete solution for improved traffic flow and all our other traffic woes!

At the present time Thompson's Square itself, the oldest town square in Australia dating from 1795, is suffering complete traffic chaos, increasing noise, vibration to the surrounding Georgian buildings, and pollution instead of being a more peaceful area fitting for an historic precinct. By diverting the heavy traffic, which does not stop and adds no benefit commercially to the town, it would return this historic precinct to its former more tranquil existence. Commercially businesses would thrive due to an increase in tourism, as heritage tour groups are known to stay for longer periods than others. It has been found that a well-managed heritage precinct has a very positive economic effect.

A number of well known heritage groups such as the National Trust, Royal Australian Historical Society and Heritage Council all strongly oppose the Windsor Bridge replacement project for the destruction of an historic bridge of a unique engineering design, and that "a high level modern motorway will significantly reduce the appeal of the area to visitors and therefore have a severe negative impact on the local economy." The RMS' own heritage advisers and the Department of Planning's Independent Heritage Review state that this project should not proceed, as it will have a major negative impact on the Thompson Square Conservation Area.

It is very clear to the Hawkesbury community that the sensible way forward is to redirect the funding for this very flawed project towards building a multi lane bypass solution, so that a third crossing of the Hawkesbury River could be constructed that would benefit the town by taking heavy traffic away from both the Thompson Square historic precinct and the town centre of Windsor. I would assume that this would best be constructed on higher ground with improved flood immunity.

It is disrespectful that the wishes of our community, many of whom are direct descendants of pioneering families, are ignored by the State politicians and RMS. Failure to stop this bridge replacement project will be the ruination of irreplaceable heritage, which is under threat too from an archaeological 'salvage' taking place in the Thompson's Square precinct at present. Many tourists have been shocked and dismayed over this badly conceived project and cannot understand how a government is not prepared to protect our precious national heritage and beautiful area. Many overseas countries value tourism and nurture both their heritage and pristine environment. Canada's top earner is tourism which brings in billions annually.

Why can't Hawkesbury residents be given the same privilege of making their district an enviable place in which to live by retaining our beautiful open areas and not succumbing to a concrete jungle mentality?

I ask you to listen to this community and to support our wishes to:

1. Stop the Windsor Bridge replacement project.
2. Renovate the historic Windsor Bridge for local traffic use.
3. Build a bypass to direct heavy transport away from the town of Windsor.

If this is accomplished, we will be able to better protect our unique heritage, so that we may proudly hand it to future generations to cherish and enjoy.

Yours sincerely,  
Noelene Lindop

27 January 2018