

Submission
No 294

INQUIRY INTO WINDSOR BRIDGE REPLACEMENT PROJECT

Name: Ms Megan Wood

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Partially
Confidential

SUBMISSION

To:

Portfolio Committee No.5 – Industry And Transport
Inquiry into the Windsor Bridge replacement project

Submitted by:

Megan Wood (formerly Megan Storie)

BACKGROUND

My ex-husband and I own three buildings in Thompson Square namely: George Street, George Street and Bridge Street Windsor. We have carried on a business from one or other of those addresses since 1994. All our buildings are listed on the NSW State Heritage Register.

These properties directly adjoin the Windsor Bridge Replacement Project (WBRP) area.

I am currently the secretary of Community Action for Windsor (CAWB), a protest organisation fighting this project and have been involved with CAWB since its inception.

ISSUE/S

- The options presented to the community
- Project assessment process

The Options Presented to the Community and Project Assessment Process

In the time we have owned these buildings we have seen a marked and steady increase in the traffic traversing the Square and in particular the heavy vehicle traffic. Due to the historically sensitive nature of Thompson Square and its main use as a recreational and tourist precinct we could see that sooner or later the traffic would grow to such a magnitude that it would destroy the charm and amenity of the Square and render it an unusable space. We looked forward to a day when there

would be the need for a bypass of Windsor and Thompson Square would be preserved for generations to enjoy.

The first time we became aware of the Windsor Bridge Replacement Project was when we received the brochure regarding the Options in July 2009 called “Community Update” July 2009 advising nine Options. We felt that some of the options being proposed were outright farcical. Funneling traffic down Kable and Court Streets just made no sense at all even to someone who knew nothing about traffic management. In our minds the obvious selection was one of the bypass options, either a modification of Option 6 or Option 8. My ex-husband and I attended a community workshop on the 1st of August 2009. We wrote a submission in response to this workshop. We did not receive a reply to our submission or any acknowledgment of receipt. We were never sent a copy of the November, 2009 Community Consultation Report that resulted from this workshop.

It was around the same time in 2009 that I spoke to one of the other Thompson Square owners, _____ of _____, and asked what he thought about the new bridge. He told me about the _____ having a meeting with representatives from the RMS. I thought that this was highly unusual that the RMS would not choose to meet with the other property owners directly affected by the project. I telephoned Yogaratham Sutham of the RMS who was the Project manager and advised that we owned properties in Thompson Square and had not been approached by anyone from the RMS about any of the issues surrounding the new bridge and its impacts on our buildings. He asked me what number in George Street I was then quickly dismissed me as someone who would not be affected by the project.

The project appeared to disappear over the following 2 years until in August 2011 we read in the local newspaper, The Hawkesbury Gazette, that comments were invited again however now a preferred option, Option 1, had been identified as the chosen option. I again submitted our objections to the proposed Option by the due date and again received no reply or acknowledgment of the receipt of my letter.

By November I recall reading about the Community Design Workshop. I had just started a new business in Richmond and was unable to attend the workshops until February in the new year. My experience of the workshops was that they were professionally run sessions where the RMS consultants would tell the community representatives about the progress of the project rather than really seeking any input from the community. In essence the RMS appeared to be going through the motions. There was much criticism of the project and a growing understanding by

many of attendees at the workshops of the stark realities regarding noise, traffic, visual and economic impacts that would result from the project. The RMS decided to abruptly close down the workshops in July as attendees became more vocal and began to demand more information regarding issues associated with option 1 other than the design elements.

At no time were we ever approached by anyone from the RMS prior to this. As the owners of three buildings directly affected by this project and business owners in Thompson Square we have never been directly approached by anyone from the RMS at any stage of the project. Nor have we ever received any replies to our submissions. All our dealings with the RMS have been at our instigation and we have either been treated in a dismissive manner or outright ignored.

We were never at any stage identified as “stakeholders” in the project despite the fact that the EIS identifies our buildings 62-68 George Street as being likely to be impacted by noise and vibration and recommends that dilapidation reports be completed on the buildings prior to commencement of works. (ref Heritage Working Paper –Part 1 page 8).

Conclusion:

It has been my experience that there has been little or no actual consultation with the community regarding the WBRP. It is apparent to me that, from their actions, that the RMS had planned and committed to Option 1 from the very inception of a replacement for the Windsor Bridge and before any options were even put to the community. It is my experience that the contending options were so unsuitable as to make option 1 the standout choice.

It also appears to me that at every stage of the assessment process the community was simply ignored and that a “box ticking” exercise was underway so that there was an appearance of due process undertaken by the RMS.

Personally as the owner of three properties directly affected by the WBRP I feel I have been disregarded and treated with contempt by the RMS and their representative team.

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