

INQUIRY INTO WINDSOR BRIDGE REPLACEMENT PROJECT

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SUBMISSION

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

Submitted by Jonathan Auld

28 January 2018

I would like to register my strong opposition and objections to the Government's Windsor Bridge Replacement Project. In the past, I have served as Community member of the Heritage Committee of Hawkesbury City Council, and am a member of the Hawkesbury Family History Group and have a strong interest in the history of the Hawkesbury. I also maintain the Hawkesbury Cemetery Register, an online record of the Hawkesbury's cemeteries.

Despite expert advice from the Heritage Council, National Trust, the Royal Australian Historical Society and others, as well as opposition from the community, the project has continued. It is not acceptable that large trucks continue to travel through historic Windsor.

HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

The Statement of significance on Thompson Square prepared for the State Heritage Register (SHR) states:

Thompson Square is one of the oldest public squares in Australia and notable for the large number of Colonial Georgian buildings which surround it. It is the only public space remaining from the original town and has played an important part in the history of the town. It is the only remaining civic space as laid out by Governor Macquarie and is a vital precinct in the preservation of the early Colonial character of Windsor. The Square reflects Macquarie's visionary schemes for town planning excellence in the infant colony. Windsor is the third oldest settlement in Australia while the Square is the oldest public square in Australia.

My opposition against this project relates to the significant impact that the project will have on the historic Thompson, the oldest public square in Australia. The proposed bridge will be raised and impact on the green space in the public square. It will reduce the footprint of the square, as much of the area will be sloped. The buildings may also be damaged during the construction due to vibrations made by the heavy building works.

Other impacts of this project include the archaeology within Thompson Square and the riverbank. This includes the Aboriginal archaeology, the European archaeology and the maritime archaeology found around the wharf area. Already much destruction has taken place in Thompson Square with the current salvage archaeology using excavators and the removal of soil from the site. This project has been secretive from the start with little collaboration with the community of the finds.

The Heritage Council concluded from Review of the EIS the following:

Thompson Square is of crucial importance to the heritage of the State; that Option 1 is likely to have a long term irrevocable and negative impact on Windsor as a whole and Thompson Square in particular; and that Option 1 does not adequately respect the unique history and State heritage significance of this area. The serious and irrevocable heritage impacts of a new Windsor Bridge through Thompson Square mean that the Heritage Council recommends to the Minister for Planning that project SSI - 4951 WINDSOR BRIDGE REPLACEMENT PROJECT should be refused on heritage grounds.

TRAFFIC SOLUTION

The project does not deliver a viable traffic solution for the community residing on the western side of the Hawkesbury River. Travel times have already increased over the last few years and the number of heavy trucks has also risen. This has been supported by the CAWB Traffic Count which records "Over the 2012-2017 five year period, while light vehicle movements on Windsor Bridge only increased by 7%, total heavy vehicle movements increased by 48%. Rigid trucks had a 45% increase, while articulated trucks had a 59% increase."

A number of towns in NSW have received bypasses including Coffs Harbour, Karuah, Moree, Tarcutta, Tenterfield, Bega, Berry, Macksville and Ballina. One of the main reasons a bypass was approved at Moree was due to the "unacceptable" level of truck movements.

The Project EIS confirms the project will have little impact on flood free access over the Hawkesbury River at Windsor however the RMS website states it will provide "*A new bridge that can cope with higher levels of flooding.*" How can the proposed bridge provide a reliable and safe crossing when the Hawkesbury River floods? There is no flood-free access on the Putty Road to Wilberforce and there appears to be no plans to raise this road.