

**Submission  
No 312**

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

**Name:** Cr Mary Lyons-Buckett

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I fully endorse the submission of Hawkesbury City Council to the inquiry. It articulates the responses to the criteria outlined in the Terms of Reference of the Inquiry in a manner representative of the majority of the Council. The Council submission, as well as those submitted by expert Heritage Organisations, Community Groups, and those individuals with historical, technical and infrastructure expertise, cover the major issues associated with this project. I therefore will not replicate what has been addressed in other submissions in detail apart from the subsections below.

Part b)

ii. The bridges crossing the Hawkesbury River in the Hawkesbury Local Government Area are at or near capacity. Sydney is growing rapidly with an estimated additional 700,000 - 800,000 people being settled in Western Sydney over the coming years, as the third city within Sydney (the Western Parkland City as identified in the Greater Sydney Commission plans) develops in conjunction with the Badgery's Creek airport development.

The growth in this section of the metropolis will greatly increase the housing and population density, as well as bringing additional pressures on infrastructure, services and the environment. A trend of city dwellers seeking weekend and holiday respite in the open spaces of the outer fringe areas such as the Hawkesbury, Blue Mountains, Southern Highlands, Illawarra and Hunter is very apparent now – one only has to see the traffic queues on a Friday evening or Saturday morning. With a proposed increase of three quarters of a million people, the numbers of people exiting the city for leisure and work purposes will increase dramatically.

The recent NSW Government Draft Transport Strategy 2056 fails to address the mechanism or solutions for allowing people to exit the city into the future. As a local government area with two of the major exits from the city – Bells Line of Road to the west, and the Putty Road to the north – we note NO COMMITMENT in the transport strategy to provide improved or additional river crossings of the Hawkesbury River, except the CONSIDERATION of the Bells Line Corridor only to start after the next twenty years – and any construction presumably decades after that. The area is extremely poorly serviced by public transport leading to a high car dependency, with congestion on all arterial roads in the area increasing significantly over the past few years.

That essentially leaves our area with only ONE major infrastructure project regarding improving the exit routes from the growing Greater Sydney area. That project being the replacement of a bridge which will do nothing to alleviate traffic congestion and remove noisy, dangerous heavy vehicles from the town centre. In the process this new structure will strip the town of its core heritage value – the intact Thompson square precinct. This is a project where there is much to lose and very little to be gained.

It is widely believed that this proposed project will not increase capacity nor deliver any traffic benefits or transport improvements. It is not considered an appropriate expenditure of public funds as it does not provide a beneficial investment either now or into the future.

iii. Strategic planning on a regional and city wide level encourages heritage protection, creation of 30-minute cities and retention of valuable public assets which contribute to the character and economy of centres. Windsor, as a destination has vastly untapped potential. Its location on the city fringe surrounded by national parks, beautiful rivers, diverse agricultural and equine enterprises, coupled with its depth of history and heritage makes it a perfect tourist location.

A modern concrete bridge structure cutting through its intact Georgian town square will irreversibly strip Windsor of its authenticity as an example of early Colonial town planning and architecture. This equates to a loss for our nation of one of the earliest colonial precincts which could and should be preserved for generations into the future.

This project has detrimental impacts – economically, socially and particularly on the heritage value of Windsor and the Hawkesbury region. The major strength in revitalising a town like Windsor lies in being able to capitalise on its natural assets – the river and the history of the region, from Aboriginal heritage to early European heritage. In a country where we have only rare examples of early colonial townships, where much has been lost and discarded, where little value has been placed on retaining examples of early buildings, Windsor holds the potential to encapsulate this history and revitalise the town.

Our heritage is a valuable asset and one which contributes to our future potential as a more widely recognised tourist destination. For the many people who treasure and respect our history and heritage, the threat posed by this proposal impacts on the social fabric of our community – the impending loss is considered tangible and unnecessary when alternative solutions exist and could be utilised. The diverse group of people who have spoken out about the significance of the heritage, and the magnitude of what we will lose, is testament to the genuine community opposition which exists to this project.

iv. There is very little value in this project for flood immunity. A slightly higher bridge will do little in flood time given the low lying surrounding roads. We have not had a large flood for over twenty five years. The State Government is putting a vast amount of money into flood studies relating to potentially raising the Warragamba Dam wall, to educate the communities within the valley of the flood risks, and to finalise evacuation routes. It is widely believed that a high level bridge crossing the river would be advantageous in flood conditions – the Windsor Bridge replacement project does not deliver this.

v. I have had my attention drawn to multiple concerns about aspects of the project assessment process. I have no doubt these have been raised in the more comprehensive submissions.

In conclusion I urge the Committee members to consider all issues raised in preparing their report – most importantly, while considering the question whether this is the most effective way public funds should be spent on infrastructure on an exit route serving a rapidly increasing population and destroying Australia's oldest public Town Square in the process?