

INQUIRY INTO WINDSOR BRIDGE REPLACEMENT PROJECT

Name: Ms Susan Templeman MP

Date received: 25 January 2018



SUSAN TEMPLEMAN MP

FEDERAL MEMBER FOR MACQUARIE

The Director
Inquiry into the Windsor Bridge Replacement Project
Upper House Committees
Parliament of New South Wales
Macquarie St
SYDNEY NSW 2000

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

RE: Submission regarding the Upper House Inquiry into the Windsor Bridge Replacement Project

Dear Director,

I welcome the opportunity to provide comment into the Inquiry into the Windsor Bridge Replacement Project. As the Federal Member for Macquarie – an electorate which includes Windsor and its surrounding suburbs – I have a particular interest in ensuring that local heritage is protected, and that any infrastructure project adequately serves the local community. Further, I make this submission on behalf of the great number of my constituents who have expressed their concern and dismay to me over the last five years regarding this project.

I am strongly of the opinion that the works taking place at the Windsor Bridge Replacement Project site (known as Option 1) must be stopped immediately, and that the Government should preserve the current bridge, and historic Thompson Square.

I believe this is a poorly thought through project, out of step with the needs of the Windsor and wider Hawkesbury community. Thus, it would be most appropriate for the Government to investigate the construction of a third crossing of the Hawkesbury River, which by-passes Windsor's town centre; a solution which would genuinely address the traffic issues in the Hawkesbury.

In summary, my issues with the Windsor Bridge Replacement Project are:

1. Poor consultation initially, and inaccurate information used as the basis of that consultation;
2. Evidence of a predetermined intention to choose Option 1, which is not the best outcome for the local community nor through traffic;
3. A callous disregard for the rich and unique heritage – both colonial and Indigenous – within the precinct;
4. A lack of understanding about the economic and social costs imposed by Option 1; and
5. An unsatisfactory traffic outcome for local and through traffic.

I would encourage committee members to visit Thompson Square and the Windsor Bridge site, and to talk to the residents who have staged an occupation of the site for almost five years – Australia's longest running heritage protest. They are community members from diverse backgrounds, work backgrounds, social backgrounds, bound by the shared belief that the proposed modern concrete structure will destroy a unique heritage precinct, while providing infrastructure that does not address Windsor's needs now or in the future.

The threat that the Windsor Bridge Replacement Project poses to the nationally significant heritage at Thompson Square is real, and is cause for genuine concern. This is a site listed under the State Heritage Register for its importance to our community, and any project which compromises the integrity of this historical site ought to be opposed.

I trust that this submission, which directly follows this cover letter, is useful to the Committee. I would be very happy to appear before you. If any committee members have any further questions regarding the content of this submission, or require any further information, please do not hesitate to get in contact with my office.

Yours sincerely,



Susan Templeman MP
Federal Member for Macquarie
25 January 2018

SUBMISSION OF MS SUSAN TEMPLEMAN MP

a) The current Windsor Bridge

There is contradictory information about the current state of repair of the existing Windsor Bridge. A report commissioned into the structural condition of the existing Windsor Bridge by the Department of Planning and Infrastructure in 2013, and prepared by Peter Stewart Consulting Pty Ltd, found that “the bridge is safe for current use”.¹ The same report found that “the condition of the existing bridge is not in a dire condition and could relatively economically be refurbished and strengthened”, and that the only threat to the existing bridge is the RMS² neglect in properly maintaining it; noting that maintenance on the bridge over the last two decades has been minimal.³ The report states that demolishing the bridge would be a “great loss to... this state significant structure”,⁴ and recommends that the existing bridge be kept, which with only a small amount of expenditure would be serviceable for more than 50 years to come and a bypass be built.⁵

This independent report directly contradicts the RMS falsehood that any restoration of the existing bridge would “only extend its functional life by a few years” and that it “does not meet today’s standards”.⁶ I would submit that the facts on the ground regarding the usage of the bridge contradicts the claim that the RMS claim that the existing bridge is in a state of disrepair. If the RMS had serious concerns about the state of the bridge, I would expect to see moves to reduce heavy vehicle use which, instead, is increasing.

It is therefore clear that:

- 1) According to the reports of independent engineers, the existing Windsor Bridge is fit for use;
- 2) That the RMS has provided several contradicting statements, with no clear evidence to refute the evidence within the Peter Stewart Consulting independent engineers report; and
- 3) That any issues with bridge maintenance have been compounded by a failure of the RMS to adequately maintain the integrity of the bridge over the last two decades; and that the RMS has failed to take steps to mitigate any potential issues with the bridge, such as reducing heavy vehicle usage.

¹ Peter Stewart Consulting Pty Ltd, *A Review and Consideration of the Structural Condition of the existing Windsor Bridge: Final Review* (Department of Infrastructure and Planning, 2013) 11. Available at: https://majorprojects.affinitylive.com/public/22b66dff343265c6d9c82da7a2ba9b9f/Final%20Engineering%20Review%20Report%20on%20existing%20Windsor%20Bridge_160813.pdf

² Within this submission, the term ‘RMS’ is used for the present day NSW Roads and Maritime Services, and ‘RTA’ for decisions made, publications issued or information received under its predecessor organisation, NSW Roads and Traffic Authority.

³ Peter Stewart Consulting Pty Ltd, above n 1, 31.

⁴ Ibid 29.

⁵ Ibid 31.

⁶ Roads and Maritime Services (NSW), *Why does Windsor need a new bridge?*, NSW Government <<http://www.rms.nsw.gov.au/projects/sydney-west/windsor-bridge-replacement/why-does-windsor-need-a-new-bridge.html>>

b) Replacement Bridge Project

i. Options presented to the community

In 2009, the RMS put nine options on display from 13 July -14 August, at three Government sites. The wider community was given only a month in which to be aware of and evaluate the options. On the basis of that initial consultation the project quickly moved to Option 1 being the preferred option.

The initial consultation, nearly a decade ago, remains the basis for the NSW Government's decision to stay committed to this project, and fails to take into account a shift in public sentiment about the importance of maintaining the unique heritage of Thompson Square, and the community recognition of the inadequacy of the traffic solution that Option 1 provides.

In looking at the options, it is clear that most of them were designed to be rejected immediately. 8 of the 9 options presented involved splitting Windsor in two. Only one sub-standard bypass option was presented for consideration. The Government Options Review Workshop ('the Workshop Report'), held in Parramatta in 2011, aimed to "involve a broad spectrum of stakeholders and others with interest in the project" to reduce the number of options to a short list.⁸ This discussion included not a single representatives from the local community (bar the Mayor and General Manager of Hawkesbury City Council), but included fourteen (14) RTA/RMS bureaucrats and six (6) State Government representatives.⁹

In addition, the 2011 Workshop Report clearly shows the lack of understanding by participants in the review workshop of what Thompson Square actually is. Additionally, it is incredibly concerning that, given the vast number of RTA/RMS staff attending the workshop, no correction to the record was made.

In a separate 2011 Options Report, the RTA language indicates that they had no understanding that "Thompson Square" is not the small area of grass that sits in the middle of the Square. Thompson Square, as documented on the State Heritage Register, encompasses all the buildings that surround the grass and the road, and extends to their back boundaries. Therefore, the RTA's description of Option 1 as an option that would "Remove the current road through Thompson Square", was wildly inaccurate.¹⁰ What it should have said is that it would replace a road sympathetic to the Georgian character of the Square with a modern, concrete structure, totally out of character with the Square's architecture and unsympathetic to its community use. This lack of understanding, or the potentially deliberate false description of the Square, has continued to this day in statements from the RMS and Government MPs.

⁸ Tierney Page Kirkland Pty Ltd, *Windsor Bridge over the Hawkesbury River: Government options review workshop report* (Roads and Traffic Authority of NSW, August 2011) Executive Summary. Available at: <http://www.rms.nsw.gov.au/documents/projects/sydney-west/windsor-bridge-replacement/windsor-bridge-gov-options-review-workshop-rep-aug2011.pdf>

⁹ Ibid 21.

¹⁰ Roads and Traffic Authority of NSW, *Windsor Bridge over the Hawkesbury River: Options report* (Roads and Traffic Authority of NSW, August 2011) 7. Available at: <http://www.rms.nsw.gov.au/documents/projects/sydney-west/windsor-bridge-replacement/windsor-bridge-options-report-aug2011.pdf>

More importantly, any claim that the community supported Option 1 is flawed on the basis that individuals surveyed were given false information. In fact, there was never an intention to “remove the road through Thompson Square” but an intention to build a bigger road through the historic Square.

The RMS’ approach to consultation can best be described in an independent traffic report by Cambray Consulting, commissioned by the Department of Planning and Infrastructure. The report found that the Government was “focussed on justifying the preferred option, as opposed to undertaking a thorough evaluation into alternative options”, and recommended that Government investigate alternative options.¹¹ The Government has not investigated these alternate options thoroughly, and has failed to adequately and truthfully represent both the planned project, and alternative options to the community in a method free of bias.



A rough approximation of the entire Thompson Square precinct. Thompson Square is not just the patches of grass, but is the entire area, including the surrounding buildings and roads, many of which have been there since Macquarie’s proclamation of the Square.

¹¹ Cambray Consulting, *Windsor Bridge Replacement Project: Traffic Review of Information Provided by the Applicant (Roads and Maratime Services)* (Cambray Consulting, August 2013) 70. Available at: https://majorprojects.affinitylive.com/public/73c09e5a9e90d23f750d8d5447be63be/001.%200001_Windsor%20Bridge_Traffic%20Review%20Report.pdf

ii. Traffic benefits

The NSW Government's original plan when the Bridge Replacement Project was announced was to have a two lane bridge replacing a two lane bridge. In response to community outcry, it was converted to a three lane bridge (two lanes southbound, and one northbound).

In a document dated June 2012, Roads and Maritime Services NSW admitted that the Windsor Bridge Replacement Project would provide "very little traffic improvement", noting that traffic in the area is caused by chokepoints at the intersections of Macquarie St and Bridge St, and Windsor Road and Hawkesbury Valley Way.¹² There are no plans to address the issues at these intersections.

Many years of anecdotal evidence indicates that residents from the north side of the Hawkesbury River – in communities such as Wilberforce, Glossodia and Freemans Reach – can face 30 minute delays as single lane roads merge as they approach the current bridge, and that the snails pace continues well after the bridge is crossed, due to the single lane road and the turning of vehicles from Macquarie Rd on the other side of it.

The new bridge will have two southbound lanes, and one northbound lane; which will not be marked so that there is a capacity for contraflow operations. During the AM peak, the southbound lanes will have the highest traffic volume; and conversely, during the PM peak, the northbound lane will have the highest traffic volume. The bridge, therefore, will not assist in reducing traffic, particularly in the PM peak period.

The Cambray Consulting report, commissioned by the NSW Department of Planning and Infrastructure recommended that alternative options be investigated.¹³

The RMS' own data, in the 2011 Options Report, states that "The traffic data shows that 70 per cent of vehicles using the Windsor Bridge crossing are considered to be through traffic. Vehicles are using this crossing as a through route, to get to a destination other than the Windsor township. Much of this traffic is likely to be freight transport or people travelling to work in other areas of Sydney, and then returning home."¹⁴

There is no reason to channel this traffic through the narrow bottleneck of Windsor. Drivers, whether they are going to Windsor or travelling through, would be better served by a bypass of Windsor. This would significantly reduce the current traffic loads through Thompson Square. A bypass would also suit the longer-term planning for the M9. Draft corridors in Transport for NSW documents for that route show a wide area being considered, and sensible planning would involve a bypass that has the ability to link to those planned new roads.¹⁵

¹² Roads and Maritime Services NSW, *Windsor Bridge Questions and Answers* (Roads and Maritime Services June 2012).

¹³ Ibid 11.

¹⁴ Roads and Traffic Authority of NSW, above n 10, 42.

¹⁵ For more information, see: <https://www.transport.nsw.gov.au/projects/current-projects/outer-sydney-orbital-corridor-study>

The other factor that seems to be ignored is that the only other bridge across the Hawkesbury River for this community is at North Richmond, and it has similar congestion. Some of this congestion is caused by residents who live between the two bridges using Richmond Bridge over Windsor Bridge, thus adding to the volumes down the Bells Line of Road.

A by-pass at Windsor would not only reduce the congestion on Windsor Bridge, but make a significant improvement to the traffic volumes at Richmond Bridge. The construction of a new two-lane bridge at North Richmond to improve the flows was, in 2012, estimated at \$155 million. While in the long term those extra lanes across the river, and with greater flood protection, are essential a by-pass at Windsor may extend the life of the current Richmond Bridge and this should be considered and investigated.

Therefore, the case for the Windsor Bridge Replacement Project Option 1 doesn't make sense from either a short or long term traffic management perspective. The new bridge will provide little to no improvement on traffic in the area, and in the process, will destroy important Australian heritage. Alternatives should be investigated.

iii. Economic, social and heritage impacts

The Windsor Bridge Replacement Project involves the demolition of historic Windsor Bridge, opened in 1874, and putting a new bridge and road through Thompson Square, a heritage precinct. This plan would do irrevocable damage to the heritage that is of State, national and Indigenous significance.

We can not underestimate the economic, social and heritage value of Thompson Square.

In 2017, the Greater Sydney Commission in its Draft Western City District Plan recognised that Windsor "has some of the oldest...buildings in Australia and an emerging tourism base focused on colonial history".¹⁶ Its recommendation to government is to "support master planning processes for Richmond and Windsor that...activate streets and places, grow the tourism economy and respect and enhance the significant heritage value and assets".¹⁷ The NSW Government's commitment to Option 1 fails on every one of these recommendations.

The (then) Director-General of the Department of Planning and Infrastructure, Sam Haddad, said in his final report into the Project that the new bridge would "have long-term negative impacts on Thompson Square in terms of its fabric and character", and would cause "adverse impacts" to Aboriginal heritage.¹⁸

The entirety of Thompson Square and buildings in the surrounding area are listed on the State Heritage Register, yet the tender acknowledges "direct impacts on the fabric and

¹⁶ Greater Sydney Commission *Draft Greater Sydney Region Plan* (Greater Sydney Commission, 2017) 94. Available at: https://gsc-public-1.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/web_gsc_draft_western_city_district_plan.pdf

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Patty, Anna 'Windsor Bridge replacement gets green light despite "questionable" legality', *Sydney Morning Herald* (online), 19 December 2013, <<http://www.smh.com.au/nsw/windsor-bridge-replacement-gets-green-light-despite-questionable-legality-20131203-2yooa.html>>

curtilage of listed heritage items and direct impacts on archaeological relics and remains”,¹⁹ including a range of additional historic buildings such as the Former School of Arts building, the Doctors House, and heritage-listed houses on Bridge Street. The 2011 Options Report shows 45 items of heritage in and around the Square listed on either the State Heritage Register, the Hawkesbury Local Environmental Plan 1989, the National Estate Register and/or the National Trust Australia Register.²⁰

Thompson Square, the oldest public square in the country, is of outstanding heritage value to Australia’s cultural history because it is a surviving physical setting from the beginning of European settlement in 1795. Grants were allocated on the Hawkesbury in 1794 but an area of high ridge sloping down to the Hawkesbury River was left vacant until January 1795 when Acting Governor William Paterson authorised use of the area as the government precinct. A wharf and storehouse were built, followed by a granary and soldier’s barracks. Visual evidence from c.1807 shows the form of what is recognisably Thompson Square – a landing place ringed by government buildings. Its position representing government authority was made clear to the settlers in 1804 when Irish rebel convict Philip Cunningham was hanged from the stairway of the government granary for his role in the Castle Hill convict uprising.

As the settlement developed other buildings edged the precinct including accommodation for officials (including the governor), a school, church, thereby maintaining its position as an official focus for the district. Many of these survive today.

With only a little imagination, to alight from a vehicle in Thompson Square is to be transported back to a Georgian era of Colonial Australia which you can’t find anywhere else in the country. Though at a remote settlement, the Square (utilising the existing civic precinct) was the first formal designed urban place.

The significance of Thompson Square – named after reformed convict Andrew Thompson – is in the physical evidence of the public recognition of the role of emancipated convicts in building this new society. Thompson Square was the first public place formally named by the Governor to honour the contributions to the nation of an ex-convict; providing physical evidence of a society in transition from a penal settlement to a free colony, one which valued the fair go, and held a view that people could be redeemed. This is where the Australian concept of the fair go was born, so its retention is of incredible value to the nation.

It was always known that significant heritage lay below the current Thompson Square. These are well documented, particularly by Edward Higginbotham, and it should have been no surprise to the RMS that early settlement construction would be revealed by their excavations. Archaeologists have recently uncovered two sections of brick barrel drain, dating back as early as 1814. The photos of this have been released by the RMS. Another remnant of this early infrastructure construction can be found at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music, and great lengths were taken to preserve them *in situ* when work occurred on that site.

¹⁹ Roads and Maritime Services NSW, *Windsor Bridge Replacement Job Specific Requirements* (Roads and Maritime Services, September 2017) 21.

²⁰ Roads and Maritime Services, above n 10, 19-21.

The brick barrel drains are in addition to the previous discoveries by local heritage experts of an historic Telford-style road on the approaches to Thompson Square - possibly the original road from Sydney to Windsor- and the remnants of a Francis Greenway-designed wharf.

It should be remembered that Labor's decision to move very cautiously on the Windsor Bridge project was directly related to the impact on heritage. In 2010, the Member for Hawkesbury, Ray Williams, claimed that talk about damage to heritage was a 'red herring'. Member for Riverstone, John Aqualina, told Parliament:

"The member for Hawkesbury was incorrect when he said that the alignment proposed in option No. 1 will not have a heritage impact. In fact, the existing road is very narrow and widening it to integrate it with the new bridge will have a considerable impact on the heritage and history of the area. Those are the issues delaying the project and we must resolve them. The member for Hawkesbury well knows that if we make the wrong decision it will upset many people. The history of the Hawkesbury area is vital to the State and the nation and we have every right to preserve it. The member does himself ill to belittle the heritage impact of the area."²¹

The Government's own Heritage Council of NSW has previously opposed the project due to its impact on the significant heritage of Thompson Square and the history of the town of Windsor. They have been joined by Engineers Australia, The National Trust of Australia, The National Trust of NSW, The Australian Council of National Trusts, the Federation of Australian Historical Societies, the Royal Historical Society of Victoria, the History Trust of South Australia, the Royal Western Australian Historical Society, the Historical Society of the Northern Territory, the Tasmanian Historical Research Association, the Yetholm History Society (Scotland) and the Canberra and District Historical Society; as well as the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union who have placed a green ban on construction at the site.

The construction of a new, modern road through the oldest public square in the country would cause irrevocable and irreparable harm to Thompson Square, and by extension, Australia's colonial heritage.

In addition, the project threatens significant Indigenous heritage in the Aeolian Sands below the site, believed to be home to Indigenous artefacts tens of thousands of years old. The RMS Strategic Conservation Management Plan noted that evidence has been found of Aboriginal use of the river banks from at least forty thousand years ago.²² Furthermore, previous researchers found that "the potential for more evidence of aboriginal life being found within the study area" is highly likely.²³ The RMS has conceded that the Hawkesbury-Nepean River corridor "contains some of the earliest evidence of Aboriginal occupation in Australia", including at Windsor Museum, where a 1.8m body of sand yielded over 12,000 stone artefacts, some of which were over 34,000 years old.²⁴ The current archaeological

²¹ New South Wales, *Parliamentary Debates*, Legislative Assembly. 29 October 2010, 27219 (John Aquilina, Parliamentary Secretary).

²² Roads and Maritime Services, *Thompson Square Windsor NSW: Strategic Conservation Management Plan* (Roads and Maritime Services, 20 March 2017) 41.

²³ Higginbotham, E. *Report on the Archaeological Excavation of the Site of the Extensions to the Hawkesbury Museum*, 7 Thompson Square, Windsor, N.S.W. 1992 (1993).

²⁴ Austral Archaeology Pty Ltd, *Windsor Museum, NSW: Aboriginal archaeological and cultural salvage excavation* (Austral Archaeology Pty Ltd, 2011).

works are taking place using heavy machinery and excavation tools. This approach to a site which the RMS has conceded is likely home to Indigenous artefacts of great national and cultural importance is completely irresponsible, and must be halted immediately.

It is for these reasons that Emergency National Heritage Listing has been sought from the Federal Minister for the Environment, the Hon Josh Frydenberg MP. A decision is pending.

Thompson Square also provides a central meeting place for people to gather. Unlike many of the Hawkesbury's other public spaces, which are some distance away from shops and amenities, Thompson Square is a place where families buy fish and chips on a Friday evening and sit in the park; they have picnics and stroll down the road for an ice cream; and they wander through the popular Sunday markets and rest under the shade of the old trees to escape the heat of the day (remembering that it was this area that held the record with a 47 degree day in 2017).

Given the increased heavy traffic through Thompson Square, there are already threats to community use of the Square. It is difficult to understand why anyone would want to use the public space there, to enjoy some peace and shade, if the proposed bridge and structure goes ahead.

Instead of leveraging the unique colonial heritage and river-side location, Windsor's heart will become a uninhabitable traffic thoroughfare. This is a massive lost opportunity to reinvigorate Windsor and the wider Hawkesbury region, and removes one of its key economic hopes.

iv. Flood benefits

The need for better evacuation routes during flood events has never been more pressing, and the NSW Government is missing an opportunity with this project. Hawkesbury Council's 2012 Flood Plan show the extent of flooding risk in and around Windsor (marked as **Appendix A** to this submission). It is additionally important to note that the Hawkesbury-Nepean flood plain has been described as "probably close to the worst flood risk in Australia", and that leaving the region during a flood could prove difficult due to clogged and inundated roads.²⁵

Option 1 provides minimal additional flood resilience. While the bridge itself is raised around 2 metres, the surrounding roads will not be. The RMS conceded in 2011 that "This project has nothing to do with flood relief", as the northern approach roads would still be inundated.²⁶ The primary point here is that the proposed new bridge could be high enough to avoid impact from flooding, but the surrounding roads, intersections and floodplains *won't* be improved to a similar quality, and as a result, access to the bridge itself will be cut off during flood periods.

The only way to improve flood immunity is for a bypass of Windsor.

²⁵ Saulwick, Jacob 'When Sydney's rivers run high', *Sydney Morning Herald* (online), February 2 2013 <<http://www.smh.com.au/environment/water-issues/when-sydneys-rivers-run-high-20130201-2dpyq.html>>

²⁶ Tierney Page Kirkland Pty Ltd, above n 8, 6.

v. Project costs

I would urge the Committee to investigate the mixed and inconsistent information about the cost of the project including:

- The 2011 Report indicates a fixed budget for the project had already been determined. “However Option 6 performs very poorly in respect of value for money and exceeds the funding allocated by the NSW Government for the project.”²⁷
- In June 2008, the NSW Government announced it had committed \$25 million to replace Windsor Bridge.²⁸ Analysis by the RTA in 2011 showed that every potential option, except for those options which involved a refurbishment or restoration of the existing bridge, exceeded the initial budget. However the Member for Hawkesbury, Dominic Perrottet, is quoted by CAWB indicating that there was no fixed and final budget for the project and that “the work will be funded until it is completed”.
- Analysis by CAWB, based on the letting of NSW contracts, of the archaeological excavation and salvage currently underway runs into the multi-millions of dollars,

vi. Cost benefit analysis process

While the RTA/RMS has provided its cost benefit analyses, there is a broader question around value for money of this project, relating to economic opportunity cost and flood immunity cost. The estimated \$50 million additional funding required to construct a bypass provides much better long term value for money.

A great number of my constituents, heritage groups, historical societies, community organisations, former RMS officials and engineers and myself strongly believe that the Windsor Bridge Replacement Project is a deeply flawed plan.

The best possible alternative is to avoid running a major arterial route through the oldest public square in Australia, and instead investigate the possibility of a small town bypass, avoiding Windsor. RMS modelling has proven this option to be “significantly better” than the current Windsor Bridge Replacement Project,³⁰ and would provide the opportunity to “develop a road that fits sympathetically into the landscape”.³¹

There are a great number of potential alternatives to the Windsor Bridge Replacement Project, options which would genuinely alleviate the Hawkesbury’s ongoing traffic problems and not destroy heritage of national, state and Indigenous heritage.

It is of paramount importance that the Government investigate such alternative options, and halt the works occurring at the site immediately whilst it does so. Any investigation or analysis into alternative options should also involve consultation with stakeholders, including local residents, heritage, historical and community groups and Hawkesbury City Council

²⁷ Roads and Traffic Authority of NSW, above n 10, 76.

²⁸ Roads and Traffic Authority of NSW, *Windsor Bridge Over the Hawkesbury River: Report on community consultation* (Roads and Traffic Authority of NSW, November 2009).

³⁰ Roads and Traffic Authority of NSW, *Windsor Bridge over Hawkesbury River: Traffic Modelling and Evaluation of Options – Preliminary Report*, (Roads and Traffic Authority of NSW, August 2011), 11.

³¹ Government Architects Office, *Landscape and visual investigation for bridge options at Windsor* (Roads and Traffic Authority of NSW August 2011) 19.

c) Other related matters

I wish to raise one issue relating to the behaviour and attitude of three current and former State MPs on this matter: Bart Bassett, Ray Williams and Kevin Connolly.

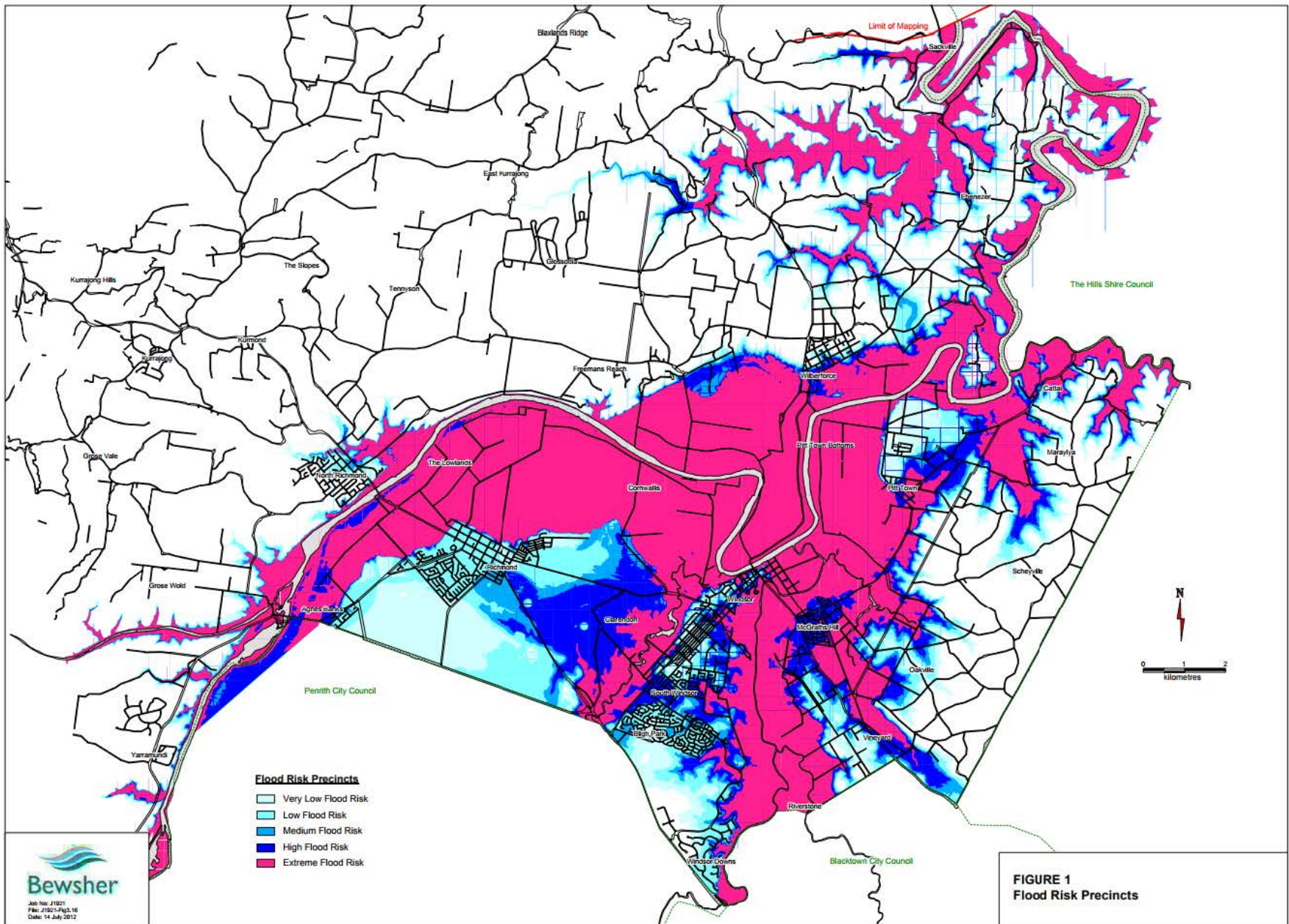
Their refusal to meet with community members involved in the Community Action Against Windsor Bridge group – CAWB – has been extraordinary.

As supporting evidence I include a letter published on the CAWB website, marked **Appendix B**.

I also urge the Committee to watch the report on A Current Affair in December 2017 to understand the lack of interest, respect and support that local members have given the community involved in trying to protect the area they love: <http://bit.ly/2n9dqve>

If committee members require any further information, please do not hesitate to get in contact with my office.

APPENDIX A:	Hawkesbury City Council 2012 Flood Plan figure demonstrating the risk of flooding in the region of Windsor and surrounding suburbs.
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APPENDIX B: Correspondence between Mr Bart Bassett MP and Community Against Windsor Bridge (CAWB) members.

Response From Bart Bassett To CAWB

Dear Mr Miller

I acknowledge receipt of your email containing correspondence regarding the Windsor Bridge replacement project which has been approved by the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure in December 2013.

I note that you and other members of your organisation have requested a meeting with myself and the Members for Riverstone, Kevin Conolly and Hawkesbury Ray Williams to discuss certain points that you have raised in the correspondence pertaining to the approvals process for the proposed new bridge. I further note that one of the proposed discussion items relates to our collective vision, as Members of Parliament, for Windsor in 2020, which is no direct correlation with the bridge replacement project. I like my colleague Kevin Connolly noted your offer that you would like to meet, "before commencing a major campaign in response to the Minister's action".

The Member for Riverstone is correct in his assertion that, If such a campaign has already been decided upon, it may appear that your request to meet is not a bona fide attempt at dialogue, but rather a step in that campaign. This impression is only reinforced through the inclusion in your letter of conditions on which you wish to meet, i.e. assurances of various kinds.

Until last night it was my intention to accept the request to meet with you in good faith and on the terms that were put to you by the Member for Riverstone, however after seeing footage of comments made by your spokesperson Ms Kate Mackaness from last night's Seven News Bulletin, I have now changed my mind and will not be meeting with you and/or representatives of CAWB now or ever!

Ms Mackaness told Seven News "the destruction of the hotel will almost certainly pave the way for a four lane highway to be built right through the middle of Australia's oldest town Square"

This statement from one of the leaders and spokespersons from your organisation does not to me indicate that you are willing to meet with an open mind and confirms my view that your organisation has already decided to embark, or should I say continue, a campaign against the State Coalition Government.

Ms Mackaness, I am informed was a senior advisor to the former State Labor Planning Minister Tony Kelly, who was found by the ICAC to have acted corruptly over the sale of lands owned by Unions NSW, the Industrial Wing of the Australian Labor Party. The presence of a former Labor staffer, who I am told remains an active member of the Labor Party, as your organisations spokesperson demonstrates to me that CAWB is nothing more than a stalking horse for the Labor Party to push their political agenda against the State Liberal/Nationals Coalition Government. I welcome debate, diversity of opinions and the right to protest against the decisions of elected governments and/or elected officials, however by allowing such a person to publically make fallacious statements, as was made on last night's Seven News Bulletin, I cannot respect your organisation and feel that you have to date not been fair or balanced in your approach to this issue.

Now that the bridge replacement project has been approved, after nearly six years of discussion, consultation, public exhibition processes and submissions, I concur with the Member for Riverstone's view that there is no point in having a meeting to re-debate the perceived merits or failings of the project.

On a "without prejudice" basis I too respectfully accept that your organisation and your supporters do not support the project, however as outlined because of the continued presence of known operatives from the Australian Labor Party and the former State Labor Government on your organisations leadership group, I will now be declining the request to meet.

Yours sincerely,

Bart Bassett MP
Member for Londonderry

Response From Kate Mackaness (CAWB member) to Bart Bassett

Dear Mr Bassett,

Thank you for providing such a detailed explanation of your refusal to meet with CAWB, a community organisation fighting to save Windsor's Macquarie Era town square. As you are aware, CAWB has been calling for a sensible long-term solution to the Hawkesbury's traffic issues with the construction of a bypass.

The time you have taken to outline your concerns is appreciated.

I am responding because you name me on three separate occasions in that correspondence as the focus of those concerns.

I am, I must say, perplexed. You appear to have only recently recalled we met when I represented the then Minister for Planning and Heritage at a meeting with you at Parliament House in 2010. Your group had unfortunately travelled into the CBD on the wrong day. As you would appreciate, it was not possible to squeeze in an additional meeting during Parliament, so you and your delegation spoke with me instead of the Minister.

Having realised a member of CAWB was someone you had met as a policy advisor to a former Minister I am further puzzled by your reaction. There seems to be a degree of hostility in your correspondence, based on the incorrect assumption I am a member of the Australian Labor Party. As it happens I am not a member of any political party. What's more, it is entirely irrelevant whether I belong to a party or not and I find your rhetoric extremely offensive. It was also, last I checked, not an offence to publicly express an opinion, even when it contradicts the views of a Member of the NSW State Parliament. Additionally, I was unaware it was not possible to be a member of any political party, other than Liberal or National, and still be treated as a citizen of this State.

Whilst your attempts to discredit me in some obscure way by naming me in the context of an ICAC investigation are unworthy of any Parliamentarian, your description of me as a 'known operative' of an opposition party is positively hilarious. However, you do thousands of loyal public servants a disservice. The vast majority of public servants serve the Government of the day, Liberal or Labor (as did I), with loyalty and diligence.

It has not been uncommon for high calibre policy advisors to be drawn from the Public Service for their knowledge and experience, providing the Government of the day with the best possible advice. Public servants are non-political. Do not make the mistake of judging

them by your own manifestly inadequate standards.

In the interests of accuracy, I have listened to a recording of the program you cite and can confirm I said, in response to a question from a journalist: "If it's knocked down? I think it clears the way for a four lane highway right through the oldest public square in Australia". However, you quote me as saying "the destruction of the hotel will almost certainly pave the way for a four lane highway to be built right through the middle of Australia's oldest town Square". Were you not to have included quotation marks as a direct quote, attributed to the Channel 7 broadcast, I would not raise the issue.

It is disappointing you refuse to meet with CAWB. The request for a meeting was made in good faith and the ridiculous contortions you have gone through to score points against a request from such an authoritative, well-known and respected group are astonishing. Of particular concern to voters will be your insistence there is no direct correlation between the bridge replacement and your vision, as a Member of Parliament, for Windsor by 2020. It is evident the proposed two lane bridge is already inadequate; a solution experts have repeatedly warned the Government will destroy Thompson Square. There must therefore be, in your mind, other matters that mitigate the looming disaster. Your advice was simply being sought on these matters.

As a matter of courtesy, please be advised I will shortly be seeking a meeting with you to discuss how you intend to assist to save the Jolly Frog in Windsor, a heritage building recently damaged by fire. Any reference to politics (should you again decline to meet with me) might lead a reasonable person to conclude you are once more discriminating against me on the (incorrect) basis of some wrongly assumed political affiliation.

In conclusion, as soon as the NSW Government passes watertight legislation that permanently and irrevocably guarantees there will NEVER be four lanes of roadway across McGrath's Flats; across South Creek at today's Fitzroy Bridge; from the Fitzroy Bridge to George Street; through Thompson Square and/or across the Hawkesbury River at Thompson Square, I would be delighted to issue a humble apology and full public retraction of a personal belief, as stated on Channel 7.

I, on the other hand, am entitled to an apology right now, Mr. Bassett. I await it with some interest. The Chair of Community Action for Windsor Bridge has writing separately to the Premier on this matter.

Yours sincerely

Kate Mackaness