

**Submission  
No 204**

**INQUIRY INTO WINDSOR BRIDGE REPLACEMENT  
PROJECT**

**Name:** Mr John Fitzgibbon

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The Director,  
Portfolio Committee No.5,  
Parliament House,  
Macquarie St,  
Sydney, NSW 2000.

January 26, 2018

Dear Director,

I am writing in regard to the Inquiry into the Windsor Bridge replacement project and wish you to accept this as my submission to this Inquiry.

My name is John Fitzgibbon and I grew up on the Hawkesbury River and farmed in this area for most of my life. I am very familiar with the nature and consequences of flooding on this floodplain and with the roads and transport network of this area. In earlier years I also obtained a Post Graduate Diploma in Environmental Studies from Macquarie University and was involved in developing a multidisciplinary management strategy for the Cooks River catchment in Sydney. I have lived in Ross St, Windsor for the past 33 years.

I mention these things only to provide a background to my thinking on the current plan for a replacement bridge at Windsor.

I think this proposal is seriously flawed.

Clearly, from all the information available, the benefits, such as they are, are not great in terms of improved traffic flow and are minimal in terms of providing access in times of flood events. The unaltered state of the feeder roads on either side of the proposed new bridge, the ever-increasing traffic load (especially heavy vehicles), and the low levels of the surrounding floodplain roads, are severely limiting factors.

While restricted flood access is inevitable for any proposal, transport flow and accessibility for heavy vehicles, through traffic, and local road users, would be much better facilitated if a bypass of the township was to be built.

A proper and transparent evaluation of a bypass seems to have been absent from the original planning process.

Still, however limited and contentious are the benefits or otherwise of the current proposal, they are quite secondary to the alarming consequences of this proposal for the township of Windsor and its historic centre, 'Thompson Square'.

The brutal indifference of the plan for a new bridge to this heritage site of national importance is shameful. This oldest public square in Australia is intrinsic to the history of the earliest days of European settlement, as indeed is the township of Windsor itself. The struggles and yearnings of those earliest convict settlers and free men and women of NSW is absolutely evoked and symbolized in the story of Thompson Square, and is memorialised in the buildings, spaces, archeology, surrounding streetscapes and natural heritage.

Such an important precinct in Australia:

The site which Governor Macquarie named Thompson Square, placing there, a permanent sign, indicating to all who saw it, that Australia was to be a land where men and women were not to be judged by their privileged standing, through birth or circumstance, but rather, by their character and their determination to make good and build a better, inclusive society - one based on egalitarian principles, the so-called, 'fair go'.

The site, where history, in the third oldest settlement after Sydney Cove and Parramatta, was enacted on a daily basis. Where the river trade and the development of farming and settlement were to gradually and often brutally, dispossess the original Aboriginal inhabitants and lead to agricultural sustainability for the young colony.

The site, where the tensions between the aggrieved Irish exiles and their goalers, would be cast in stark relief by the hanging of Phillip Cunningham, the leader of the 'Vinegar Hill Rebellion' on a gibbet by the Square.

The site of early Australia's most important inland port, a bustling transport hub, utilized by craft built by the first shipbuilders of this country. A port, soaked in the rum trade under the control of the famous 'Rum Corps', complete even with a 'Smuggler's Tunnel', still apparently in existence.

There are many aspects to Thompson Square in Windsor, which attest to its importance and these are reflected in multiple heritage listings for the buildings and the Square itself.

These are just some of the reasons why we should not be acting to irreversibly degrade this site. To not take this historic opportunity to save Thompson Square and Windsor from the ever-increasing and sad effects of intrusive road infrastructure and heavy vehicle traffic would be a great mistake.

Considering also, the unique heritage of the bridge itself, and the amenity of Windsor overall, it is absolutely necessary to stop this project now and adopt a proposal to bypass Windsor. This will provide a solution that will benefit this community, NSW and Australia at large and will be applauded by future generations.

Yours sincerely,

John Fitzgibbon

BSC. (UNSW), Grad. Dip. Env. Stud. (Macq), Grad. Dip. Visual Arts (City Art Institute)