

Submission
No 333

INQUIRY INTO WINDSOR BRIDGE REPLACEMENT PROJECT

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially
Confidential

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SALVAGE

I wish to make a submission against the LNP State Government's and the RMS's WBRP also known as Option 1 which requires a new elevated bridge to be built across the Hawkesbury River and deep into the historic precinct known as Thompson Square. The government State Infrastructure Law allows such a travesty to take place. Under this Law any Heritage Listing/Protection of a State level are "turned off" to allow the destruction to be carried out free of any encumbrances to the Government or developer. No one can question what is done and the Government does not have to present its case to enact the Law to any independent body. In Thompson Square, the only remaining Georgian Square in Australia, the RMS is at present ripping away the earth in the lower Square in a practice known as "Salvage Archaeology". The RMS is using large diggers to carry out even what they themselves said they would do with careful hand troweling. Many items are simply being smashed with digger and put into dump trucks and taken away. "Windsor Bridge Destruction" FB Page has several videos of this as do other pages which also make use of "stills". The RMS has uncovered the unique 1814 convict built barrel brick vaulted drains large enough to walk through. These were ordered to be built by Lachlan Macquarie. The RMS made statements before the dig that they could not find them and didn't know where they were. They also stated they couldn't find the Francis Greenway wharf. The position of these items has been known for a very long time by archaeologists like Mr Higginbotham who reported on the outstanding significance of this structure as being the very earliest example of Government infrastructure in the Colony of Australia. The Wharves have been recently photographed by local historians and appear in a Heritage Walk given by a volunteer every 2 weeks in Windsor. Yet, despite the unique and outstanding quality of this find, the RMS still is in pursuit of its plan to build a bridge which is defunct before it is built because according to the RMS the traffic on the new bridge would have "maxed out" by 2026. But the traffic has already reached this point so the building of this bridge - Option 1 - is appearing more and more like an act of malicious vindictiveness carried out against the citizens of Windsor and the Hawkesbury who have so valiantly stood against the destruction of our Nation's history and fought for a better solution for Windsor. Just to point out the hypocrisy of this situation, I would like to introduce you to a family who lives in a small house just down the road from Thompson Square. The house was built in the 1960's and has no remarkable historic value and has no heritage listing on it. It stands on the site of Windsor's old tannery and thus beneath its earth lie some items of interest to the layman. The owner was very sympathetic to the heritage buried beneath his land and began some work on his house making alterations etc. In the process he came across some items which he kept preserved and which he researched. In deed he has carefully researched the history of the Tannery and has found out much information and collected photographs from many sources. However, he had a Section 136 placed upon him, meaning all work must stop on site for 40 days. He was not even permitted to mow the lawn in case he might disturb some relics. Indeed, he was threatened with a \$1,100,000 fine if he did mow the lawn. These threats were imposed by a Heritage Department Official who told him that selling to a developer would be in his best interests. Meanwhile, down the road, the RMS eagerly smashes legally through heritage items of priceless value to our Nation's heritage without batting an eye. All work should be stopped immediately on the WBRP. Perhaps a Section 136 can be placed on the RMS at Windsor Bridge and Lower Thompson Square. All heritage items should be thoroughly investigated by independent historians and archaeologists as is the practice in many European countries who prize their heritage. All efforts should be made to investigate a bypass for Windsor. All efforts should be made to investigate the source of this WBRP and its validity or lack thereof. I pray that the Upper House Inquiry will deliver justice for our Nation's heritage and transparency for the process used by the RMS in this issue.

PUBLIC CONSULATION

Yesterday was Australia Day and our local LNP Member, Domonic Perrottet ventured into Windsor for the first time since his election to briefly attend the Hawkesbury Council's celebration Day at Governor Phillip Park, just metres downstream from the destructive dig being carried out by him and his Government which will destroy forever the 1814 brick barrel vaulted drains which have laid in pristine condition beneath the Square for over 200 years. The saga of the WBRP , Option 1, the RMS and the State LNP Government is one of intrigue, fake news, distorted facts, mysterious manipulations and manoeuvring since the Project first came to surface in the Hawkesbury. From the first, the RMS had its "preferred Option" - that was, and always has been Option 1. From the beginning the RMS has always tried to garner written public support for its project. Before the plan became public knowledge, as told to me by Hawkesbury citizens, the RMS held "special" meetings with both the Windsor Boat Club (whose operations are in Gov. Phillip Park just downstream from the Windsor Bridge) and Residents of the Peninsular (that section of land between the Hawkesbury River, South Creek and Thompson Square). The Boat Club is opposed to ANY structure which has pylons or even casts a shadow over the river as it believes these two things would interfere with their annual Bridge to Bridge Boat Race. Therefore they would be opposed to any RMS Option which crossed the river between Brooklyn and Windsor Bridge. The Peninsular residents did not want any new road carrying all the trucks (2,5000 back then)and traffic that funnel their way noisily through T.S., going through or anywhere near the Peninsular. Knowing this the RMS convinced the Boat Club and the Residents to sign a Petition in support of Option 1 otherwise, it just might happen that Option 6 (Just down stream from the Windsor Bridge and going through the Peninsular) might somehow "get up" in the upcoming public survey of publicly preferred Options. At the Public Forums, held by the RMS later to inform residents of the RMS plans regarding the WBRP and the demolition of the historic Windsor Bridge (an RMS heritage listed Bridge), when it was felt by the RMS that the residents attending the Forum were becoming uneasy with Option 1 , they told the participants, of which I was one , that they chose Option 1 because :- * They added together the public votes (there were only about 130-158 overall public survey votes) for Option 2 (which was so close to Option 1 and was not a viable suggestion in the first place) and those for Option 1 and because out of those votes Option 1 had the most, they then concluded that Option 1 had won in the Public Survey out of all votes cast for the 9 options originally offered. * They took the 500-600 votes on the Petition which they had obtained via the Boat Club and the Peninsular Residents and told the Public Forum citizens that they had all this popular support for Option1 and basically our objections were really not required and were unwanted. The RMS people who attended the Public Forums were becoming increasingly agitated by the questions being sked by the citizens - so much so - they cancelled the last meeting. * To get more public support because it wasn't getting any from the Public Forum group of citizens, the RMS then resorted to hiring a company, GA Research/AFS Smart Askers/KGA, to run what it called a "Deliberate Forum"where local Hawkesbury residents were randomly selected to attend a free dinner and were paid somewhere between \$200 and \$100 depending on whether they were a business or a home owner. The pretext for this Forum was to give residents a chance to suggest things they felt would improve the Hawkesbury like better roads etc. At some time in the meeting a person mentioned the need for a new bridge and up popped the RMS team ready with their Option1 slide show presentation and experts to give talks and information. At the end of the meeting, residents were asked to sign a petition in favour of Option1. * Option 1 was brought to Council by the then Mayor, Bart Bassett, who told the Councillors that the historic Windsor Bridge was decaying and wasn't safe so a new bridge was needed. Concerned Councillors voted in favour of Option1 with the

exception of Labor Councillor Calvert who had previous knowledge of this plan when the RMS had tried to get Labor to pass this Project but it rejected it on heritage grounds. As more information became available via local residents and their research 4 more Councillors rejected the Option 1 plan. However, the Liberal dominated Council (2004-2016), supported it. The newly elected Council in 2016, no longer LNP dominated. has rejected the Option 1 and has opted to refurbish the Square and to make it the centrepiece of its Tourism plans. * LNP Councillor, Tiffany Tree, told a Candidate's Forum in 2012 that Option 1 was the cheapest Option and if we didn't accept that then we would get nothing. At that time the cost of the Project was \$25 Million. Citizens have since found that "nothing" is not an option. * Independent, LNP supporter, Councillor Bob Porter, made it his business to go around the town of Windsor telling citizens the Windsor Bridge was so old it was going to fall down because it had been "white-anted out". Mothers with children became afraid to use the bridge. But at the same time, the RMS had taken load limits off the bridge allowing it now to carry Fully laden B-Doubles. The issue of Public Support for Option 1 has held a position of importance for the RMS, though why this should be so is a mystery. When State Infrastructure was applied to Thompson Square the RMS plan for Option1 was immediately put to the new LNP Government and passed - though it had already received approval by Ray Williams before the LNP had won office and he was Shadow Minister. So Thompson Square, once a State Listed Heritage Precinct, was now unprotected and the RMS could do as it wished. So why bother with getting public approval? Recently a woman (name can be supplied) wrote to Hawkesbury's local Minister, Dominic Perrottet, saddened by the useless destruction of Thompson Square and she received an immediate response. She then was called by phone by one of Perrottet's office staff who, disregarding her pleas to find a better way to represent her, told her the Project would have to go ahead "because it had so much community support." Is the support referred to the Petition signed by Boat Club members and the residents of the Peninsular as well as the "Deliberate Forum" petition? Dominic Perrottet has refused to meet with opponents of Option 1 and those who want a bypass for Windsor like other small towns have been given. The Shoalhaven River has been given a bypass and its historic bridge has been retained even though it is much younger than Windsor bridge. Tarcutta has a new bypass - 4 lanes wide, 7 kms long with 10 bridges in it...and the list goes on Gunning, Bega, Berry, Macksville Tenterfield etc. Mr Perrottet said at a Candidate's Forum that he would follow RMS advice on this matter. I beg of the Upper House Inquiry that all avenues are explored to find the truth of this saga, because it has been sorely missing since the very beginning. Somewhere in the truth lies the reasons for the lack of transparency in this matter and the unwillingness of Mr Perrottet to release the Working Papers for Option1.

HAWKESBURY CITY COUNCIL

Another Councillor, Bob Porter also pushed hard for this project and told people in the town the old bridge had been white anted out and was going to fall down. He also appeared uninvited and unannounced at a Community Forum meeting which he took over with a speech in favour of the Project.

WINDSOR BRIDGE

In the early stages of CAWB's Tent Protest, a Councillor from Hawkesbury Council, Bob Porter, who was greatly in favour of Option 1, went around the town telling all that the Bridge was ready to fall down "because it had been white-anted out". This caused fear in the community especially amongst young mothers who crossed the bridge daily with their school aged children.

Unbeknown to the populace, the RMS had taken away all load limits on this bridge that was “ready to fall down”, opening it up to BDoubles of all loads.

Ray Williams, State Member of Parliament, Liberal, has consistently announced that the bridge will give flood free access all the way to Wilberforce. But this is an impossible task for the new bridge to perform because its footings are well and truly based on the river’s banks which flood and in bad floods the road to Wilberforce, which will remain unchanged, floods. With the new rules enforcing the bridge to be closed when the river level reaches a certain height, this bridge will not remain open in flood situations but will be closed at its footings on the Wilberforce side of the river.

RMS

Supporters of Option 1 have often been involved in using their position e.g . Local Councillor, to push the project. One attempt by a local Councillor, Bob Porter took the opportunity to use his position, to go around the town proclaiming the historic bridge was so old it was going to fall down because it had been white anted out – a difficult thing for a bridge made of concrete and steel. He had the town in fear of crossing the bridge and told all that a new bridge was needed. The same Councillor, whilst still in office, would drive by the CAWB tent with his middle finger in the air. This same Councillor, along with two of his cohorts, appeared at one of the Community Forums run by the RMS. The RMS officials stood aside, it appeared in anticipated deferment to let them speak and they took over the meeting for a period. This was so different to the way the meeting was normally conducted where we, the participating public had to put our hands up and wait for our turn. This Councillor told of experiences where bus drivers crossing the bridge had lost their side mirrors because the lanes on the bridge were too narrow. After doing research we found that the width of the lanes on the bridge were fairly average for around Sydney (see CAWB notes on this information). When he had finished delivering his speech on why, in his view, we needed to accept the WBRP, he and his cohorts left the building. I asked one of the RMS specialists about this and he said they had to basically follow what important people in the community wanted.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nPq5RQ_IQYo&feature=share

I invite the Members of the Upper House Inquiry to view the attached U tube segment of Senate Question Time 2013.

In this segment, Senator Doug Cameron questions three representatives of the Heritage Council which rejected the initial attempt to gain National Heritage Listing for Thompson Square.

This first submission was undertaken by Professor Ian Jack and Graham and Carol Edds – all eminent historians who had written successful submissions to the Heritage on previous occasions.

In this segment none of the representatives can admit to or recognise the central fact, documented by all historians as fact, that Thompson Square is the only Georgian Square remaining in Australia and is the oldest Public Square remaining in Australia.

It beggars belief that these experts in Australian history cannot know this central fact of history and only know of it because of what has been presented to them in submissions by eminent historians.

To admit to this fact would compromise the negative decision of the Heritage Council to give National Listing to Thompson Square.

Whilst realising the scope of this Inquiry lies within the boundaries of the RMS and the WBRP I feel that the influence of the RMS and other agencies such as the NSW Government, has moved

in other ways to make sure it is not hindered by such things as National Listing.

I have no proof of my allegations save for the strange and evasive answers offered by these three officers representing the Heritage Council.

However, I am astonished by their answer to a basic and direct question put to them by Senator Cameron about the unique Georgian age of Thompson Square...a central fact in the gaining of National Listing.

Being aware of the strategies used by the RMS to gain local support for Option 1 ie The WBRP, with the Hawkesbury Boat Club, with the citizens on the Peninsular, and with the citizens of Windsor through The Deliberate Forum, I can see that perhaps some similar strategies may have been employed through the Heritage Council.

I think this is worthy of some further investigation.