

I register my objections to the proposal to modify the Windsor Bridge replacement project. In doing so, I note:

- the missed opportunity to make the online process for lodging submissions user friendly
- the inadequate, imprecise and poorly defined key aspects of the proposal, especially in a document of 250 pages.
- The RMS has not responded to requests for additional information about the project and especially the 2019 traffic data comparison report in a timely manner, thus making it more difficult to provide a fully informed submission.
- The brief length of time allocated in which to respond has inhibited the provision of a fully informed submission.
- This is a personal submission only.

### **Precis**

- It is argued it is unethical for the RMS to carefully structure its language, statements and claims to facilitate the perceptions it wants to promulgate within the community at the expense of accuracy, openness and honesty.
- This modification application indicates the inadequacy, inefficiency and ineffectiveness of the previous traffic management plans since 2008, the official commencement of the project's process.
- Only two options were modelled. There are more options available than one v do nothing.
- The rationale for the slip lane is based on a claimed 'unexpected' increase in traffic numbers of on average, 2 000 vehicles per day. The numbers were not unexpected nor do they appear to be accurate and validated.

### **Arguments:**

- There have been significantly varying proposed traffic management plans over the years including those of 2011, 2012, the December, 2016 plan to bring forward the 3 lane strategy to the opening of the replacement bridge that was claimed to bust the traffic issue and various lane marking changes, and this last minute current modification application.
- The major traffic congestion point is the Macquarie/Bridge Street intersection and its closeness to the George/Bridge Streets and the Court/Bridge Streets intersections.
- The WBrpt claims recent traffic surveys have indicated the likelihood of greater traffic usage than had been expected. In the October 2019 RMS community update it says, "*.....we have also taken the opportunity to carry out **updated traffic studies in 2017 and 2019***" (my emphasis). However in the 'Environmental assessment modification' it says, "***A further traffic assessment*** (my emphasis) *was undertaken by Arcadis in August 2019. This assessment has confirmed and is consistent with the traffic data that was surveyed in March 2017.*" There appears to be two traffic reports for 2019. One is titled on the webpage, 'May 2019 traffic and options modelling report'. (see below) This is a rebadged report identical to the 2017 report. However, as also identified below, a more relevant and significant report from Arcadis dated 27 October, 2019 titled, "Windsor Bridge

Replacement Project Traffic Counts Data Comparison Between 2017 and 2019” which appears not to validate the claim of greater traffic usage.

- The RMS proposed this modification. It is to be found in the 2017 Arcadis Traffic and Options Modelling Report on P.39 4.6. In the Arcadis Windsor Bridge Replacement Project Traffic Counts Data Comparison Between 2017 and 2019 on P.3 it says, “At that time (*referring to 2017*), the decision was made not to proceed with the “zip” or merge lane”.
- In the 'Windsor Bridge replacement project Environmental assessment modification' it stated in 1.3.2, "Roads and Maritime has undertaken additional investigations to confirm traffic growth rates since the EIS was prepared. Essentially the new study indicated that traffic had grown slightly faster than originally predicted, and that about **2,000** (my emphasis) additional vehicles per day could potentially be travelling the route in 2026 than predicted in 2012." However in the EIS document "7.3 Traffic and transport: Bridge Street ADT Projections: Table 7-16 Page 235" the traffic projections in 2026 were **24 000 (my emphasis)**. In the "Arcadis 2017 survey in 4.4 Future Traffic Volumes on new Windsor Bridge Table 4-5 Estimated Average Weekday Traffic on Windsor Bridge for 2026 and 2036 Page 35" its projections for 2016 are **25 000. This is a difference of 1 000 not the 2 000** (my emphasis) as claimed in the 'Windsor Bridge replacement project Environmental assessment modification'.
- In the current proposal the team evaluated two options - its preferred option of a slip lane or a ‘do nothing’ option. The team has not indicated an evaluation of other options. There are quite a few. Two of these options are:
  - tidal flow between a.m. and p.m. as happens on some other bridges in NSW. In the 2017 Arcadis report on P.39 4.6 it says, “To meet possible future demand, the modification allows for future tidal flow arrangements on Bridge Street. This would result in two lanes northbound across the bridge during the afternoon peak.”
  - make the two lanes on the bridge Northbound with one lane Southbound. The majority of vehicles crossing the bridge travel Northbound as shown by the traffic surveys (2011, 2012 and 2017) as well as the RMS’s Traffic Volume Counter on Bridge Street which indicates the number of vehicles Eastbound (read Southbound) has been decreasing over the years 2016, 17 and 18 to the point the 2018 figure is about the same as the 2013 figure. The roundabout on the Northern side may facilitate traffic flow onto the bridge to make this option worth considering.
- On page 50 of the document it says, “Approximately 160 square metres or approximately 5% of the grassed area in the Thompson Square parkland would be removed and replaced with additional road pavement.” However there is no mention of the area occupied by the current sealed roadway leading to the existing bridge which will be utilised by the slip lane. Clarification is therefore sought as to how much total area will the proposal consume out of the promised additional 500 square metres of usable parkland.
- The claim in the report, "During operation minor improvements to air quality may be achieved through less traffic congestion, particularly in the afternoon peak.” would not

pass the pub test nor the user test as vehicles up to 3m will be closer to those picnicking in the park.

- The claim in the report, "The construction noise impacts associated with the proposed modification works are not considered to represent a significant difference to those identified in the EIS." would not pass the pub test nor the user test as vehicles would be up to 3m closer to those picnicking in the park..
- The use of part of the existing road sloping steeply towards the river for the proposed slip lane may provide challenges to keep the filled area within the no more than 1:4 slope.

## Conclusion

- The WBrpt has known about the slip lane proposal for over two years as it first proposed it. It is certainly not recent.
- The claimed unexpected increased traffic numbers for 2026 does not appear to be able to be validated.
- If not, it undermines the rationale for the proposal.
- Is this proposal the precursor for a request for approval for a tidal flow?
- The impact of pollution and noise will intrude up to 3m further into the upper parkland.
- Exact and accurate details of the total additional area to be reclaimed from the claimed 500 square metres need to be provided.
- For a request for an environmental assessment modification for a project at this stage of the project that officially started in 2008 is very disturbing and implies an unreasonable degree of previous inefficiency and ineffectiveness.
- The opportunity has been missed to provide, with a budget of \$137m, infrastructure that would provide better traffic flow whilst revealing, conserving and showcasing this significant heritage site.

## **STOP PRESS:**

- At 4.37 p.m. yesterday, Wednesday, 06 November I received an email from the RMS a copy of the Arcadis Windsor Bridge Replacement Project Traffic Counts Data Comparison Between 2017 and 2019.
  - On P1 it lists the dates of the Drafts for internal and client reviews and the date of the Final Report i.e. 29 October, 2019. It is noted the final report is dated 6 days after the consultation period commenced.
  - On P. 17 it lists its conclusions:
- *"Across the two time periods, traffic on Windsor Bridge has increased by 100 vehicles (0.5 per cent) per weekday. This suggests that the overall traffic volumes have remained relatively consistent between 2017 and 2019*
- *The peak hour traffic volume change across the four intersections is minor, with a 2 per cent increase observed between 2017 and 2019*

- *In the 2019 AM and PM peak period, average travel times on the Bridge Street / Wilberforce Road have marginally decreased by between six to 42 seconds when compared to 2017*
- *The survey results suggest there has been a minor improvement to the overall travel speeds across the AM and PM peak periods between 2017 and 2019*
- *The queue lengths across the four locations in 2017 and 2019 are similar, with minor changes observed across the study area.*  
*Overall, the traffic volumes on the Windsor Bridge and the four nearby intersections have remained at similar levels between 2017 and 2019.”*

Hence, where is the evidence to support the application for ‘this modification’ as detailed under 1.3.2 Need for this modification which says in part, “*Roads and Maritime has undertaken additional investigations to confirm traffic growth rates since the EIS was prepared. Essentially the new study indicated that traffic had grown slightly faster than originally predicted, and that about 2,000 additional vehicles per day could potentially be travelling the route in 2026 than predicted in 2012.*”

If the real reason for the application is not about improving traffic needs, what is it about!

PS The title of the document titled on the webpage, ‘May 2019 traffic and options modelling report’ has been adjusted to read ‘May 2018’ etc. However there is a screen shot of the 2019 title.