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Sara Roach - Glebe Island Expo and Bridge.Submission

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Date: 12/10/2012 9:54 AM
Subject: Glebe Island Expo and Bridge.Submission
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Attachments: Glebe Island Bridge.doc

Attn Ms Sara Roach.

Please find enclosed our submission re the Glebe Iisland Expo and our rationale for the retention of the Glebe Island Bridge. Papers on the pollution in the Bays to follow to be read in conjunction with this doc.

Kind regards

Jean Stuart President Pyrmont Community Group.

85, Point St,
Pyrmont,
NSW 2009

Attn
Ms Sara Roach,
Department of Planning and Infrastructure NSW
23 – 33 Bridge St
Sydney 2000
7th December, 2012

Re Glebe Island Exhibition Centre and associated developments

Dear Ms Roach,

Rationale for Retaining and Redeveloping Glebe Island Bridge

Overview and Main Points

Following the opening of the Anzac Bridge and the subsequent closure of the Glebe Island Bridge (GIB), no State Government has been willing to make a decision to demolish it, but neither would they commit to pay for adequate maintenance. The bridge has deteriorated in what appears to have been a deliberate attempt to achieve demolition by neglect. A more charitable view would be that successive governments recognised the heritage value of the bridge, but could see no practical future for it, given that its functions within the transport infrastructure had been taken over by the new bridge.

Several factors now combine to make the GIB a major infrastructural asset rather than a liability. They can be summarised as follows:

i) Ambitious State Government plans for the redevelopment of the Bays Precinct require redeveloped and expanded transport infrastructure. This is particularly the case with regard to Glebe Island, Johnstone's Bay, White Bay, East Roselle and Balmain as a whole, where a number of major projects are under way, with others to follow. This is precisely the area GIB can serve.
ii) The engineers who created the GIB did a fine job. It can still operate and is capable of being restored to full operational capacity.
iii) The Anzac Bridge is now at or exceeding its capacity.

iv) The height of the deck of the Anzac Bridge and the difficulty of access to it make it unsuitable as part of a major cycle / pedestrian route, and it cannot support Light Rail. GIB is ideally located and potentially well suited to supporting all of these functions essential to the future transport needs of the inner west.
v) GIB permits limited and controlled access of vessels to Blackwattle and Rozelle Bays. Given the well established levels of pollution in the inner harbours, this level of control is a highly desirable asset. If GIB were to be removed, it would be necessary to decontaminate the inner harbour areas in order to prevent the pollution spreading to the outer harbour. It is not clear that the technology exists to achieve this. Retaining GIB is the most practical and cost effective ecological solution at least until a solution can be found.
vi) If GIB were removed, it would be necessary to construct another bridge, or tunnel in the same place to meet future transport demands or face complete gridlock. Redeveloping the GIB is by far the most cost effective infrastructural solution.
vii) GIB forms an important part of Sydney's and Australia's industrial heritage.

These points are expanded in the arguments presented below for retaining, restoring and redeveloping Glebe Island Bridge. Taken together we believe these arguments are irrefutable.

1) Bays Precinct Redevelopment

Many of the key sites for redevelopment in the Bays Precinct lie within an area served by and bounded by the Anzac Bridge, Victoria Rd and the outer harbour. The major site for redevelopment is the semi-derelict White Bay Power Station. Areas where plans for development or actual construction are already under way include Glebe Island and White and Johnstone's Bays. Projects include the Cruise Terminal and the proposed Temporary Exhibition Centre, both of which will need to deal with very large numbers of people moving to and from the city at any one time. Key stakeholders, the Bays Task Force, Community Consultation Groups, the Bays Alliance, Sydney City Council and Leichhardt Council have all emphasised the importance of a moratorium on future development in the Bays Precinct until a new Master Plan has been developed for the area. Whatever the plan, a solution to the transport problems in this area will be a crucial element in its successful implementation.

2) Transport Infrastructure

Light rail:

As indicated above, the Anzac Bridge has reached capacity and without major additional transport infrastructure, any major redevelopment in the Bays Precinct area will result in gridlock. The approach to Anzac Bridge from Victoria Rd is under particular stress. The previous State Government attempted to address this problem by constructing a Metro connecting the City to White Bay and Balmain. This plan was abandoned when it was shown to be grossly over expensive while achieving little benefit to Sydney's transport system as a whole.
GIB used to support a tramway, and there is no reason why it could not be brought back into use, at a fraction of the cost of the abandoned Metro, as a part of the expanding Sydney City light rail network. In addition to supporting developments in the Glebe Island and White Bay areas, the GIB light rail could be extended to eastern Balmain to relieve pressure on roads leading out of the Balmain peninsula and onto Victoria Rd. The GIB light rail could be integrated with the current light rail to the city, via Bank St and the Fish Market, where plans for extensive redevelopment are already being advanced. It could also link to light rail or rail transport initiatives which will be needed to serve other parts of the Bays Precinct redevelopment.

Cycleway:
The current cycleway from the City to the west passes through Pyrmont and is then patched onto the Anzac Bridge via a detour along Saunders St and a ramp from the pavement on Quarry Master Drive to the deck of the Bridge. Up or down, this ramp is challenging for the cyclists and pedestrians who share it. The exit of the cycleway from the ramp crossing Quarry Master Drive to Saunders St is inherently dangerous. A safer and more direct route would take cyclists from Miller St along Bank St and across the reopened GIB to East Rozelle and Balmain. The GIB would form a vital and far more viable link in the Inner West cycle ways of the future.

Pedestrians.
Large and increasing numbers of pedestrians who live in Pyrmont choose to walk to work in the city across Pyrmont Bridge. Very few from further west choose the extended detour that takes pedestrians across the Anzac Bridge and involves sharing and negotiating the cycleway ramp. The more direct, safer and less arduous route across a reopened GIB would increase the numbers of pedestrian commuters.

The distance from Balmain to the City by this route is not great. Increased use by pedestrians would further reduce vehicular pressure on Victoria Rd and the Anzac Bridge.

Ferries.
A ferry service from the City to the White Bay Cruise Terminal and the Exhibition Centre would be an attraction in itself and would help to relieve congestion created by cruise arrivals and events at the Centre.

Vehicular Access.
This proposal does not envisage use of the GIB by vehicles. Access should be restricted to light rail, cyclists and pedestrians.

3) Vessels entering Roselle and Blackwattle Bays via the Glebe Island Bridge.
GIB was constructed specifically to facilitate the passage of vessels from the outer to the inner harbours. In its redeveloped state this function should be fully maintained. GIB opening times for vessels should exclude peak traffic hours.

4) Recreational use of the Inner Harbours.
The Master plan for the inner harbour area placed special emphasis on recreational and non motorised marine activities: rowing, dragon boating, kayaking etc. Motorised vessels are restricted for speed, and leisure craft such as jet skis have been specifically prohibited. Increased access to the inner harbour for large marine leisure craft (including 'super yachts') has been advanced as a reason for demolishing the GIB. This argument has no credibility given the size of vessels that currently and in the past have gained access via the GIB, and is a totally inadequate reason for squandering the potential advantages a redeveloped GIB would offer the redeveloped Bays Precinct and the Inner West of the City.

5) Overall Health of Sydney Harbour. (See attached documents)
Another dubious advantage put forward for the demolition of GIB is the consequent increased and (it is argued, cleansing) tidal flow flushing out the inner harbour. The problem with this argument is that Blackwattle and Rozelle Bays were a dumping ground for industrial waste throughout the 19th and much of the 20th Centuries. Any local gain from tides flushing out these bays set back significantly what has so far been achieved in reducing pollution in the main harbour. The post industrial residue is there, but other means must be found for removing it if the pollution levels in Blackwattle and Roselle Bays are

to be reduced. The danger of increasing pollution levels within the inner harbours is also an argument against larger numbers of larger vessels using these waters.

The following information is taken from research carried out by Professor Gavin Birch and associates over a number of years. They refer to dangerously high levels of heavy metals, including copper, lead and zinc that reside in the heavily contaminated sediments of both Rozelle and Blackwattle Bays. Zinc levels are between 2,000 and 3,000 parts per million when the internationally acceptable safe level is 410 ppm. Professor Birch and Associates note further that the contaminated sediment of these bays should not be disturbed as the technology to decontaminate it does not yet exist. He states further that the very shallow nature of Blackwattle Bay, and to a greater extent Rozelle Bay (smaller and narrower) means that having motorised craft in the upper reaches of them should not be permitted.

6) Cost Effectiveness

At recent discussions of the proposed redevelopment of the Bays Precinct, it became clear that the two alternatives, removing the Glebe Island Bridge or restoring it to full operation, were almost equally expensive. Figures were produced to the effect that $7 million would be saved if the bridge was removed rather than restored. A more reasonable argument would be that a mere $7 million could purchase most, if not all, of the benefits listed above, and failure to do so would have a very high opportunity cost indeed.

If the Glebe Point Bridge is not restored and redeveloped as proposed here, the transport infrastructural problems will remain. The costs of their solution, or the costs of failing to arrive at a solution, would be far greater.

7) Industrial heritage:

The twin bridges, Pyrmont Bridge crossing Darling Harbour and Glebe Island Bridge, formed an essential westerly transport link from the City to its industrial heartlands in Pyrmont and Balmain. These bridges were amongst the most advanced in design for their period and have played a significant role in the life of the City. A new and positive role has been found for the Pyrmont Bridge, as a major pedestrian and cycle route to the west and rather less positively, in the Monorail, for public transport. The role of GIB should be complementary to that of Pyrmont Bridge in continuing the pedestrian and cycleway western links and by extending the light rail to link the City to the Bays Precinct.

Summary and Conclusion.

The proposal to redevelop and restore the Glebe Island Bridge provides a vital link in the transport infrastructure that will largely determine the success of the Bays Precinct Redevelopment Plan. It is more cost effective than either of the possible alternatives: a tunnel or a new bridge.

This proposal has additional advantages. It augments significantly the Sydney City Light Rail system and improves cycle and pedestrian routes from the CBD to the Inner West. Pedestrians and cyclists are far more likely to choose this low level direct route than the current hard to access route via the Anzac Bridge.

The structure of the Glebe Island Bridge facilitates marine access to the inner harbour. Its dual function as a land and maritime route necessarily restricts the numbers, size and speed of the vessels that enter the inner harbour. This level of control restricts the extent to which contaminated sediment on the floor of the inner harbour is stirred up and restricts the tidal outflow of such contaminants into the main harbour.

Finally, the restoration of the Glebe Island Bridge provides an important link to Sydney's past and a significant example of bridge engineering.

Yours Faithfully,

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