



Susan Templeman

Labor candidate for Macquarie

28 January 2013

Mr Andrew Beattie
Acting Manager
Infrastructure Projects
NSW Department of Planning
GPO Box 39
SYDNEY NSW 2001

Department of Planning
Received
30 JAN 2013
Scanning Room



Dear Mr Beattie

**RE: SSI-4951 WINDSOR BRIDGE REPLACEMENT PROJECT – PUBLIC EXHIBITION
OF ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT (EIS)**

Thank you to the Department for allowing me an extension until the end of January 2013 to submit this response to the EIS.

Following extensive consideration of the information provided in the EIS, I would urge you to recommend that the RMS not proceed with the preferred Option 1 on the grounds that it will irreparably damage one of NSW's most significant pieces of history. I would also argue that the Thompson Square precinct is a place of national significance, as its story helps explain the national character of the Australia we have today.

While historians more qualified than I will be able to give you the historical references of the undisputed significance of the oldest and only 18th Century Square, it is the narrative revealed by the RMS' own archeologist that best sums up for me why it is unforgivable to allow the remaining heritage values of Thompson Square to be destroyed by the proposed road changes.

On 14 October 2012, the Hawkesbury branch of the NSW National Trust organised a tour of Thompson Square/Windsor Bridge. This included a presentation by Denis Gojak, the RMS Archaeology/Heritage expert, on his initial findings.

During his presentation, Mr Gojak described Thompson Square as demonstrating the "larrikin" and "anti-authoritarian" traits that many would consider was a key factor in the development of our national character.

Specifically, as one example, he pointed to the Green Hills residents' reluctance to comply with Governor Macquarie's orders that a grid-pattern be imposed on the existing settlement. The higgledy-piggledy arrangement of fencing and unaligned structures offended the order-loving Macquarie.

With what many would consider the appropriate degree of respect, and the rejection of conformity, the residents of the area quickly undid the changes Macquarie imposed on their community. Mr

Gojak said there is ample archeological evidence of fences being moved and returned to their original, non-grid-like positions.

When questioned on where else in Australia the archaeology points to this personality or character or behaviour being seen in the early days of settlement, the only comparable example Mr Gojak was able to identify was The Rocks area of Sydney.

As just one example of the heritage value of Thompson Square, this goes to the core of a story that, until now, has not been properly appreciated or told. And there are many others that, no doubt, other submissions have referenced.

The one thing we can be grateful to the RMS' for, in its bewildering commitment to Option 1, is that these things are starting to be explored. What a tragedy to have that exploration cut short, before the total narrative is revealed.

In addition to its story of the history of European settlement, the RMS's preferred Option 1 has destructive effects on:

- A site of Aboriginal significance with much more research needed to really reveal its full story;
- Archeological relics that tell of the experiences, innovation and hardship of early settlers;
- Existing buildings that show the skill and values of early settlement;

In particular, we have a responsibility to further investigate the Aboriginal significance of Thompson Square, and not do what was done to Aboriginal sites:

"Physical evidence of pre-European Aboriginal culture at The Rocks has been largely destroyed. The lack of such evidence is a poignant reminder of loss to current and future generations. Aboriginal cultural sites which may have survived such impacts are of great significance to the Aboriginal community."

(NSW Dept of Environment and Heritage – Heritage Sites – The Rocks.

<http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/heritageapp/ViewHeritageItemDetails.aspx?ID=4500458>)

Recommendation 1:

I would urge the Department to recognize that there is no way to mitigate any of these impacts in a meaningful way, and recommend to the Minister for Planning that the project be rejected on heritage grounds.

In addition, Windsor Bridge itself is, by the RMS' own assessment, considered to have significant historic value, not only for its original design but also for its modifications.

"The use of reinforced concrete beams for the deck in 1922 is considered to be an early use of the material despite the experimental designs in the late nineteenth century. Only a relatively small number (nine) of reinforced concrete bridges dating to prior to 1922 survive in NSW; and even fewer on substantial historic crossings such as Windsor. The construction technique of building the girder

on the river bank and moving them into position was an innovative way to keep traffic flowing in one lane while the other was being raised; this aspect of the program was considered at the time to be unique."

(WRG Friday 20 January 1922.) Page 47 of the RMS working paper November 2012/

Recommendation 2:

I would therefore urge the Department to recommend that an alternate option be developed that allows Windsor Bridge to be preserved and maintained as a local road, with a by-pass to service the major traffic needs of the region.

My final issue of concern with the EIS is the failure of the RMS to more widely consult on the matter, given both the Bridge and Thompson Square are listed as items of State Significance and as such demand preservation.

This area is not only of significance for residents of Windsor, and in fact I am one of those interested parties NOT residing in the local government area. Yet only one tour of Thompson Square explains why those who know only a part of its history are horrified by the RMS proposal.

It is incumbent on a State Government to properly consult about something that, by its own assessment, will irrevocably impact on a significant part of our European settlement.

Recommendation 3:

That the Department recommend to the Minister that the RMS be required to more fully consult, in an open and public manner, with the people of NSW on this matter, to fully develop and consider a by-pass option, and to seek permission before destroying a site that speaks to both the development of European settlement and to the development of the character of the nation.

There is an opportunity here for preservation of an area, rather than destruction; for the saving of a town centre that is to wider Sydney what The Rocks is to the CBD; and for a town to be revitalized by an RMS project, rather than destroyed.

Yours sincerely



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