

Sydney Metro - Blues Point Temporary Retrieval Site

To:- Major Projects Assessment
Department of Planning and Environment
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1. **Name:-** Judith Rintoul, 60 Blues Point Road, McMahon's Point NSW 2060
2. **Application name:** Mitigation of impact at the proposed Blues Point Retrieval Site
3. **Application number:-** SS1 15_7400
4. **Brief Statement of Objection:** - I object to the proposal to excavate Blues Point Reserve for a Metro Retrieval Site on the grounds of
 - a) Its irrevocable impact upon an early historic (1807) site of Exceptional Significance,
 - b) Its adverse heritage impacts upon views and settings
 - c) The vibration and noise impacts which would be caused by the excavation works and the frequent heavy trucking required to and from the site potentially resulting in serious damage to early 19th century housing flanking narrow roads such as Blues Point Road.
 - d) The social and traffic impact to Blues Point Road and the loss of parking to residents, many of whom are elderly or infirm.
 - e) The non-consideration in the EIS of alternative sites or approaches to removing the boring machine cutter heads. Can the cutter heads be removed at the Barangaroo & Victoria Cross station sites? Can barges be used at Blues Point in lieu of trucks to remove excavation material and to bring in concrete?
 - f) The lack of adequate consideration in the EIS regarding condition surveys and the proposed emergency measures should a building collapse or severe damage occur,
 - g) the lack of discussion in the EIS regarding the need for a Detailed Historical Archaeological Assessment of a site of Exceptional heritage significance.
5. The detailed reasons why I object to the proposal for the retrieval site at Blues Point are set out in the following summary.

I declare that I have made no reportable political donations in the previous 2 years.



17/06/16

Covering letter with Brief Statement

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1. Historic background and potential heritage impact

The lower north shore was called Cammerra after the chief Cammerragal whose daughter Barangaroo married Bennelong. The sheltered cove that is now called Blues Point Reserve would have been a launching point for fishing canoes and for collecting cockles and oysters. As the local tribes found themselves competing for food with the white men, they moved to more plentiful locations.

In August 1807, the *Sydney Gazette* stated that William Blue, the only waterman licensed to ply a ferry across the harbour, offered passengers 'a tight clean boat' and 'an active oar'. He launched his boat from the natural sheltered beach still evident at Blues Point Reserve. His fleet eventually increased to eleven boats which caused Governor Macquarie to name him 'Commodore'. On 24 January 1817, Governor Macquarie granted Billy Blue an 80 acre grant which included 'Gibraltar' built on the very point itself. Remnant stone footings are still evident both on the point and within the reserve.

As occurred at Millers Point, the cliffs were quarried for stone to build stores and houses on the resultant flat rock shelf which also provided an excellent flat wharf area.. The following 1840s etching indicates the still relatively undeveloped area at Blues Point which formed part of Billy Blue's grant. The 1839 gazetted plan indicates that Blues Point Road was established from Billy Blue's boat landing site to extend northwards to St Leonards.



Blues Point in the 1840s showing boatmen and small paddle steamer

The NSW heritage management system recommends a 3-step approach in the assessment of heritage significance which should form the basis of the heritage assessment within the EIS:-

1. Investigate significance:- the history, context, themes and fabric of Blues Point Reserve should be thoroughly researched by a professional historian.
2. Assess significance:- A heritage professional and Archaeologist should assess the potential heritage status and significance of Blues Point Reserve based upon historic research.
3. Manage significance; analysis of the constraints and opportunities of the proposed intervention at Blues Point Reserve in consultation with the NSW Heritage Division.

An overview based on historic material which is readily available is analysed below to establish Blues Point Reserve's significance using the NSW Heritage Office heritage significance criteria:-

- **Criterion (a):- An item is important in the course, or pattern, of NSW's cultural or natural history (or the cultural or natural history of the area):-**
Blues Point Reserve is important due to its use as the initial landing stage for the development of the north shore and for the potential artefacts of earlier indigenous occupation that may be encapsulated below the current grassed surface.
Criterion (a) is assessed as potentially having Exceptional Local Significance and Moderate/High State Significance.
- **Criterion (b):- An item has a strong or special association with the life or works of a person, or a group of persons, of importance in NSW's cultural or natural history (or the cultural or natural history of the local area);**
This site has a unique association with the Cammeragal and Billy Blue, the North Shore's first ferryman who received an 80 acre land grant from Governor Macquarie for most of McMahons Point. It is likely that Billy Blue's first house and store were adjacent to his boats, now Blues point Reserve. Relics from early Aboriginal use may also be present. A detailed archaeological investigation would establish these possibilities.
Criterion (b) is assessed as potentially having Exceptional Local Significance.
- **Criterion (c):- An item is important in demonstrating aesthetic characteristics and/or a high degree of creative or technical achievement in NSW (or the local area);**
Blues Point Reserve is one of Sydney Harbour's natural amphitheatres with spectacular views of the Opera House and Fort Denison visible below the Harbour Bridge which is flanked by the Walsh Bay Wharves and Luna Park. Celebrated by numerous artists, this view is enjoyed by international and interstate tourists, televised world-wide on New Year's Eve and the setting for weddings, television interviews and many other spectacular events. The site falls within the Visual Curtilage of the World Heritage Significant Sydney Opera House.
Criterion (c) is assessed as having High Local Significance and potentially High State Significance.
- **Criterion (d) :- An item has a strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group in NSW (or the local area) for social, cultural or spiritual reasons;**
This criterion is assessed as not relevant to this site.
- **Criterion (e):- An item has potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of NSW's cultural or natural history(or the cultural or natural history of the local area);**
The sloping grassed area of the Blues Point Reserve has experienced minimal disturbance. . There is therefore a high possibility of archaeological relics revealing both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal history. To disturb this site before full historic research, analysis and archaeological investigation has taken place would lose forever any opportunity to understand the very significant events that took place here in the 18th and early 19th century.
Criterion (e) is assessed as having high potential to yield early historic information and is therefore potentially of Exceptional Local Significance and High State Significance.
- **Criterion (f) :- An item possesses uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of NSW's cultural or natural history (or the cultural or natural history of the local area);**
Blues Point Reserve possesses the potential to reveal rare aspects of NSW's cultural history.
Criterion (f) is assessed as having Exceptional Local Significance.
- **Criterion (g) is considered not relevant to this site.**

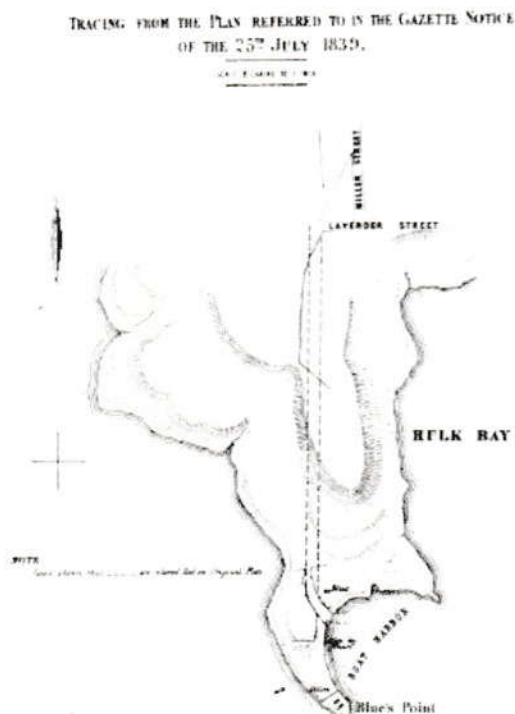
The following table outlines different components of a place which may make a contribution to its heritage value. Loss of integrity, function or condition may diminish significance.

Gradings	Justification	Status
EXCEPTIONAL	Rare or outstanding element directly contributing to an item's Local or State Significance	Fulfils criteria for local or State listing
HIGH	High degree of original or intact fabric. Demonstrates a key element of this item's significance. Alterations do not detract from its significance	Fulfils criteria for Local or State listing
MODERATE	Altered or modified elements. Elements with little heritage value, but which contribute to the overall significance of the item.	Fulfils criteria for Local or State listing
LITTLE	Alterations detract from significance. Difficult to interpret	Does not fulfil criteria for local or State listing.
INTRUSIVE	Damaging to the item's heritage significance	Does not fulfil criteria for local or State listing

In conclusion, the potential heritage significance of Blues Point Reserve is Exceptionally High. The site may appear empty but it encapsulates evidence of the first ferry service to the North Shore, the first road to St Leonards and potentially earlier Cammeragal occupation. The heritage component of the EIS should be required to investigate more thoroughly the significance of Blues Point Reserve in accordance with the NSW Heritage Council's guidelines.

A full historic research and analysis should be a condition of any approval as should a full historical archaeological assessment prior to any intervention being considered at Blues Point Reserve where the Metro Retrieval Site has been proposed.

Furthermore, questions should be asked and investigations carried out to assess if the Retrieval Site could be located at a less significant site such as the proposed Victoria Cross or Barangaroo Station sites or along the disused railway siding and vacant railway land which travels along Sawmillers Reserve which appears to align with the metro tunnel and would require a less deep excavation with excavated material able to be removed by train.



25th July 1839 Gazetted plan

Blues Point Road was the first corridor to Sydney and the first gazetted road in North Sydney was from Blues Point to Lavender Street.

2 Adverse heritage impacts upon views and setting

As stated in the EIS Chapter 16.2.1, the proposed landscape modification is 'Considerable' to landform, function, parking and streets. The Landscape Impact determined for Blues Point Reserve is 'Considerable in National, State, Regional and Local contexts' i.e. the excavation site will cause a Very High Adverse Impact for a sustained duration of time.

The Blues Point Reserve is a natural amphitheatre for viewing the harbour and its events from a sunny sheltered bay. The sloping ground permits large crowds to all enjoy the view or spectacle. Bus-loads of tourists visit this site for a unique photo opportunity of an iconic vista of the Opera House framed beneath the Harbour Bridge and flanked by the Walsh Bay finger wharves and Luna Park.

These opportunities will be lost for at least two years if the proposal for excavation is approved to proceed. Impact upon parking and streetscapes is also considerable in an area where many residents do not have on-site parking.

The impact upon the visual curtilage prescribed for the World heritage listed Opera house is assessed in the EIS as Considerable in National, State, Regional and Local contexts. Views would also be impacted upon from Dawes Point, Walsh Bay and Barangaroo.

Is such a high adverse effect warranted? Are there other options for the establishment of a retrieval site? Could the cutting heads be retrieved at the Victoria Cross or the Barangaroo Station sites?

3 Vibration and Noise impacts

Blues Point Road is relatively narrow and cut through rock with Victorian terraces and some earlier stone cottages built right up to the street frontage. These early houses are constructed with lime mortar in non-cavity masonry construction and have lathe and plaster ceilings.

These old methods of construction are particularly sensitive to vibration and noise-borne vibration and can collapse catastrophically. A ceiling collapse would certainly seriously injure or kill the occupants below them.

The vibration which will be caused by tunnelling below my home at 60 Blues Point Road is of great concern as our bedrooms have lathe and plaster ceilings. The 10 hours spent in these rooms each night amplifies the potential risk.

Will residents need to vacate during the tunnelling immediately below our home and will any damage be repaired immediately? What insurance policies are in place and will any repairs/ reinforcement be undertaken as an urgent priority? i.e. within a few days? Will local equivalent accommodation, removalist costs and lost employment income be provided in this event?

The vibratory noise from large trucks moving excavated material uphill and concrete trucks delivering concrete to the proposed Retrieval Site is of a similar concern. The noise and the vibration from the noise of heavy trucks will be particularly felt at 60 – 68 Blues Point Road (a row of Victorian terraces) as there is a cliff opposite which will intensify both the noise and air-borne vibration.

What structural checks and warranties will be made prior to the commencement of work to ensure the houses in Blues Point Road will remain safe for occupation and undamaged? How quickly will an engineer respond if there are signs of damage?

The noise levels in Warung Street from the excavation works are forecast as severe. If the excavation proceeds, can the pit be covered with a sound attenuation enclosure? Blues Point Tower has been experiencing major subsidence on its southern side which has been stabilised. Will excavation in nearby rock exacerbate this problem?

Blues Point Road has become a much-visited café / restaurant street with outdoor seating on the footpaths. They are generally full and open for breakfast, lunch and dinner.

How will these businesses survive the noise and dust from heavily laden and frequent trucks thundering up and down Blues Point Road for close to two years? Will they be compensated for loss of business?

4 Social and traffic impacts

Blues Point Road is quite narrow with much-needed parking on both sides as most of the houses do not have off-street parking. The loss of parking proposed to lower Blues Point Road is a major problem, particularly to the elderly and infirm. How will local residents park their cars within reach of their homes? How will they carry shopping and heavy loads? What provisions have been made to handle this problem? Has an allocated alternative parking area been nominated with a frequent (10 minute) dedicated shuttle mini-bus service? Will an approval to proceed include a requirement to address this problem?

Will these trucks be required to travel at slow speeds to avoid incidents? Blues Point Road is a very busy pedestrian street with locals, café and restaurant-goers, commuters, cyclists, joggers and walking tours constantly happening. Car-parking and restaurant service vehicles are constantly stopping or parking adjacent to the restaurant strip as there is no access apart from Blues Point Road. Blues Point Road is not only narrow but very busy. The addition of so many heavy vehicles and workers' vehicles in addition to the current traffic levels is potentially dangerous. Should a barge or rail solution for the removal of excavation material be conditioned? There are several alternate opportunities for excavated material to be transported by rail or barge which do not appear to be fully investigated in the EIS.

The ferry service at McMahons Point creates many walking and cycling commuters as well as linking with a bus service and taxi rank. The proposed Blues Point Retrieval Site will conflict with all of these commuter services.

5. Rail, barge or truck?

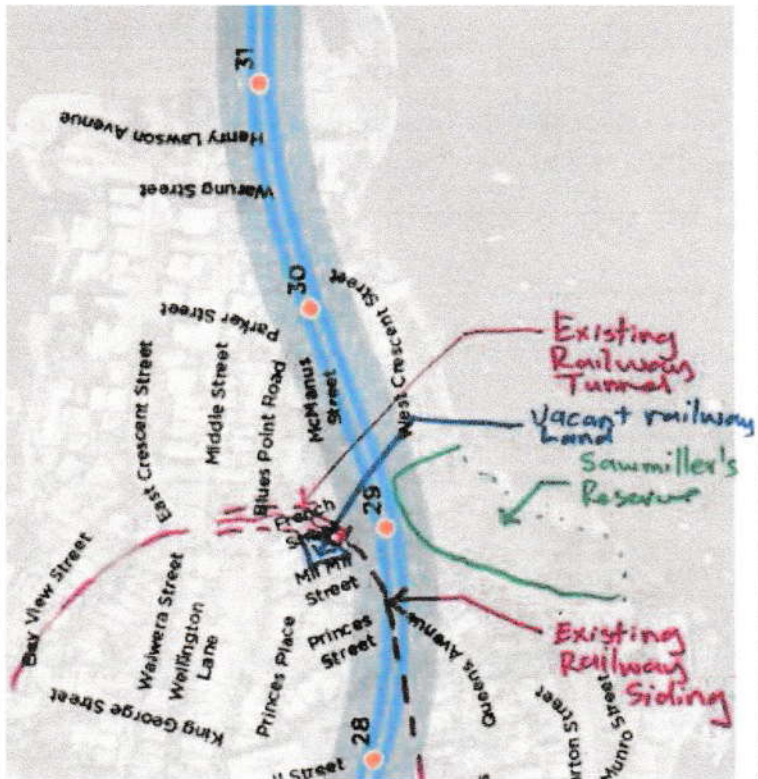
The EIS and its attached reports appear to have not examined all options for both the location of the Retrieval Site and the method of removing spoil and bringing in concrete. Barging is mentioned as an option to trucking spoil and concrete to and from the Retrieval Site but discounted due to cost as the existing wharf at Blues Point would need reinforcing and the cove would need dredging.

There is no mention of trains being investigated to remove spoil and deliver concrete when there is a site where this could occur adjacent to Sawmillers Reserve where there is a rarely used railway track cut deep into the ground as it emerges from a tunnel below McMahons Point. This deep railway cutting coincides with the Metro Tunnel below at a much lesser depth than the proposed site at Blues Point, therefore less excavation would be needed. The existing deep cutting could also be readily enclosed to mitigate noise and dust emissions.

The advantage of using trains over trucks is that trucks can carry only 10 cubic metres whereas trains can carry 116 cubic metres per wagon. A barge or railway approach could result in only one or two barge or train movements per week without conflict with pedestrians and traffic in lieu of the huge impact of 4-6 heavy vehicles per hour (11 hours per day for an entire year for excavation and 6 months for remediation) i.e. 66 heavy vehicles per day.

A Retrieval Site with railway access would avoid intervention to the very sensitive heritage site at Blues Point.

The Sawmiller Reserve option is identified in the plan below.



Possible use of existing railway for spoil removal

6. Requirements for Condition surveys

Chapter 10 of the EIS assesses the methodology for monitoring construction noise and vibration. It states it will identify sensitive receivers but no further information is given. It is confirmed that there will be noise and vibration management but this is not clarified nor is a sound attenuation shed recommended over the Retrieval Site. There is no mention in this chapter of the dangers of air-borne and ground-borne vibrations to 19th century houses with lime mortar construction and lathe and plaster ceilings.

As mentioned in Section 3 of this submission 'These old methods of construction are particularly sensitive to vibration and noise-borne vibration and can collapse catastrophically. A ceiling collapse would certainly injure or kill the occupants below them.' Air-borne vibration from the noise of heavy trucks will also be amplified by the narrowness of Blues Point Road.

If a Structural Engineer agrees that there is a reasonable risk of damage to early residences, how will these homes be protected and the residents assured that there is no risk of catastrophic failure? If failure occurs, how quickly will it be remedied and what insurance cover is there for injury or loss of life caused by such a failure. How long will the cover continue in the aftermath of this event if structures are weakened? Will residents in these at-risk dwellings be required to vacate their homes as the tunnel is bored beneath them? If so, how will this be managed?

How will the potential ongoing subsidence to Blues Point Tower be monitored?

Generally, a photographic Condition Survey is undertaken in situations where buildings are to be subject to vibration but this may not be sufficient when dealing with 19th century buildings. It is requested that an expert public opinion from a specialist heritage engineer should be a condition of any approval which should be undertaken in conjunction with a detailed Condition Assessment.

7. Requirement for a detailed Historical Archaeological Assessment

Based on a detailed assessment of heritage significance of the proposed Blues Point Retrieval Site, a detailed Historical Archaeological Assessment should be prepared to examine the archaeological potential of this site. This should assess whether the information is likely to be obtained by other non-interventionist means and whether the site has such significance that excavation may be an inappropriate option. The NSW Heritage Council's guidelines for assessing archaeological potential quote Division 9 of the Heritage Act in a description of a 'Relic' meaning '*any deposit, artefact, object or material evidence that* *a) relates to the settlement of the area....*
b) is of State or Local heritage significance.

There is little doubt that the Blues Point Retrieval Site will have relics and would fall into this category.

Therefore a condition requiring a detailed historical archaeological assessment should be made for this site before the commencement of any works (preliminary or other).

Chapter 14.5.5 of the EIS relating to heritage Items and conservation areas notes that the proposed excavation site is listed in the LEP as being of Local Significance but that the direct physical impact would be Minor to Moderate as it is within an existing park. This conflicts with the brief assessment of the historical archaeological potential of the site in Table 14-11 which notes that the pre-1850s development of the foreshore may be of State Significance.

This assessment should automatically trigger a full Historical Archaeological Assessment. A full-time Archaeologist may be needed to attend site to monitor unexpected finds.

8. Additional Queries

- a) Confirmation is sought regarding the location of the proposed on-shore site facility for the treatment of slurry from the Harbour Ground Improvement Works.
- b) Are there any proposed air vents to the Metro tunnel proposed in McMahon's Point?
- c) Are there any proposed fire escapes from the Metro tunnel proposed and where are they located?
- d) Are any permanent above-ground structures proposed in McMahon's Point in connection with the Metro Tunnel?
- e) Is any blasting being proposed?