

**Submission  
No 54**

## **INQUIRY INTO WINDSOR BRIDGE REPLACEMENT PROJECT**

**Name:** Mr Grant Medaris

**Date received:** 7 January 2018

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## **Inquiry into the Windsor Bridge Replacement Project**

Relating to:

Portfolio Committee No 5 – Industry and Transport's enquiry into the expenditure, performance and effectiveness of the Roads & Maritime Services' Windsor Bridge replacement project.

The Terms of Reference relate to:

A) The current bridge, including its maintenance regime, renovation methods and justification for demolition,

and

B) The replacement bridge project, including:

- options presented to the community
- post construction strategic outcomes, including traffic benefits, transport and network service capacity
- economic, social and heritage impact
- flood immunity benefits

Submission From:

Grant Medaris

Date: 20 December 2017

## **Introduction**

I am retired, seventy one years of age, a public servant for most of my adult life. My various careers ranged from being a Patrol Officer in Papua New Guinea for eight years; an Education Officer in New South Wales prisons for thirteen years and Manager of Education Programs at Borallon Correctional Centre in Queensland for two and a half years. I was a policy adviser to the NSW Board of Adult and Community Education Board for five years and a Training Advisor with the NSW Department of Education and Training for fifteen years. Since my retirement in 2011 I have been a volunteer with the Blue Mountains Refugee Support Group and for three years was a member of their management committee.

I have visited Windsor for over three decades, used recreational facilities in the Hawkesbury during that time and travelled along the Putty Road on many occasions.

Over the years I have been drawn to the historical elements still in place at Windsor. The heritage value attached to Thompson Square; the old buildings in the immediate vicinity and the old traffic bridge, has been of significant interest to me. I am concerned that redevelopment will permanently alter and diminish the historical importance of Thompson Square.

## **The Current Windsor Bridge**

In my view there is no justification for a new bridge which will necessitate road widening and significantly alter the area surrounding Thompson Square.

According to the RTA/RMS the current bridge is no longer fit for purpose. The Environmental Impact Statement submitted by the RMS outlined concerns over increased maintenance costs, corroded underwater sections, disintegration to parts of the deck slab and external beams, and non-compliant deck joints.

The engineering elements stated as justification for demolishing the current bridge do not survive scrutiny when evaluated by others with engineering backgrounds. Two retired RTA engineers, Ray Wedgwood and Brian Pearson, stated in a letter to the Gazette that the bridge has sufficient reinforcement to handle current weight loads.

An independent report commissioned by the Department of Planning and Infrastructure written by Peter Stewart, concluded that the current bridge is in good condition.

I am not an engineer so my concern relates to the link the current bridge provides to the heritage values of the area. If the bridge is demolished, upgraded and connected to a high speed road, few people will have the opportunity to appreciate Windsor's early history.

Thompson Square provides an invaluable historical link to the late eighteenth century and the early period of European development in the Hawkesbury area.

## **The Replacement Bridge**

Refurbishment of the existing bridge for light and local traffic will help protect the heritage values around Thompson Square. However, this option does not address the large volume of traffic passing along Bridge Street.

Of the options presented in the 2011 RTA Windsor Bridge Replacement Report only Option 6 is viable in terms of minimising the impact on heritage values and removing heavy traffic flows from close to the town centre.

It is my view that Option 1 of the WBRP will not achieve the desired objectives. It will increase the speed and volume of traffic passing through the area adjacent to Thompson Square and not present an increase in pedestrian access or safety.

A further option is required. One that would necessitate going back to the community for consultation to elicit a route for a bypass which avoids the historical centre of Windsor.

A bypass which takes heavy traffic away from close to the city centre is preferable.

## **Recommendations**

It is recommended that all work to implement Option 1 of the WBRP be suspended while an alternative bypass around Windsor is canvassed and subject to community consultation.

Grant Medaris