

# **Haberfield Association**

## **Response**

to the

## **2023 TfNSW Proposal**

for

## **Dobroyd Parade/CWL**

## **Pedestrian Bridge**

Table of Contents

1. Background.....	1
2. Areas of Concern .....	2
2.1 Bridge Proposal .....	2
2.2 Other Concerns & Considerations .....	3
2.2.1 Transparency & Release of Evidence .....	3
2.2.2 U-Turns, Cameras & Signage.....	4
2.2.3 Relocation of Pedestrian Crossing on Waratah St.....	4
3. Consideration of Alternatives.....	5
4. Conclusion .....	7


**APPROVAL:**

This submission has been approved by the Management Committee of the Haberfield Association and bears the signature of the Association President and the Author:



**Ronald Brown**  
President

**21 December 2023**



**Malachy Ward**  
Traffic Officer

**21 December 2023**

# 1. Background

Haberfield was Australia's first successful planned 'model suburb', embodying the then-evolving international garden suburb principles. Begun at the time of Federation in 1901, it predates British examples such as Letchworth and Hampstead. This visionary social experiment was so financially successful that it helped lock in the great Australian dream of the quarter-acre suburban block with dwelling, which has dominated how Australians seek to house themselves. Haberfield was designated a State Conservation Area in 1985 and was added to the register of the National Estate in 1991.

The Haberfield Association was formed in 1980, as a result of the increased public awareness, of the need to maintain Haberfield's special architectural and Garden Suburb character.

Haberfield also has national social significance as a place where, from the mid-1970s, residents opposed the destruction of these same picturesque houses, and is an early example of community statutory management.

Haberfield residents realise that our suburb forms part of the vital and changing City of Sydney. However, we do not believe that such changes should be detrimental to the residents of Haberfield.

WestConnex has had a devastating effect on all residents but particularly the occupants of the 182 properties that have been acquired and the 53 Heritage homes lost to WestConnex. Haberfield has borne an unfair burden of destruction and disruption caused by WestConnex. For those residents whose properties have not been acquired, we have been enduring many years of devastating dust and noise. Many hundreds of residents have had their sub-surface acquired. Those who have experienced property damage due to ground movements have had their claims denied after significant expense involved in proving their case.

There has been a profound negative impact on the Haberfield community and its heritage character due to the Westconnex Project. The suburb has been divided physically and many dozens of Federation homes have been destroyed. Residents have been displaced. Years of work to restore properties has been laid waste.

The TfNSW vision of the WestConnex was to deliver faster, safer, and more reliable transport and to:

- respect and maintain heritage;
- maintain or improve air quality;
- work collaboratively with communities;
- reduce traffic on local streets;
- return local streets to local communities;
- reduce the strain on local roads;
- remove bottlenecks and relieve congestion

The Haberfield Association welcomes a proposal to improve pedestrian safety but is very disappointed at the complete lack of any consultation with the community on the proposal prior to this quite short general feedback period at an extremely unfortunate busy time of the year for many families in our community.

We seek to have a proper dialogue with the community including face to face meetings. We are disappointed that our normally responsive local member and Minister has not been available during this brief feedback period.

## 2. Areas of Concern

### 2.1 Bridge Proposal

#### **Lack of Consultation**

The 2020 consultation report advises:

*The project team will keep the community informed through **regular** updates on the Haberfield, Ashfield and Leichhardt website, online webinars, community notifications and **email updates**.*

*No existing or new proposals will be implemented without further consultation with the community, councils and stakeholders.*

Although TfNSW advised in July a bridge would be proposed as late as September 2023, the Association was advised there were no further updates on the project

While the Haberfield Association welcomes a review of the pedestrian safety of our community, our first-hand knowledge and experience of the area has not been given due consideration.

TfNSW received submissions from over 200 residents of Haberfield and adjacent streets responding to the previous 2020 proposals but apparently didn't consider it useful or necessary to communicate with any of them on the details prior to this public feedback period.

#### **Inner West Council Input**

We have been advised by Inner West Council that their general preference is for an at-grade crossing, advice that had given to TfNSW in 2023.

Also that in early 2022 there had been concerns raised by the community and elected council about the safety of the existing staged crossing resulting in Council requesting that the crossing be changed to a single phase crossing as a matter of urgency.

Council also sought measures to prevent vehicles from hitting the pedestrian refuge as well as to prevent confusion where pedestrians are crossing the one side of the road on the red pedestrian phase when the green pedestrian phase is only active for the other side of the road.

We recall also that in 2020, Council expressed the view that "it would be appropriate in both instances to construct the bridge whilst also retaining the existing signalised crossing".

#### **Further Consultation**

We seek feedback from TfNSW on this submission and a commitment that the community consultation promised in the 2020 consultation report will transpire.

The Association, and residents are eager to work with TfNSW on a better proposal. and as a starting point, we recommend the following concerns:

#### **Loss of amenity & privacy**

The proposal would result in loss of amenity for residents adjacent to the site of the proposed bridge because of the loss of privacy. This is due in part to the height of the proposed steel structure.

The alternative suggestions discussed elsewhere would at least in part minimise that loss of privacy.

#### **Ugly Monstrosity**

The proposed design of the bridge lacks finesse. It has been described by some residents as an ugly monstrosity. The apparent additional 1.5m clearance for maintenance purposes increases the height of the structure and its imposition on the perspective from all directions.

#### **Visual Impact on Heritage Area**

It appears that little consideration has been given to keeping in tone with the Heritage Conservation Area which it abuts. The bland concrete walls are unsympathetic with the HCA. Perhaps they could have been clad in sandstone with more trees to soften the appearance. But the bulk of the steelwork is also dominant and appears to be more obtrusive than other pedestrian bridges of similar length.

### **Loss of Green Space, Trees and other Vegetation**

The proposed footbridges would result in the loss of trees and vegetation. WestConnex has already resulted in a significant loss in green space. The proposed footbridge must be located and designed so as to minimise further loss of trees and green space.

### **Wheeled Users**

The proposal suggests that wheelchairs, mobility scooters, bikes and presumably other scooters and e-bikes could use the lift which “would be large enough to cater for a minimum of two bikes at a time and long enough for a cargo bike”.

Given the space available on the site, a proper ramp for bicycles, prams and wheelchairs would provide a much better option for people not to rely solely on lifts which can be out of service for extended periods.

Not all cyclists agree on the use of access using stairs with wheeling ramps. There is a particularly concern about large family bikes and electric bikes which are often too heavy to push up wheeling ramps. Even for leisure walkers and runners, a ramp is a much gentler and safer way of increasing elevation when compared with stairs.

Some alternatives which address these concerns are discussed in the following section 3.

### **Advertising**

It is an absolute requirement from the Community they any bridge will never include any advertising. We understand that a similar request has been made by the Inner West Council. We seek an assurance from TfNSW that advertising will never be permitted on any bridge.



Advertising on other bridges

## **2.2 Other Concerns & Considerations**

### **2.2.1 Transparency & Release of Evidence**

We ask for transparency and the release of the evidentiary basis for the proposal and all other possible options considered.

TfNSW advises that the bridge is for pedestrian safety but although there have been several incidents at this intersection, there have not been any incidents affecting pedestrian safety. The brief presentation on the proposal in the December Community Update Live Stream suggested that trucks were stopping over the crossing impeding pedestrians crossing.

Residents appear to be unaware of such incidents but if it is the case, shouldn't the drivers be charged with an offense?

Some in our community have suggested that the bridge has more to do with improving traffic flow into and out of the tunnel portals. We would welcome any evidence that show that is not the case.

We call for a suspension of all project planning until there is an agreed community discussion and consultation on all possible options with traffic models and the data used to create them made available to the affected community.

## 2.2.2 U-Turns, Cameras & Signage

The community are quite concerned about the frequent illegal U-turns both at the intersection and in Waratah St as well as the vehicles which exit the portal and use the Haberfield local streets to turn and head west via the Wattle St tunnel entrance. In particular, the brightly coloured breakdown patrol trucks regularly use Haberfield local streets to re-enter the tunnel at Wattle St rather than, as previously proposed, using the roundabout at Timbrell Drive, thus avoiding residential streets.

It has previously been suggested that cameras be installed to identify the vehicles doing illegal U-turns. The installation on “No-U-turn” signs in both Wattle & Waratah Streets might also reduce this occurrence?

It was also previously requested that the right turn from Wattle St into Waratah St be signposted “Local Traffic Only” or “Resident Traffic Only”, but these requests have not been acted on.

## 2.2.3 Relocation of Pedestrian Crossing on Waratah St

Consideration should be given to moving the Waratah St. crossing a little distance from the corner – five but no more than ten meters – to improve safety as well as allowing stopping space for a vehicle coming from the City West Link. The location needs to be further considered. Pedestrians crossing Waratah St would have visibility issues with vehicles coming from City West Link.

A more suitable location may be south of the footpath into the Dobroyd Pde cul-de-sac. That would improve safety as well as allowing stopping space for a vehicle coming from City West Link and allow for a speed hump to reduce vehicle approach speeds. The location would need to accommodate the trees on the opposite side of Waratah St?

It should be noted that blind or sight impaired residents live in this area and do need to safely cross Waratah St.



### 3. Consideration of Alternatives

The Review of Environmental Factors (REF) discusses a few alternatives which may have been considered, but there appears to have been only a cursory attempt to consider alternatives as well as to fully consider the options discussed.

**Option 5:**

If pedestrian safety is the prime objective then surely a safer street level crossing should not be dismissed? Has there been adequate consideration given to making the street level crossing safer?

While there have been several incidents of vehicles colliding with the railings, would not a steel or concrete barrier improve the safety of pedestrians while on the centre island?

**Option 2:**

This appears to be similar to the 2020 bridge proposal but that proposal lacked detail. The curved ramp suggests a concrete construction and indeed such a construction could result in a slimmer design with less visual impact like that of the Albert ‘Tibby’ Cotter Pedestrian bridge over Anzac Pde, or King George Road Footbridge, Beverly Hills. (See images below.)

But Option 2 is not fully considered in the REF.

The long ramp in Timbrell Park could be minimised if the canal section of the bridge was sloping forming part of the ramp.

The image in the proposal does not include the ramp on the southern side. A ramp on both sides is considered essential. The impact of the southern ramp could be minimised from that suggested in Option 3 by placing at least half the ramp in the northern side of the sound wall.

Further, the use of a lower concrete structure would reduce the length of the ramp and thereby the impact on the environment and the community.

A revamped version of Option 2 should also include a set of steps between the roadway and the canal as recommended by Inner West Council for the 2020 proposal.



Albert ‘Tibby’ Cotter Footbridge at Anzac Pde



King George Road Footbridge, Beverly Hills

**Pedestrian Tunnel:**

Was there any consideration given to a tunnel beneath Dobroyd Pde/City West Link?

A tunnel would presumably only require much shorter ramps which would not have the same visual impact as any bridge.



## 4. Conclusion

While we welcome steps to improve pedestrian safety at the intersection of Dobroyd Pde/City West Link and Waratah Street, the alternative solutions discussed should be given due consideration and the design of the solution must meet minimum requirements.

- A single phase, safe, 'at-grade' crossing is the preference of both the local community and the Inner West Council.
- Any proposed bridge must include a separate bicycle lane to Australian standards.
- Ramps will be required on both sides.
- Steps should also be included to facilitate those with limited time who do not wish to use a long ramp.
- For Pedestrians with mobility issues a lift would be essential to accommodate their needs.
- For any bridge which includes the canal, we support the Inner West Council proposal for the inclusion of steps to directly access what remains of the Reg Coady Reserve.
- Any proposal for a footbridge must include designs that give due consideration to aesthetics and the Federation character of the suburb.
- If a bridge is to be provided, consideration should be given to providing time limited simple level crossing at the present location. This could have long wait times particularly at busy traffic periods but would provide an alternative option for pedestrians with mobility issues as noted by the IW Council.
- We seek an assurance from TfNSW that advertising will never be permitted on any bridge.
- It is disappointing that TfNSW appear to be prioritising traffic flow over residents' accessibility, that the **sole** purpose of this proposal is to improve the flow of traffic into and out of the M4E tunnels, and that TfNSW apparently thinks that tunnel traffic flow is more important than the rights of the residents to have easy access across our suburb.
- We seek feedback from TfNSW on this submission and a commitment that further direct face-to-face consultation with the community will be provided.