

The logo for CAWB (Community Action for Windsor Bridge) is prominently displayed in large, bold, black letters. The background of the top right corner features a faded image of a bridge over a river, with the text 'COMMUNITY ACTION FOR WINDSOR BRIDGE' overlaid in a smaller, white font.

CAWB

MEDIA RELEASE

IS THE NSW GOVERNMENT POISONING THE HAWKESBURY RIVER?

Concerns are growing that the construction of a bridge at Windsor, north west of Sydney, is triggering the release of sulfuric acid into the environment.

President of Community Action for Windsor Bridge (CAWB), Mr Harry Terry has written to the Secretary of Planning setting out detailed concerns regarding the rigour of original planning assessments, testing undertaken to establish soil conditions at the construction site and the management of the actual construction.

Concerned residents have already dedicated themselves to documenting the destruction occurring as a result of the bridge project, however it was only recently that a review of their photographs alerted the community to a potential issue relating to acid sulfate soils (ASS).

Despite government maps identifying a significant part of the project zone as Class 4 ASS, residents fear the importance of this soil condition was down played in approval documents. They point out early testing for the environmental impact statement (EIS) involved only four test sites at two locations upstream of the existing bridge and away from the project zone. Subsequent testing appears to have been exclusively concentrated on the riverbed, with no testing done on the terrestrial soils currently undergoing massive disruption.

Harry Terry says, "Acid sulfate soils are a bit like encapsulated asbestos - safe ... as long as you don't break them open. Unfortunately breaking open these soils is exactly what is happening at Windsor, on a massive scale."

Mr Terry wants answers. An RMS representative has confirmed in conversation with a community member that the RMS has been excavating material known as Monosulfidic Black Ooze (MBO) from the riverbank. An RMS document advises that whilst MBO is a manifestation of acid sulfate conditions, an important distinction between MBO and other acid sulfate material (ASM) is that "MBO may continue to form in drains, even after treatment, if conditions are favourable. This means that the presence of MBO presents an ongoing management and maintenance risk that may extend well beyond the road construction period."

Now the community wants to know whether this highly contentious project is visiting even more catastrophic destruction on the region, having already destroyed a complex land drainage system, commissioned and personally supervised by Governor Macquarie as well as much of the oldest town square in the nation.

ENDS