

*National Trust Awards
2015.
The Battle to Save Thompson Square*



Question 1A: Please submit at least 2 BEFORE photos.



Left: an 1841 map of Thompson Square and surrounds.

Right: an early twentieth century painting of the historic Windsor Bridge, currently under threat from NSW State Government plans to demolish it and replace it with a modern, concrete structure.



Question 1B: Please submit at least 2 AFTER photos.



Above Left: A volunteer stands watch over the oldest public Square in Australia as part of the long-running battle to protect the precinct from a major arterial road and new concrete bridge.



Above Right: another visitor signs one of the 13,000 letters that have now been sent to the NSW Premier, protesting against the planned bridge project. Four of the many volunteers who have maintained a round-the-clock presence at the Square for over 630 days watch on..

Question 2: In two sentences please give us a description of your campaign (50 word limit)

Grassroots community action to stop the destruction of Australia's oldest town square via construction of a major modern concrete bridge, arterial road link and traffic lights and the demolition of the 1874 Windsor Bridge. The battle, possibly most significantly, includes the continuous occupation of the Square sine 21 July 2013.

(50 words)

**Question 3: What were you up against, what were you fighting? (500 word limit)**

CAWB is up against a number of project proponents: The RMS, Minister for Roads, the local council and the NSW State Government are all apparently committed to the proposal to bulldoze a major arterial road through Thompson Square, Windsor.

Some of the issues CAWB has been up against include:

- Inadequate recognition of the historic significance of both the Square and the Bridge,
- A hostile local Council, determined to see the new bridge constructed,
- Lack of clarity regarding government project processes and inadequate community consultation,
- The use of State Significant Infrastructure legislation to effectively 'switch off' heritage protections,
- The huge technical demands involved in responding authoritatively to the EIS,
- The costs involved in engaging experts to provide independent data such as traffic counts, and
- The restrictions imposed by the legislation, limiting appeals to administrative issues and removing the right of a merit appeal.

(142 words)

Question 4: How does your campaign make a difference? (500 word limit)

The CAWB campaign has been instrumental in highlighting the historic significance of both Thompson Square and Windsor Bridge. It has created an increasing awareness of the unique status of Windsor as the oldest rural township in Australia (1795, originally called Green Hills) and the extraordinary cultural and economic significance of heritage in the Hawkesbury.

Feedback from other protest groups indicates the CAWB action has had a 'lighthouse effect', inspiring other community groups and demonstrating the power of determined, well-organised and informed community action. CAWB representatives have contributed to two publications designed to assist communities confronting similar issues and have spoken at workshops and conferences on tactics and strategies.

CAWB is particularly concerned to ensure upcoming generations of Hawkesbury residents recognise the importance of the Square and local heritage more generally and events have often included experiences specifically for younger supporters. Anecdotally, there has been a concurrent increase in local history content in local school curriculum offerings and an increased background level of knowledge about the area's colonial beginnings.

CAWB has consciously and deliberately fostered a broad membership with supporters coming from all age groups, demographic, educational, professional and political persuasions. The resulting synergies have been powerful and recent supporter workshops indicate the campaign has made a powerful contribution to community cohesion, generating social opportunities and linkages previously impossible.

(219 words)

Question 5: What innovative tactics did you use? (500 word limit)

For over 630 days CAWB supporters have maintained a 24 hour, seven day per week sleepless vigil in Thompson Square, using the right to public assembly, as defined in the NSW Summary Offences Act, as a means of legally occupying Thompson Square.

Occupation of Thompson Square has been a highly successful strategy, building the profile of the cause and generating enormous public support. The presence of informed and engaging representatives at the occupation tent, willing to talk to interested visitors has helped to raise awareness of the significance of a NSW Heritage Conservation Area that many had previously taken for granted.

Over 13,000 people have stopped to chat, to learn about the issues and sign letters of support for the cause. These letters have been forwarded to the NSW Premier. Combined with the 2012 petition this means that over 25,000 people have put their names forward as supporting the campaign.

At the forefront of CAWB's online campaign is an informative webpage (cawb.com.au), providing detailed information, as well as an active and engaging Facebook page. With over 6,200 followers, this page allows followers to remain informed of latest developments and shares forgotten or unknown tales of the people and buildings of Windsor. Twitter has further contributed to CAWB's social media presence. A team of dedicated researchers continue to provide detailed accounts of the history and events surrounding the square. As such, the Facebook page and webpage have become an invaluable resource, and a developing compendium of historical information.

Other initiatives include:

- A 'wool bombing' project, designed to raise the profile of the cause,
- "Governor and Mrs Macquarie" delivering the 2012 petition to the NSW Parliament in a horse and carriage, accompanied by outriders, a piper, colonial characters and red coats,
- A CFMEU "Green Ban"
- Cinema in the Square showing iconic Australian films
- Heritage Tours
- Concerts and the writing and production of a protest song, "Two Lane Bridge"
- Chalkboard messages, designed to be attention grabbing, pithy and amusing,
- A Heritage Award from the NSW Government
- A visit from then-Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd,
- Challenging the Planning Minister's approval in the Land and Environment Court.

(583 words)

Question 6: What networking did you do? (150 word limit)

Networking has been fundamental to the CAWB campaign. Of particular importance has been ongoing discussions with State and Federal politicians, as well as support and exchange of information with other advocacy groups.

A connection with a Greens MLC resulted in a Call for Papers and Labor MPs have pursued issues through Questions on Notice. Both Opposition parties have raised questions in Estimates hearings and the attendance of party representatives at events in the Square has been very much appreciated by CAWB supporters. (82 words)

Question 7: What do you believe to be the legacy of your campaign? (150 word limit)

In the long term CAWB is determined the survival of Thompson Square and the historic Windsor Bridge as functioning public infrastructure, representative of the best of their class of heritage assets, will be our legacy. More immediately our legacy includes a heightened awareness of the significance of the Thompson Square heritage precinct and the Hawkesbury more broadly, as well as increasing local interest in heritage as an economic force.

Other significant legacies include a Land and Environment Court decision that may set a precedent for Ministerial decisions under recent planning legislation, increased community dialogue about the future of the Hawkesbury, greater cooperation between local advocacy groups and a more robust ‘conversation’ about heritage protection with the NSW Government. (120 words)

Question 8: For Media Releases- what was the purpose of your project? What are some interesting findings in your project that you had to overcome? Are there some stories or interesting facts about the place and the heritage of it? (100 word limit)

To protect the very soil of Thompson Square where Governor Lachlan Macquarie wrote a symbolic contract with all Australians. In naming the Square for an ex-convict, rather than a member of a foreign royal family or foreign nobility he effectively sowed the seeds of his own destruction. But he stood up to the “Exclusives”: those who sought to rule by virtue of birth, social worth and economic power; choosing rather an Australia committed to a 'fair go for all' and the egalitarian society we value and enjoy today. (87 words)



Question 9: Additional information

Thompson Square is a rich source of fascinating characters and stories of early Australian life. A more recent tale that has charmed many of us involves one Thomas Mina (Obimune Minami), who was born in Yokohama, Japan in 1874. After studying for an Arts Degree at Kyoto University and travelling the world Thomas arrived in Australia in 1897.

By 1920 he had become a resident of Windsor and married Susan Trapp, a British immigrant lass, at the Methodist Parsonage. The two established a very successful laundry business, first in Thompson Square, later in George Street, Windsor.

Thompson Square had been neglected by the then Council and, as the first impression of Windsor seen by visiting tourists who came out from Sydney to see “the old Colonial town”, it was deemed important to beautify this area in recognition of its historical importance.

As leader of the Town Improvement Society, established to improve the appearance of the Square, Thomas was the “one who walked the Square and planned for its beautification”. He designed gardens, terraces, a summerhouse and a fountain. Thompson Square became a place of peaceful beauty full of flowerbeds and clipped lawns to be enjoyed by locals and tourists alike. People donated plants for the garden...one man came from Sydney with 100 Portulaca plants.

Thomas had an unfulfilled ambition to install a statue of Lachlan Macquarie outside the School of Arts. He was told he couldn't because there was a new, wider road going through. His recognition of the contribution and importance of Lachlan Macquarie and desire to honour it in the “Gateway to Windsor” is in stark contrast with the behaviour of the local council, who refused to allow his access to river water to keep the Thompson Square gardens he had so carefully created alive during a period of drought.

Thomas returned to Japan in 1941.

Question 10 : Please upload additional photos/document



Left: a supporter on their way to the 6am shift change-over took this photograph of Windsor Mall, looking towards a fog-shrouded Thompson Square. The photo recently attracted over 37,000 views on the CAWB Facebook page.



Right: CAWB has been blessed to have the support of luminaries such as the Trust's Chairman, Ian Carroll, Green Bans Legend, Jack Mundey and colleague, Mick Tubbs.



Left: A student group learns more about Thompson Square from a CAWB volunteer.



Left: Australia Day 2014, media personality, Wendy Harmer judged the Great Australian Cupcake Muster.



Above and Right: Events in the Square have been well-attended.

"Wool bombing" added a colourful message to the Square. A young supporter 'helps'.



Some of the Chalkboards...

