

CAWB

Community Action for Windsor Bridge



CAWB WELCOMES 'GREEN BAN'

Today, in an extraordinary and rarely seen move, the CFMEU, in response to community pleas for help, has placed an historic 'Green Ban' on Thompson Square, Windsor.

Just as, in the early 1970's, green bans protected Australian architectural heritage and social history; today this venerable and honourable tradition has been called upon in defense of the oldest remaining public square in Australia.

In the 1970's green bans occurred against a background of the Askin Government and increasing developer power. Today's green ban occurs against a background of eroded environmental protection and diminished heritage safeguards in response to an increasingly powerful developer lobby.

In 2014 the power of development over community concerns is well illustrated by the Windsor Bridge proposal and today's announcement is made against a backdrop of ICAC investigations into political donations, power and influence; although more sophisticated financial arrangements are evident than the infamous 'brown paper bags' of the past.

Chairman of Community Action for Windsor Bridge (CAWB), Mr Dail Miller says the group is grateful to the CFMEU for the interim Green Ban.

"This interim Green Ban is symbolic of a remarkable period in history when people from all walks of life united to protect our heritage," Mr Miller says, adding, "today, the threat to the oldest public square in Australia has been a catalyst for the historic renewal of this great Australian tradition."

CAWB, a local, grassroots organisation, in round the clock action, has been defending Australia's oldest remaining public square from government plans to demolish the historic 1874 Windsor Bridge and replace it with a two-lane, modern concrete bridge and new connecting road through the Square.

Since 21 July 2013, CAWB members have maintained a continuous presence in the Square to highlight the government's plans and watch over this unique urban precinct. Their diligence was recently

recognised by the State Government with a 2014 Heritage Volunteer Award.

CAWB says the only logical solution is to retain and renovate Windsor's still-sound historic bridge for local traffic and put heavy and through traffic on a new bypass, providing a further two lanes across the Hawkesbury River and potential for further, easy expansion in the future.

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Why did CAWB take court action by lodging judicial review proceedings with the Land & Environment Court?

- The Minister for Planning approved a new bridge and approach roads over the Hawkesbury on 20 December 2013.
- The Department of Infrastructure & Planning had previously appointed 3 independent heritage experts to prepare an Independent Heritage Review. That independent review advised Mr Hazzard:

“the project should not go ahead because of the impact on the significance of Thompson Square Conservation Area and Windsor Bridge”

- The independent review also warned the Minister that the Heritage Assessment and Statement of Heritage Impact (SoHI) provided by the Roads and Maritime Authority to justify the project
 - o “is generally inadequate”
 - o “incomplete”
 - o “is insufficient to understand the significance of the Thompson Square Conservation Area”
- The Heritage Council of NSW also advised the Minister the project should not go ahead.

CAWB has taken court action to stop this new arterial road being driven through Windsor’s premier heritage and tourism precinct, Thompson Square.

Why has the local community felt the need to keep a physical human presence in Thompson Square?

- Thompson Square was proclaimed by Governor Macquarie in 1811, making it the oldest proclaimed public square in Australia.
- Thompson Square is the much-loved heart of Windsor. With its surrounding historical buildings it is a unique heritage precinct, listed on the State Heritage Register as an item of state significance known as the Thompson Square Conservation Area.
- NSW Roads & Maritime Services plan to demolish the existing bridge (also of historical significance) and build a modern concrete bridge and new approach road through Thompson Square.
- CAWB says the new bridge and road will:
 - o be disastrous for the Thompson Square Conservation Area as a heritage area,
 - o irreversibly and seriously diminish everyday use of Thompson Square now and for the future.
- CAWB and many others argue a by-pass is the real solution.

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A brief history of Green Bans

Green Bans spring from the great period of activism of the late 1960s and early 1970s. Members of the Builders Labourers Federation, predecessor to today's CFMEU, were becoming increasingly concerned about the lack of planning for the unbridled development then going on in NSW.

Green Bans always were and always will be about social responsibility. They always occur at the request of, and in support of, residents' groups and have a long, proud tradition of protecting places under threat from improper development.

Today the existence of the historic Rocks, (planned to become office towers) and the Royal Botanic Gardens (planned to be a car park for the Sydney Opera House) are examples from this period of the importance of Green Bans, which also protected the residential areas of Ultimo, Glebe, Annandale, Rozelle and Leichhardt from a planned expressway.

Preserving heritage was a key concern and the BLF and the National Trust worked together to save 1700 buildings in New South Wales. Green Bans protected heritage sites such as:

- Pitt Street Congregational Church (February 1972);
- Theatre Royal (May 1972);
- Regent Theatre (October 1972);
- Newcastle Hotel in George Street (October 1972);
- Helen Keller Hostel for Blind Women in Waimea Avenue, Woollahra (March 1973);
- Royal Australasian College of Physicians, an 1848 building at [145 Macquarie Street](#) (December 1973);
- Catholic Church Presbytery, an Edwardian mansion in Moore Park Road (May 1974);
- State Theatre (June 1974).

In a letter to the Sydney Morning Herald in January 1972, Jack Munday articulated the union's principles:

Yes, we want to build. However, we prefer to build urgently-required hospitals, schools, other public utilities, high-quality flats, units and houses, provided they are designed with adequate concern for the environment, than to build ugly unimaginative architecturally-bankrupt blocks of concrete and glass offices...Though we want all our members employed, we will not just become robots directed by developer-builders who value the dollar at the expense of the environment. More and more, we are going to determine which buildings we will build ...The environmental interests of three million people are at stake and cannot be left to developers and building employers whose main concern is making profit. Progressive unions, like ours, therefore have a very useful social role to play in the citizens' interest, and we intend to play it.

The federal Department of Urban and Regional Development in 1973 acknowledged the effectiveness of the NSWBLF:

Where pleas and reasonable requests could be ignored or summarily dismissed by government, and especially by private developers, the threat of direct strike action by workmen on the site is a matter of immediate concern and negotiation.