

Committee for North Sydney

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Sydney Harbour Bridge Cycleway Access Program

Submission of the Committee for North Sydney

It has been obvious for a long time that the Bridge bike path needs one or more of the following:

- a continuing elevated path alongside the bridge/rail structure;
- the first stage of the HarbourLink elevated separate shared user path;
- a ramp to the ground;
- a travelator to the ground;
- a lift to the ground.

The solution, when it is found, will just be another instance of transport infrastructure. Admittedly it is for a single (but increasingly important) mode, and it is in a sensitive location. But most transport infrastructure is for one mode, and is usually in an area that people care about.

Finding the best option should not generate controversy, grandstanding, pressure or politicking. It should not require grand gestures in the form of ramps that are trying to be giant sculptures and landmarks.

So far, the search for an alternative connection (in addition to the stairs) has been fundamentally flawed.

- It seems unnecessarily rushed. What is the urgency?
- The problem has been around for a long time and several efforts to solve it have failed – but a good process could see a consensual solution over a relatively short time.
- It is provocative to offer two grandiose ramps and declare that it will be one of the other.
- It is provocative to say the decision will soon be made by TfNSW.
- A process limited to the calling for submissions (like this one) with no real transparency, no conversation, no independent review and no participation is rightly viewed very cynically by the public.

Instead, TfNSW is capable of running a sensible process involving the key stakeholders and others who wish to be included.

This would be like an open design process, beginning with a broad agreement on defining the problem, on the criteria for a solution, and on outcomes to be avoided. On this basis, a range of options could be identified – ramps, travelators, lifts, continuations of an elevated path – and then compared and ranked according to their strengths and weaknesses.

If this is given time, and is properly facilitated (by the people that TfNSW engages for these kinds of processes) there would be much greater confidence and support among the public for what TfNSW is trying to do. There should be time for the community to debate the pros and cons of the various possibilities, without a lot of passion and outrage.

We are confident that a broad consensus would emerge based on the facts and realities, and that everyone would, at the very least, acknowledge that the process had been comprehensive and inclusive, even if their preferred solution isn't chosen.

The Committee for North Sydney urges TfNSW to

- engage with the community to explain the context and to rationally explore all options;
- facilitate a conversation about the nature of the problem, the criteria for a solution, and the strengths and weaknesses of all options;
- build a broad consensus or acceptance around an emerging solution.

The outcome would be good infrastructure for an increasingly important transport mode, and renewed confidence in the community that planning and urban design can be a positive and inclusive process.