**WestConnex**

Submission for Environmental Impact Assessment

Heritage, Public and Green Space Working Group,

WestCON Community Action Groups

(Ashfield Haberfield Chapter)

15 February 2014

The proposed WestConnex will have an adverse impact on Ashfield and Haberfield in the demolition of houses and destruction of gardens and a significant portion of a park. These houses, gardens and park are all of heritage significance.

**HOUSES (Wattle and Ramsay Streets):**

Wattle Street and nearby streets form part of the Haberfield Conservation Area which has been a gazetted conservation area in the Ashfield Local Environmental Plan since 1985. Haberfield’s status as a conservation area was confirmed in the recently gazetted Ashfield Local Environmental Plan 2013. The Haberfield Conservation Area is also classified by the National Trust and listed on the Register of the National Estate. Demolition of houses is not permitted under the Ashfield LEP because it would have an adverse impact on the relevant streetscape and on the conservation area as a whole. The demolition of houses in Haberfield for the proposed WestConnex would have an adverse impact on the relevant streetscapes such as Wattle Street and Ramsay Street. It would also have an adverse impact on nearby streets due to the noise and air pollution created by the traffic entering and exiting the tunnel portals near Ramsay Street and Parramatta Road, specifically at or near Yasmar. It should be remembered that these houses are also peoples’ homes.

The proposed WestConnex will separate the Northcote and Wolseley Streets area from the remainder of the Haberfield Conservation Area thereby causing lack of cohesion within the suburb. Much of the suburb will be adversely affected by toxic pollution levels caused by the placing of stacks at tunnel exits such as those in Parramatta Road and the City West Link Road. These deleterious impacts will adversely affect Haberfield the Garden Suburb which has been recognised to be of heritage significance to Australia.

When proposing a Classified listing for Haberfield in 1979 the National Trust stated:

Haberfield is the earliest Australian garden suburb characterised by architecturally distinctive single storey suburban villas in the Federation style. These houses have a quality and detail much higher than the later copied examples. It is imperative that this distinctive and historic area be protected from the threat of uninformed and apparently uncontrolled renovations if its quality is to be retained.

(*National Trust Listing Proposal for Haberfield Historic* *Conservation Area*, May 1979)

In 1990 Haberfield was entered on the Register of Australia’s National Estate. In its Statement of Significance, the Australian Heritage Commission wrote:

Haberfield was Australia’s first comprehensively planned and developed Garden Suburb, establishing a model for Australia’s suburban development in the 20th century. Astutely conceived and promoted by Richard Stanton, a Summer Hill real estate agent and former Mayor of Ashfield, Haberfield comprised individually-designed, locally-adapted Queen Anne style houses, set along tree-lined streets which were antithesis of the unhealthy crowded inner city suburbs. Haberfield’s significance derives from its successful adaptation of the Garden Suburb idea, and the architectural quality of its houses related in style and character, but carefully individualised in form and detail.

(Australian Heritage Commission, *Listing for Nomination*, to Vincent Crow 18 April 1990)

Specific examples of the heritage significance of individual houses within the Haberfield Conservation Area are:

**Wattle Street:**

**45: ALLENDALE, 1910.**

This allotment of land was sold to John Manning Allen, telegraphist of Haberfield, in July 1909 and title was transferred to his wife in August 1910. The property was probably named after the owner’s surname. According to Terry Kass, historian and heritage consultant,

This cottage is part of a group which contributes to the landscape. It is very intact. This cottage also demonstrates the history of the street. The man for whom the house was built was an active investor in land along this street and his activity was a factor in determining the layout of the street and allotment boundaries.[[1]](#footnote-1)

**43: ALLAWAH, 1912**

**41: AIRLIE, 1912**

Ownership of this land was transferred to Clara Laurence, wife of James Laurence who was a lime and cement merchant of Haberfield, in June 1910. In May 1912 she took out a mortgage to finance the construction of this pair of semi-detached dwellings. The builder was A. E. Wood. Both dwellings had four rooms and were completed by September 1912. They had damp courses and main roofs of slate. Both these dwellings were initially leased to tenants. According to the heritage consultants Clive Lucas Stapleton in their 2005 study of RTA owned real estate in Haberfield:

The pair of semi-detached cottages are (sic.) of local significance for their historic and aesthetic contribution to the Haberfield Conservation Area which is highly regarded as Australia’s first garden suburb. With some intact features and reversible alterations, the cottages contribute to the local streetscape in their detailing, form, scale and setback.[[2]](#footnote-2)

**39: LINTON, 1913.**

**37: GLENGARY, 1913.**

Ownership of this land was transferred to Clara Laurence, wife of James Laurence when he was a lime merchant of Newtown, in July 1907. Soon afterwards they moved to a new house at 33 Wattle Street, Haberfield. In May 1912 she took out a mortgage to finance the construction of this pair of semi-detached dwellings. Both these dwellings were leased to tenants.

Each of these semi-detached dwellings features French doors opening onto a front verandah which is ornamented with decorative timber fretwork. This timberwork shows strong Art Nouveau influence. Although each dwelling is asymmetrical in design, the overall design is symmetrical with gables, chimneys and timberwork balancing each other.

**35: built in 1916.**

The land on which this house was built was originally owned by Clara Laurence who owned property from 33 to 43 Wattle Street from 1912. In May 1916 she transferred the title to 35 Wattle Street to Helena Comerford, the wife of John Comerford of Marrickville, who took up residence here.

This cottage has many intact original features such as triple casement windows with fanlights, panes of coloured glass at one end of the verandah, tessellated tiled serpentine front path and tiled risers in the front steps. Unusual features are the fleur-de-lis design on the front gable and the Arts-and-Crafts heart design on the chimneys. According to the heritage consultants Clive Lucas Stapleton in their 2005 study of RTA owned real estate in Haberfield:

The house is of local aesthetic significance as a largely intact example of the Federation style cottages typical in the area retaining many original features, notably the patterned tile step risers, decorative motifs on the chimney and gable end, and the circular bay to the verandah. The house contributes to the quality of the local streetscape in its form, detailing, scale and setback.[[3]](#footnote-3)

**33: LAURESTINE, 1906.**

This property was probably named after its first occupants, James and Clara Laurence. It was the first house constructed on the eastern side of Wattle Street. James Laurence was a lime merchant resident in Newtown before he moved to Haberfield.

When writing of the social significance of 33 Wattle Street and its relationship to 37 to 43 Wattle Street, Terry Kass stated:

This is an intact cottage which forms part of a group which makes a positive impact on the streetscape. This house is close to the cottages erected by the original owner to let and it demonstrates how once both landlord and tenant lived in close proximity, with little of the social distance which now characterizes this relationship. This cottage is intact example of the Federation Arts and Crafts style.[[4]](#footnote-4)

In terms of architectural style, this house is quite close to those designed during the Early Federation Period (1901-05) for Richard Stanton’s Haberfield Estate. The circular ‘moon-gate’ windows reflect the Oriental influence evident in Western architecture during the early twentieth century- refer to pages 120-121 of *Tours of Haberfield: Past and Present, Part Two* (Vincent Crow, 2007)*.*

**9 Wattle Street, 1911** is listed as a separate heritage item in the recently gazetted Ashfield LEP, 2013.

**Ramsay Street:**

**164: built in 1916.**

This Californian Bungalow style house was built by R. F. Curyeuven at a cost of six hundred and fifty pounds ($1300). Originally it had a slate roof. According to the heritage consultants Clive Lucas Stapleton, “The house is of local significance for its aesthetic contribution to the Haberfield Conservation Area. It is a good example of an intact Californian Bungalow which is unusual for the area”[[5]](#footnote-5).

Further information on properties in Ramsay and Wattle Streets affected by the proposed WestConnex can be found on pages 274 to 281 of Vincent Crow’s *Tours of Haberfield: Past and Present, Part Three* (2010).

All the houses mentioned in this submission have been recognised to be of heritage significance and form part of the Haberfield Conservation Area which will be harmed if the proposed WestConnex is constructed.

**GARDENS:**

Construction of the proposed WestConnex would result in the **destruction of gardens** in the Haberfield Conservation Area and **part of the garden of Yasmar**. This property (both the house and the garden) is listed on the State Heritage Register. Its heritage significance has been recognised by the National Trust, Ashfield Municipal Council and the New South Wales State Government.

According to the State Heritage Register in regard to **Yasmar**:

**Statement of significance:**

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|  | The site of Yasmar survives as a rare example of a suburban villa in its garden setting that remains in a relatively intact condition. Yasmar is the only relatively intact villa house estate remaining on Parramatta Road, the oldest roadway in Australia, commenced in 1792. Other great estate houses in the vicinity no longer exist - Annandale 1808, Elswick 1805-25, Dobroyde, Ashfield Park 1820s. The house, stables and garden survive in layout and in relation to each other as originally intended. For these reasons the site is rare. The garden has historic and aesthetic value as a now very rare example of the Gardenesque style surviving close to the city on a major arterial road and retaining connection with its original residence. The existing remnant garden allows an understanding both of the kind of setting thought appropriate to persons of wealth and taste and of this style's principles. The garden has historic, aesthetic, social and scientific significance for its purposeful layout in relation to the house and outbuildings, range of remnant vegetation and formal entrance gates on Parramatta Road. The gateposts, gates and curved carriageway leading to the turning circle survive in near original condition. The scale of the surviving, now mature, garden marks it a landmark feature along Parramatta Road. The garden's scale and diversity of planting make it an important element in the Haberfield and Ashfield townscape; a welcome contrast to later commercial development along Parramatta Road. Many examples of the garden's vegetation have high individual significance as well as being physical evidence of 19th century practices. The olives may be derived from William Macarthur's Nursery at Camden Park. The garden has associational links with David Ramsay, his son Edward Pierson Ramsay and Alexander Macleay, the latter two being founders of the Linnaean and the Australian Flora & Horticultural Societies. Yasmar's house has historic, aesthetic and social significance at state level. It is a rare example of John Bibb's residential work. The property has strong associations with Simeon Lord, the Ramsay Family and GJN Grace. The house was used as a Sunday School in 1860's, the first home Sunday School for the Presbyterian Church in New South Wales. This led onto the establishment of a week day school in the church hall, circa 1866, and subsequently Haberfield School in 1907. The use of the house as a childrens' court and in association with the remand centre and its school, has been a significant public use of the building. |
|  | **Date significance updated:** 04 Nov 02  |

### Assessment of significance

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| SHR Criteria a)[Historical significance]  | Yasmar house and its grounds have a strong association with the 3 former owners and their families, whose endeavours helped shape Australian society. The property has associations with Simeon Lord, who was a wealthy merchant in the colonial period and who in 1840 had the greatest land ownership in the colony. There is an association with the Ramsays, who were a significant family in the foundation of the suburb of Haberfield and in their role of establishing the local Presbyterian Church community. Members of the Ramsay family were also pioneers of the horticultural industry from the 1840s onwards. The property was subsequently owned and has associations with J N Grace, a founder of the Grace Bros Department Stores. The garden has a strong association with the Ramsay family, the Dobroyde Plant Nursery which was established by Edward Pierson Ramsay, and members of the Flora & Horticultural Society, including members of the Macleays of Elizabeth Bay House, and the architect John Bibb, who was the auditor of the Society. E P Ramsay was Curator of the Australian Museum, a founder of the Linnean Society and close associate with the Scott and Mitchell Families. |
| SHR Criteria c)[Aesthetic significance]  | Yasmar house remains as principal evidence of architect John Bibb's work. It is a rare example of his residential design and is the only known work surviving in a substantially unaltered condition to Bibb's original design. Bibb was an English-trained architect whose work here was almost entirely in the Greek Revival style. Before working in his own practice, Bibb had worked in, then took over, the office of architect John Verge, a highly significant architect in colonial Sydney. The house is a fine example of a Regency designed villa in the Greek Revival style, with quality examples of Regency joinery detailing. Yasmar grounds area rare example of the Gardenesque style garden, still in contact with the original residence, and surviving close to the city of Sydney. Although much reduced in size, the existing remnant allows an understanding of the principles of a villa garden as set out by J C Loudon in his influential book 'The Suburban Villa Gardener', reprinted in the 1850s. The classically-designed gate posts, the gates and curved carriage way leading to the turning circle in front of Yasmar house, survive in near original condition, following Loudon's principles. The scale of the surviving garden, which is now mature, makes it an important element in the local townscape and a landmark along Parramatta Road. |
| SHR Criteria d)[Social significance]  | Yasmar house remains as principal evidence of architect John Bibb's work. It is a rare example of his residential design and is the only known work surviving in a substantially unaltered condition to Bibb's original design. Bibb was an English-trained architect whose work here was almost entirely in the Greek Revival style. Before working in his own practice, Bibb had worked in, then took over, the office of architect John Verge, a highly significant architect in colonial Sydney. The house is a fine example of a Regency designed villa in the Greek Revival style, with quality examples of Regency joinery detailing. Yasmar grounds area rare example of the Gardenesque style garden, still in contact with the original residence, and surviving close to the city of Sydney. Although much reduced in size, the existing remnant allows an understanding of the principles of a villa garden as set out by J C Loudon in his influential book 'The Suburban Villa Gardener', reprinted in the 1850s. The classically-designed gate posts, the gates and curved carriage way leading to the turning circle in front of Yasmar house, survive in near original condition, following Loudon's principles. The scale of the surviving garden, which is now mature, makes it an important element in the local townscape and a landmark along Parramatta Road. |
| SHR Criteria e)[Research potential]  | The site of Yasmar survives as a rare example of an early 19th century villa garden in the Gardenesque style, that remains in a relatively intact condition. There are many examples of vegetation in the garden that are of high individual significance and research value. Individual items in the garden are also physical evidence of the practice of the exchange of exotic plan specimens between members of the Flora & Horticultural and Linnean Societies. The olives in particular may be derived from the Macarthur's Nursery. |
| SHR Criteria f)[Rarity]  | Yasmar house is considered commensurate with John Verge buildings which have Permanent Conservation Order Status, such as Tempe House and Rose Bay Cottage. The house layout and fabric has survived relatively intact since it was first conceived and built, and is the only known example of a single storey residential building designed by John Bibb to survive. The garden is rare for its maturity and species of plants, and the fact that a fragile environment has survived within 5 kms of the Sydney GPO. The 19th Century landscape principles remain evident as a rare research and educative resource. The house within its garden setting is a rare cultural environment and evidence of mid 19th Century society. Yasmar is the only example of a 'villa estate' to survive along the length of Parramatta Road. |
| SHR Criteria g)[Representativeness]  | The House is representative of the Greek Revival architectural style for a domestic mid 19th Century villa. The Garden is representative of the Gardenesque classical style of house and garden layout design typical of the early to mid 19th Century |
| Integrity/Intactness:  | Both the House and the Garden are remarkably intact as they originally designed, both individually and as a purposefully contrived entity. |
| Assessment criteria:  | Items are assessed against the [PDFState Heritage Register (SHR) Criteria](http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/resources/heritagebranch/heritage/listings/criteria.pdf) to determine the level of significance.  |

The proposed destruction of part of the garden would have an adverse impact on the heritage significance of Yasmar as a whole and would be a great loss to the cultural heritage of New South Wales. Rather than destroying this garden, the NSW Government should be investing money restoring both the house and the garden.

**ASHFIELD PARK:**

Ashfield Park was formally gazetted in 1885 and has remained a venue for community activities since then.

The park is listed as a specific heritage item in the recently gazetted Ashfield LEP 2013 and has been classified by the National Trust. According to the Trust in its reasons for giving the Park a classified listing,

Ashfield Park is a fine example of a landscaped park of its era. Within the park are a number of trees planted shortly after the park was purchased in 1879. . . .

The stately trees which cover the “undeveloped” sections of Ashfield Park have considerable appeal as do the garden plantings along Parramatta Road. The aesthetic value of the Park achieves greater prominence as it is one of the only two (with Victoria Park) along the entire length of Parramatta Road with large passive recreation areas, significant trees and gardens.

Vegetation: The eastern half of the Park has the oldest trees including turpentines and a lone blackbutt which are the Park’s examples of indigenous vegetation. The plantings of Phoenix canariensis in the northern half of the Park are amongst the finest to be found in Sydney. Other species planted include Brush Box, Figs (Ficus macrophylla, F. Hillii) and Araucarias. . . .

Maintained garden beds are found in the north-eastern corner of the Park. A particular feature of Ashfield Park are the two “Ashfield Park” signs made by plantings of annuals (including cultivars of Alternanthera amoena) with contrasting foliage on the Parramatta Road frontage. Other beds of flowering annuals enhance this area.[[6]](#footnote-6)

Some of the palms and fig trees mentioned in this report would be destroyed if the west-bound entry ramp and tunnel for the WestConnex is constructed in this area. About fourteen of the Phoenix canariensis, at least one Fig tree and five Brush Box would be destroyed. The general layout of pathways and avenues of trees, especially those in the northern part of the park, would be truncated. These plantings of Phoenix canariensis regarded by the National Trust as “amongst the finest to be found in Sydney” would be lost forever. Diminution of the area of the park would result in diminution of public enjoyment of the park. The local community as well as Parramatta Road itself cannot afford the loss of this green space and public amenity especially when it is to be replaced by a wide expanse of concrete.

**CONCLUSION:**

Some people may argue that the loss of these houses, gardens and park is warranted by the construction of the Westconnex. However there are alternatives to the construction of this road. These alternatives would not involve the destruction outlined in this submission and would have a more effective outcome for the problems that WestConnex is supposed to solve. There are options available within the broad parameters of the proposed WestConnex:

**Ramsay and Wattle Streets:**

Rather than demolishing houses in the Haberfield Conservation Area, the Long Tunnel or Short Tunnel options proposed about ten years ago should be adopted if the WestConnex is to be constructed. The Long Tunnel option would carry traffic to the Anzac Bridge while the Short Tunnel option would transfer traffic to the City West Link Road at Reg Coady Reserve. The Short Tunnel option would involve the ‘cut-and-cover’ of Wadim Jegorow Reserve which does not contain any trees of heritage significance.

**Yasmar:**

A major problem with the proposed WestConnex is that the city-bound exit tunnel for which part of Yasmar’s garden is to be destroyed will only feed traffic onto that part of Parramatta Road which is already congested due to the entry of traffic from Liverpool Road and the restriction of this traffic to two lanes at Battle Bridge. Obviously the flow of traffic will be made worse rather than better. If an exit tunnel is to be constructed, its portal should be east of Battle Bridge.

**Ashfield Park:**

If the WestConnex is to be constructed, a west-bound entry portal should be constructed so that there is no need for destruction of part of Ashfield Park. If the city-bound exit portal is constructed east of Battle Bridge, this may allow space for construction of the west-bound entry portal further west of Ashfield Park.

In order to avoid traffic congestion at the Ashfield/Haberfield end of Stage 1 of WestConnex, surely it would be more sensible to construct your proposed Stage 3 before the construction of your proposed Stage 1. If this was done, traffic from your proposed Stage 1 would have a tunnel into which to enter rather than being stuck in a traffic jam on that part of Parramatta Road between Haberfield and Summer Hill.

Ultimately, construction of the WestConnex will not be a long term solution to the problems that its planners seek to solve. Other more enlightened solutions should be found to Sydney’s traffic problems.

Yours sincerely,

Vincent Crow OAM

Convenor

Heritage, Public and Green Space Working Group,

WestCON Community Action Groups

(Ashfield Haberfield Chapter)

1. Kass, T., *Ashfield Heritage Study: Review of Areas Zoned 2b and 2c.* Reference No. 119 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Clive Lucas Stapleton, *RTA Owned Real Estate Items in NSW- Phase 2 Register,* 2005. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Clive Lucas Stapleton, *RTA Owned Real Estate Items in NSW- Phase 2 Register,* 2005. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. *Ibid.,* Reference No. 115 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Clive Lucas Stapleton, *164 Ramsay Street*, RTA Heritage and Conservation Register, 2005. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. National Trust of Australia (NSW), *Ashfield Park*, Listing proposal 1986. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)