

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**To:** [Seaplanes](#)  
**Subject:** Proposed seaplane operations on West Lake, Lake Burley Griffin - feedback from a foilboarder  
**Date:** Tuesday, 18 May 2021 11:10:28 AM

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I have no concern, per se, regarding seaplanes operating on Lake Burley Griffin, however I am gravely concerned that **the safety of current users of the Lake** has not been granted sufficient weight. I find it baffling that the chosen area for seaplane landings and take-offs is in the middle of the designated sailing course in West Lake. Your maps on pages 12 and 24 of the discussion paper clearly show the designated sailing area. My particular concern is with the landing phase of operations.

I have recreationally sailboarded on West Lake, Lake Burley Griffin, since 1981. Specifically, I ride a variation of a sailboard that uses a hydrofoil to fly above the water surface. A foilboard will easily travel at double the apparent wind speed once the lift-off threshold has been achieved. If the apparent wind speed is 15 knots, I might be travelling at 30 knots, or 15+ metres each and every second. Wind speeds of 15 knots are common in Canberra. Foilboards are also common.

Recreational sailboarding is mostly done back and forth on a beam reach. We reach across the wind, gybe 180 degrees and reach back. Our vision will be focussed forward, upwind and at lake level. There is no need, prior to this proposal, to even consider looking downwind or to the sky.

A seaplane intending to land where someone happens to be foiling will be approaching downwind and into the wind. If it is an afternoon landing, it is probably also be approaching into the sun, given the prevailing wind direction in Canberra is NW. By your own words, (page 17) *“The pilot is responsible for ensuring no conflicting traffic hazards are present.”* The seaplane will be travelling above stall speed, which, in the case of the Twin Otter aircraft suggested for initial operations from Rose Bay, equates to at least an over-the-ground speed of 40+ metres per second. Your charts have the plane descending at 500 fpm, or 152 mpm. At 5 seconds before touching down, the aircraft is 200+ metres downwind, at an altitude of 12 metres. The foilboard sailor is 75 metres to the side, leaving no wake, looking upwind. The sailor will be oblivious to the plane’s arrival. The pilot will likely be oblivious to the sailor’s presence; he is quite low at this point. The plane and the sailboard are on a right-angled collision course that has Pyrrhic consequences. By whatever measure, the sailboarder is in the right, not that that subsequently counts for anything.

I take no reassurance from (page 18): *“The landing phase of the flight presents minimal collision risk. On approach the pilot has an excellent view of the landing area: water users such as swimmers and kayaks that can be very difficult to see from a boat are usually very visible from the air. The pilot must select a landing area well away from conflicting traffic, and always has the option of ‘going around’ if sudden threats emerge.”*

If the pilot must “select a landing area well away from conflicting traffic”, why is the pilot considering landing in the middle of the designated sailing course, West Lake?

I see almost the same degree of risk when the plane is taking off. Take-off distance is 18% longer than landing, but at least the plane is at water level and making a lot of noise, and thus more obvious to other water craft users.

The proposal paper attempts to make a case that, because seaplanes operate safely in other large bodies of water such as The Great Barrier Reef, Rose Bay, Lord Howe Island, Port Stephens Great Lake, Jervis Bay, Batemans Bay, Solitary Islands, and Cape Byron, it will be safe to do the same in tiny West Lake. But, fundamentally, the concentration of watercraft in West Lake will be significantly greater.

#### **Conclusion:**

I do concede that there will be days where there will be little usage of that part of the Lake, particularly on calm Winter mornings. However, that is not the usual case on a Spring, Summer or Autumn afternoon.

How hazardous is the proposal, particularly the landing phase of operations? Unless you can have a means to properly warn watercraft in West Lake that an aircraft wants to share their space, I can foresee the inevitable outcome being grave.

Does the NCA really consider seaplane operations on West Lake to be safe?

Brian Stoyles

