

## **Submission to the National Capital Authority**

### **Seaplanes on Lake Burley Griffin, Discussion Paper, May 2021**

Peter Ottesen, 22 June 2021

The introduction of regular seaplane flights to Lake Burley Griffin as proposed can assist in raising the awareness of Canberra as the National Capital but it also represents, as proposed, an unacceptable significant conflict with some existing lake activities. Modifying the proposal to take into account existing patterns of use and to include landing and takeoff zones in other parts of the lake should remove this conflict. To this end, the NCA and the proponents should undertake further work and resubmit it for community consideration.

By way of background, I am a qualified ecologist, I am very familiar with multiple-use protected area planning and management, having been employed during my working career by the Great Barrier Marine Park Authority and the Canadian Parks Service, and have extensive experience with operating small craft on the lake (I have been at various times a member of four Canberra sailing/boating clubs) and sailing (racing and cruising) on Sydney Harbour, Pittwater and the Hawkesbury River in the vicinity of seaplanes.

From my experience, it is possible to cater for a range of activities, even if potentially conflicting, if consideration is given to “what goes where, when and how”, when planning and regulating these activities.

The discussion paper provides detail on the proposed operations and environmental considerations, and benefits; it provides insufficient detail about existing users, or on landing/take-off options with assessments of these against criteria. The paper provides details on regulatory arrangements and pilot procedures; it does not provide any details on how conflicts between other users (policies, plans etc) are managed in other areas of Australia), other than a reference, but no link to the “Best Practice Guide for the Use of Rose Bay). In this instance, it is noteworthy that for the Woollahra Sailing Club, based in Rose Bay, most of its racing occurs outside the Bay in the main harbour, and therefore away from the runway zones.

West Lake is identified as the landing and take-off zone with two ‘runways’ identified. This happens to be area where at least three sailing clubs undertake regular racing and training activities, and it is the preferred area for sailing by other members of the community. It is preferred because there is no other region of the lake that can fulfil this function (size of area, adequate water depth, access to facilities (launch/rigging areas and clubhouses). Sailing in this area occurs regularly from September to April, on Saturday and Sundays, from about midday to 5pm, and late afternoons on Tuesday and Wednesdays. At various times during summer, clubs host national and international regattas that can extend over a week or more. Sydney Seaplanes is proposing an afternoon service at around 3-4 pm. It is not fair, safe or realistic to allow seaplanes to land in or take off from within this area at these times and during these activities. Seaplanes should not be permitted to land or taxi in this area under these circumstances.

However, based upon the information provided on the required length of runways, I would suggest there are other runway options the should be considered and if suitable, approved so that operators and pilots have a choice, depending on activities, weather etc. For example, what about Tarcoola Reach (to the west of Black Mountain Peninsular); the stretch of water between Springbank Island and between and parallel to the northern shore of West Lake; West Basin, Central Basin and East Basin? Including some or all of these options may allow adequate and temporal separation of seaplanes from other lake users. Some of these options are further away from the proposed preferred mooring facility (jetty), and some closer. This West Basin mooring facility should not dictate the runway locations. I recommend further information be gathered about

these additional runway option, including current patterns of use, with a view to these being included in a list of suitable runways.

I do not question the competency of pilots and their ability to operate from the lake with its unique conditions, nor on any proposed regulatory arrangements, and I cannot identify any significant environmental issues.