ANU Sailing Club (ANUSC) Response To The Proposed Seaplane Operations on Lake Burley Griffin

Note: The ANU Sailing Club affirms the position held by other establishments including but not limited to the YMCA Sailing Club and Canberra Yacht Clubs. Issues raised in those submissions translate to potential problems for the ANU Sailing Club.

Overview:

The Australian National University has operated a sailing club on Lake Burley-Griffin (LBG) from Yarralumla Bay for over 50 years. Our members come from a variety backgrounds with differing skill levels. Our members have access to the shed at all times of the day as a result of our key access and key register program. The result is that our club potentially operates all day everyday, weather permitting, as has been the case since the club's inception. Similarly, the club has a high turnover of membership, resulting from the nature of our members as primarily university students. In a similar manner as the YMCA Sailing Club and Canberra Yacht Club, the club is not in a position to manage or coordinate boat users with the potential operations of seaplanes presenting a potentially incredibly dangerous situation on the lake for all users. The ANU Sailing Club's committee has tabulated the following points of concern from the club's perspective:

Key issues:

Safety

- ANU Sailing club operates with 24/7 access to facilities. ANUSC members consist of sailors, paddlers, minors (under 18), privately stored boat owners and inexperienced members. Club members use the boats at their own risk in an independent manner.

- While more experienced sailors may be able to avoid a seaplanes area of operations this may not be possible for some of our less experienced members.

- Also, while all members are aware of NSW maritime rules, all sailing boats have trouble taking urgent avoiding action in light to no wind conditions. The result is that vessels will be potentially powerless to avoid oncoming aircraft.

- Most sailors carry a watch and would be aware of the time and wind conditions but if the conditions change they may be unable to clear the landing area. If they aren't carrying a watch they may not be aware of the arriving seaplane. When under sail, the skipper is facing and looking forward and will not be looking for a seaplane coming from behind, until the engine noise is heard. This may be too late to avoid taking action. The plane may be required to undertake a 'practice landing' to alert users to the plane's intention to land.

- In respect of Sydney harbour commercial vessels, they operate at slower speeds, can be seen up 30 mins before potential impact because they are on the same level resulting in sailors being prepared. Sydney harbour is considerably larger with known routes. The width of LBG at the point of Springbank Island (the area in which racing operates) is 500 metres whereas Rose Bay is over a kilometre wide. This difference means conflict between seaplanes and sailboats is more likely to occur, and in that event more difficult to give seaplanes the recommended safety distance.

Liability

Rose Bay has a dedicated single user water runway, LBG will have uncontrolled multi-user zones (2 alternative runways based on wind and multiple taxiways). This results in multiple levels of legal liability (seaplane operators, pilots, NCA, CASA, lake user, sailing club committee as supervisor of members and parent organisation (ANU Sport). This complex level of legal responsibility maynot be workable for volunteer clubs such as ourselves.

- ANU Sailing Club would prefer the legal implications of liability be clearly outlined particularly with regard to insurance and the impact on training and liability waivers for club users. WThe club would like the NCA's position on this issue to be made clear

Practicality

- The ANU Sailing Club as a volunteer run organisation operating on behalf of the ANU is not set up to manage the complex legal implications of potential incidents nor is it designed to implement complex requirements to make seaplane operations viable. Any safety requirements for seaplane operations interactions with lake users will need to be simple, clear and easy to implement.

- ANU Sailing Club members are often ad hoc members who use the lake 2 or 3 times a year. While ANU would take all due diligence to ensure that members are aware of the requirements, the independent nature of the club may mean that members are not going to remember requirements and landing times, which is a considerable safety issue. Likewise, interstate based competitors participating in club events may not have enough practice with similar conditions to implement safety requirements.

- The proposed landing times overlap with current competition sailing times. If a plane lands during a competition, it will disadvantage all competitors and may result in the race being abandoned, reducing the amenity of the lake for sailing and other water activities. Whilst the club acknowledges that racing does occur during seaplane operations in Rose Bay, the difference in the space available between the two locations means that solutions that are feasible in Rose Bay will not translate to LBG.

- Potential solutions to conflicting times of lake users would be resolved in winter due to the temperature of the water limiting recreational use. However in summer recreational use is from sunrise to sunlight at all times of day.

- The wind conditions and size of the west basin to the west of Black Mountain peninsula are not favourable for sailing due to the influence of Black Mountain on down and updrafts and wave turbulence which prevents events being moved to the west. While Commonwealth Bridge height and boat mast heights prevent events being moved to the central basin.