

22nd June 2021

Re: Seaplanes on Lake Burley Griffin

National Capital Authority
By email to: seaplanes@nca.gov.au

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission regarding the possible seaplane operations on Lake Burley Griffin (LBG). Canberra Grammar School (CGS) along with other Schools and Clubs in Canberra, utilises the lake to teach students to Row, Sail & Dragon Boat. We submit to the NCA considerations regarding the operations of seaplanes in relation to other Lake Users (specifically School Rowing, Sailing and Dragon Boat programs):

Operations

Canberra Grammar School operates sailing, rowing, and dragon boat programs on Lake Burley Griffin which currently involves over 150 students. These programs operate from novice, to more experienced students. However, it is the former group of novice students who for the first four to eight weeks in the program, particularly sailing and rowing, are unable to competently manoeuvre their boat around the lake. It is during this period where coaching staff must remain very close to students to ensure their safety and ability to safely learn the sport. CGS are concerned that the proposed operating times including 3:30 - 5:30pm would create a bottleneck of School users in Yarralumla Bay and Lotus Bay.

As the proposed seaplane flight and landing path crosses with the current rowing and sailing traffic pattern, coaches would have serious concern about operating anywhere near the path of the seaplane with novice crews. While the seaplanes would be required to give way to those under wind or paddle power, usual lake use in the summer afternoons is busy and with novice users there are multiple user groups for seaplanes to avoid.

Demonstration

The 2020 Seaplane demonstration measured noise pollution, heritage and ecological impact, but did not consider other lake user groups. Other than the Water Police, no other user groups were present on LBG. While seaplanes successfully operate in some Australian waterways with other user groups, LBG has a combination of lake users different to other waterways in Australia. CGS encourages the NCA to consider performing an observation study during peak usage times and consider the safety impact of seaplane operations and discuss appropriate risk mitigation strategies with the Lake User Group.

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Safety

Canberra Grammar School employs staff to coach and supervise students involved in Sailing, Rowing and Dragon Boat programs on LBG. These staff have a duty of care in being legally responsible for the safety of students, that they are coaching. In a water environment we have a significant risk management system in place which ensures that risks are appropriately mitigated.

The only waterway we are aware of where rowers and seaplanes both operate is Rose Bay, Sydney - where the Cranbrook School operate a small number of Coastal rowing boats designed to suit the choppy harbour and are significantly larger and more stable than a regular flat-water boat.

As there are no similar examples of rowing, sailing and dragon boats co-existing with seaplanes, we do not yet understand the safety implications on the introduction of seaplanes to the lake, and what additional cost could be associated with further risk mitigation strategies directly correlated to the possible use of seaplanes on LBG.

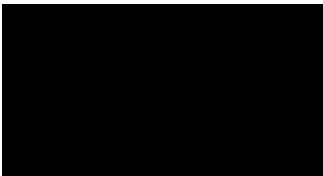
Precedence

There are multiple users of Lake Burley Griffin, including several commercial operators. As these ventures have proven to be financially viable, their use of LBG has increased accordingly to match demand. The current discussion paper for the introduction of seaplanes does not mention any process in place for change of scope or operations should the proposal be successful. CGS are concerned that the use of LBG could significantly vary in the future from what is outlined in the current proposal, and accordingly the impact this may have on future operations.

Final Comment

Canberra Grammar School support the use of Lake Burley Griffin by multiple user groups and deeply value our ability to provide unique opportunities for our students to learn and engage in sport. We request that the NCA considers our submission and the points raised when determining the appropriate steps to be undertaken to incorporate seaplanes on LBG.

Yours sincerely



Kent Peters
Director of Business