

# SYDNEY INTERNATIONAL REGATTA CENTRE

## USE FOR RECREATION

Statement of Environmental Effects

Prepared by

**Office of Sport, Sport and Recreation**

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## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

This statement of environmental effects accompanies a development application for use of land at the Sydney International Regatta Centre for recreation.

The Sydney International Regatta Centre (SIRC) was opened for competition in 1996. It was the venue for rowing and sprint canoe/kayak events at the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games and has successfully hosted hundreds of rowing and canoeing competitions and other sporting events. It is the only international standard course in Australia and is rated in the top 3 rowing and canoeing venues in the world.

This application is to use the land for recreation and related uses that were not covered in the original development consent for the Regatta Centre.

This statement of environmental effects describes the proposal, outlines the planning requirements applicable, and provides an assessment of the relevant environmental issues associated with the development.

## **2. SITE DETAILS**

### **2.1 Location**

The land to which this application relates is the Sydney International Regatta Centre (SIRC). The SIRC is located at 153-233 Old Castlereagh Road, Upper Castlereagh. It is 56-58km west of the Sydney CBD and 2.5 km north of Penrith CBD (See Figure 1).

### **2.2 Property Details**

The real property description of the SIRC is Lot 21, D.P. 1 013 504. The site is owned by the Minister Administering the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979. The area of the SIRC is 178.4 ha.

The SIRC is located within the Penrith Lakes Scheme, and is the first part of the scheme to be completed. The SIRC is bounded by Old Castlereagh Road to the south, Castlereagh Road to the east, quarries, quarry haul road and lakes under construction to the west and north (See Figures 2 and 3).

### **2.3 The Site**

The SIRC comprises:

- the main Regatta Lake, which has a rectangular shape of 2.2km x 170m
- the adjoining and connected Warm-Up Lake, which has an irregular shape, but is approximately 1.5km east-west at its longest point
- the Island between the 2 lakes, on which are located the finish tower, pavilion, boatsheds, scoreboard, grandstand and sealed 'P1' car park. The main boatshed building includes the SIRC venue management office and meeting rooms
- starting area and timing huts
- presentation pontoon
- detention basins at the south-eastern end of the Competition Lake
- spectator seating
- administration building
- toilets and barbecues
- internal roads and access gates
- grassed and sealed car parks
- informal recreation areas
- service compound
- the Penrith Lakes Environmental Education Centre

(Refer Maps 1 and 2)

### **2.4 Existing Use of Site**

The SIRC is used as an aquatic event and training venue for rowing, canoeing, dragon boats, swimming, sailing, triathlon, wakeboarding, powerboat racing, fishing and other sporting events such as athletics,

obstacle runs, cycling, and for passive recreation such as walking, running and picnicking. The venue also hosts entertainment, such as outdoor cinema, music festivals, community and cultural events. A small area of the site within the P6 car park is used as skydiving landing area. Consent was granted for this use on November 19, 2002. Another area in the P5 and P6 car parks is used by the RMS for motorcycle rider training courses.

The SIRC is managed by the Office of Sport, Sport and Recreation, which is part of the Department of Premier and Cabinet. Prior to 2006, the venue was managed by the Department of Planning Infrastructure and Natural Resources (DIPNR) having been transferred from the Olympic Co-ordination Authority (OCA) when the OCA was wound up on June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2002.

## **2.5 Adjoining Land**

Adjacent to the SIRC on Old Castlereagh Road are the offices of the Penrith Lakes Development Corporation (PLDC) – refer map 1. Within the PLDC land are a laboratory/workshop and an aboriginal cultural heritage centre 'Muru Mittigar'. Further east from the PLDC along Old Castlereagh Road are 3 private houses. South of the SIRC, on the opposite side of Old Castlereagh Road, are former quarries that are being redeveloped as wetlands .

Adjoining the Regatta Centre to the north is the Penrith Whitewater Stadium, also a former Olympic venue and used for recreational and competitive, rafting, canoeing and kayaking (refer Map1). Further north are former sand and gravel quarries. These defunct quarries will be incorporated in the development of the Penrith Lakes Scheme and may in future become parkland or zoned for housing and/or commercial development (subject to addressing issues associated with flooding and evacuation). East of the Regatta Centre is the Waterside Estate. The Estate, which incorporates a series of freshwater canals, is surrounded by semi-rural residential development. West of the site are defunct sand and gravel quarries that are being redeveloped into a "Quarantine Lake". The Castlereagh Penrith Lakes Academy (self-contained cabin accommodation, function hall, chapel and caretakers cottage) and a vacant heritage school house reside to the north-west of the SIRC.

### **3. PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

#### **3.1 General Description**

'Use of the Sydney International Regatta Centre for Recreation' was originally approved by Minister Diane Beamer on 20 October 2004. The DA (5-4-2004) was modified (MOD 1) and extended over two consecutive 5 year periods, i.e. to 20 October 2009 and then 20 October 2014. The consent allows the SIRC to stage a range of sporting/social/community/cultural events, functions and festivals and host a broad spectrum of sport and recreation activities..

Details from the original application in 2004 are given below:

The proposal is to use land at the SIRC for recreation. The application seeks consent for recreation in broad terms, i.e. it is not feasible to provide a definitive list of all activities that may occur at the SIRC, nor is it considered necessary to do so or to require development consent for each individual activity. It is noted that this approach was adopted by the Department for the Sydney Showground at Sydney Olympic Park – a comparable event and activity venue.

The activities listed below are proposed for the SIRC. These activities give an indication of the type and range of activities and uses that may occur. As noted above the list is not definitive.

1. Operation of model cars, boats and planes, including racing and club meetings
2. Hire of equipment such as bicycles, rollerblades, paddleboats and sailboats
3. Public swimming
4. Fishing (catch and release)
5. Movie screenings
6. Wheelchair and handcycle races
7. Sailing and boating – recreational and competition, and also coaching and training, including rescue courses
8. Wakeboarding
9. Parasailing
10. Concerts
11. Outdoor theatre
12. Pro-blade (parachute landing)
13. Markets
14. Motor-cycle rider training
15. Boat trailer and caravan driver training
16. Various educational classes e.g. cartooning, circus skills
17. Scuba diving classes
18. Community festivals
19. Personal fitness classes and training
20. Trade shows/exhibitions

As can be seen from this list, the type and range of activities is varied. It is a moot point whether some of these activities constitute development as

defined in the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act. 'Recreation' itself is not defined, and therefore it is also a moot point whether an activity such as a trade show falls within recreation. This is further discussed in section 4.

### **3.2 Location of Activities**

Given the nature of the uses – they are generally not static and require flexibility in operation - it is not possible, nor is it considered necessary to specify precise locations for each activity. However, general locations for some activities are obvious. For example water based activities can only take place in and around the lakes and it may be assumed that all of the lakes will be used for all the water based activities. Wheelchair racing will only take place on roads and paths. Personal fitness classes will utilise the entire site.

In what may be termed crowd based recreation, i.e. movie screenings, concerts and theatre, these are proposed to take place on the island in the vicinity of the pavilion and boatsheds. However, as for any event based venue, the SIRC requires flexibility in operations. The grassed banks on the southern side of the Regatta Lake (used for parking during major events) are also considered suitable for these activities and it is submitted there would be no material difference in the environmental impact of alternate locations within the SIRC.

Activities involving a training or educational component will utilise the boatshed building which contains offices and meeting rooms or the Environmental Education Centre.

Vehicle training currently utilises the P1 car park.

### **3.3. Utilities**

Utilities such as electricity, water, sewer and telephone are all existing at the SIRC and adequate for the proposed use.

### **3.4 Parking and Traffic**

Ample parking is available on-site. Car parking areas are designated P1 to P7. The P1 car park is on the island and is a sealed car park with capacity for 240 vehicles. The grass banks on the southern side of the Regatta Lake are all nominated car parks for major regattas at the SIRC, with capacity for approximately 2,250 vehicles. There are also a small number of sealed parking spaces adjoining existing roads. The SIRC can cater for crowds of 30,000 people at a major regatta. The proposed activities generally involve small groups or individuals. Even crowd based activities such as movie screenings will have attendance only a fraction of that of a major regatta. Therefore, traffic and parking associated with the proposal is insignificant in this context.

Traffic Management Plans are prepared by the SIRC Venue Management team and submitted to the RMS and Penrith City Council Traffic Committee

for approval in advance of all major events held at the SIRC. Police, RMS and traffic control companies are employed as required to fulfil the obligations of each Traffic Management Plan..

### **3.5 Hours of Operation**

The proposed activities will take place 7 days a week, with peak use being on weekends. Most activities will occur during daylight hours. However, movie screenings and concerts are proposed for evening operation, up to 11pm.

#### 4. PLANNING REQUIREMENTS

##### Sydney Regional Environmental Plan No. 11 - Penrith Lakes Scheme

The SIRC and Penrith Lakes are covered by Sydney Regional Environmental Plan No. 11 - Penrith Lakes Scheme. The REP provides the framework for the implementation of the Penrith Lakes Scheme, a regionally significant recreation resource. The plan establishes an overall concept for the lakes system and it specifies the types of development allowed in the scheme area. The plan primarily deals with development control for mining operations, and the rehabilitation of mining sites to implement the Penrith Lake Scheme.

Clause 11 of SREP 11 is relevant to this application. Clause 11 is as follows:

##### ***“11 Development for the purposes of recreation***

*(1) Development for the purposes of recreation (whether that development is commercial or not) may, with development consent, be carried out on land to which this plan applies.*

*(2) The consent authority shall, in determining an application to carry out development for the purposes of recreation, take into consideration the implementation of the Penrith Lakes Scheme and the structure plan.”*

Therefore, under the clause the proposed development, being recreation, is a permissible use.

It is noted that there is no definition of ‘recreation’ in SREP 11 or in the Model Provisions or any other relevant environmental planning instrument. The Model Provisions do however, contain the following definitions:

***“recreation establishment”*** means health farms, religious retreat houses, rest homes, youth camps and the like but does not include a building or place elsewhere specifically defined in this clause or a building or place used or intended for use for a purpose elsewhere specifically defined in this clause;

***“recreation facility”*** means a building or place used for indoor recreation, a billiard saloon, table tennis centre, squash court, swimming pool, gymnasium, health studio, bowling alley, fun parlour or any other building of a like character used for recreation and whether used for the purpose of gain or not, but does not include a place of assembly;”

The above definitions relate primarily to built facilities and this application does not propose uses that fall within either of the above. However, these definitions do indicate that the concept of recreation is a broad one and it is considered to encompass most if not all of the activities that will occur at the SIRC.

Prior to preparation and submission of the original application there was discussion and correspondence on this issue between the SIRC and the Urban Assessments Branch of the Department of Planning, Infrastructure and Natural Resources.



Solicitors for the SIRC have suggested the following definition of 'recreation' as being appropriate and it is understood that this has been accepted by DIPNR:

*"a pastime, diversion, exercise, occupation, pursuit or other activity affording relaxation, refreshment, consolation, amusement or enjoyment, which may include commercial activities."*

This definition is a broad one and it is considered would encompass all activities proposed for the SIRC.

Being for recreational use the proposal is consistent with the ultimate intent of the Penrith Lakes Scheme to provide for a variety of recreation within the Penrith Lakes, and therefore assists in implementing the scheme for its ultimate use.

If there is any doubt as to whether particular activities fall within the broad ambit of 'recreation', clause 9 of SREP 11 may also be relevant. Clause 9 deals with interim development and is as follows:

*"Development may be carried out on any part of the land to which this plan applies:*

*(a) for the purpose of agriculture, without the necessity for development consent, or*

*(b) for any other purpose, with development consent, if the consent authority is satisfied that the carrying out of development for that purpose will not adversely affect the implementation of the Penrith Lakes Scheme,*

*pending the completion of the Penrith Lakes Scheme in, and the use as a public recreational lake system of, that part of the land."*

This clause relates to one of the particular aims of SREP 11 which is as follows:

*"(d) to permit interim development in order to prevent the sterilization of land to which this plan applies during implementation of the Penrith Lakes Scheme."*

As this aim specifically provides for, it is important that development of the nature proposed not be prevented or the land sterilized, by the issue of definition of the proposed use. This is particularly so in relation to the SIRC as the SIRC was in fact the first part of the Penrith Lakes Scheme to be completed. As the land involved is only the SIRC - the completed part of the Penrith Lakes Scheme - the use clearly will in no way adversely affect the implementation of the overall Penrith Lakes Scheme. In fact, it is considered the proposed use assists in the implementation of the Scheme by providing for recreation use.

Notwithstanding events and activities will be on-going and some will occur on a regular basis, as they involve no physical work or permanent structures, and therefore can cease at any time, they may be considered to be interim development.

## **5. ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES/ASSESSMENT OF IMPACTS**

### **5.1 General**

The proposal is for the use of land for recreation. No buildings or construction works are proposed as part of this application. The only facilities are temporary and portable items such as movie screens and toilets. Therefore, the environmental issues are considered to be limited.

Many of the proposed activities are very low key with negligible impact. For example, public swimming and cycling may involve an individual, or small or large social or competitive groups. Crowd based activities such as theatre, concerts or festivals could, if successful, involve up to ten thousand people. Significant crowds may be seen as potentially of significant impact. However, given the size and isolated location of the SIRC, any impact would be in fact quite limited. The SIRC is somewhat remote from any residential or urban area and is ideally suited for events involving large crowds. This is demonstrated by the hosting of major regattas where up to 30,000 people have attended (even more for the Olympics), and where there have been no significant impacts. Nothing like the size of such crowds will occur from the proposed activities.

It is understood that any urban development proposed under the ultimate development of the Penrith Lakes Scheme is likely to be some distance from the SIRC. (Reference is made to Draft Vision Plans prepared by the Office of Penrith Lakes). It is acknowledged that the ultimate development of Penrith Lakes, other than the SIRC, is yet to be determined. However, environmental impacts, if any, would be significantly greater from large regattas, than from any recreational activity proposed under this DA. Nonetheless, no significant conflicts or impacts are considered likely.

### **5.2 Impact on Adjoining Uses**

As noted above the nearest dwellings are generally distant from the site. The nearest urban development is the general industrial zone located in the vicinity of the intersection of Old Castlereagh and Castlereagh Roads. No significant or unacceptable impact could be expected to arise as a result of the proposed operations.

The proposed use is considered complementary to the existing and adjoining sporting/adventure/recreation uses of the SIRC and Penrith Whitewater Stadium and is consistent with Penrith City Council's "adventure" vision for the LGA. It is the intention of the SIRC management to have the venues recognised as a major recreation hub in Western Sydney. This occurs already with the SIRC and Penrith Whitewater Stadium, and ultimately will be in the context of the entire Penrith Lakes – being an enormous water and land based recreational parkland.

The offices of the Penrith Lakes Development Corporation (PLDC) and Muru Mittigar Cultural Centre are adjacent to the SIRC. The extraction of sand and

gravel is now complete and PLDC are currently remediating the quarries and preparing to fill the Main Lakes. No impact is expected and PLDC has previously indicated they have no objection to the proposal.

A tandem skydiving landing area operates in the P6 car park and is covered under a separate DA consent. This area is a flat grassed area with an associated marquee adjoining. The landing area is required to be kept clear during landing times and is clearly signposted when in use. No impact on the skydiving landing area is expected. Nor is any impact expected from skydiving on any of the proposed activities. The skydiving landing area has been in operation at the SIRC for approximately ten years, and to date there have been no 'outlandings' or misses of the landing area by parachutists. Therefore, given this 100% accuracy the risk of outlandings is not considered a significant issue.

### **5.3 Noise**

The site has the advantage of being generally distant from the nearest dwellings. 3 dwellings are located on Old Castlereagh Rd, towards the eastern end of the site, and 2 dwellings are within the industrial area south of Old Castlereagh Rd. The nearest dwelling is some 1.5km from the pavilion and boatshed. So even for the most intense activities involving crowds and broadcast sound, i.e. movies and concerts, the distance is clearly such that no impact will occur. The nearest built-up residential area is at Waterside Estate (Cranebrook) – more than 2.5km from the island to the east and north-east. These distances are such that it is unlikely that there will be any noise impact from the proposed use on any residential area.

### **5.4 Parking and Traffic**

Parking at the Regatta Centre has been designed for major events to cater for thousands of cars. Most of this parking is in grassed areas on the southern side of the Competition Lake. Some sealed parking is located alongside internal roads. The existing parking areas at the SIRC have sufficient capacity for the parking demand likely to be generated by the proposal.

The great majority of traffic to the SIRC comes from the east along Old Castlereagh Rd. Old Castlereagh Rd is a 2 lane road with a speed limit of up to 80 km/h. Between the SIRC and the Old Castlereagh Rd, Castlereagh Rd, Andrews Rd intersection, there is just a single intersecting road (Laycock Street) leading from the north Penrith industrial area. There are only 5 property access driveways (to private houses and the Penrith Lakes Development Corporation offices), along this stretch of Old Castlereagh Road, so that traffic travelling along Old Castlereagh is normally uninterrupted.

The SIRC is very well sign-posted, in and around the site and also on the M4 motorway. There are 4 gates to the SIRC from Old Castlereagh Rd and Gates A, B, C and D each have right turn bays to them. However, outside of major events only gate A is normally open.

Therefore, traffic conditions and vehicle access to the SIRC are very good and traffic is not considered a significant issue. Again, the SIRC has regularly successfully handled very large crowds well in excess of anything proposed in this application.

### **5.5 Vegetation**

Some 30,000 trees have been planted at the SIRC. There will be no removal of or other impact on any vegetation.

No other significant environmental impacts are anticipated.

## 6. CONCLUSION

The proposed use for a recreation is considered to have minimal environmental impact. It is located in a world famous established sporting and recreation facility, distant from any residential area or urban development.

The use is considered complementary to the existing sporting and recreation use of the Sydney International Regatta Centre and Penrith Whitewater Stadium (PWS). The activities will further the recognition of the Penrith venues as a pre-eminent sporting and recreation destination that continue to attract approximately 500,000 people each year. In the longer term, the proposed use is one that will be an asset to the Penrith Lakes Parkland – adding to the variety of land and water based recreational uses available, thereby enhancing and promoting the major recreation area in western Sydney.

The SIRC and PWS are part of a designated *Sports & Events Precinct* in the Draft Vision Plan, prepared by the Office of Penrith Lakes in December 2014. The possible future character of this precinct is given in the Vision Plan as:

*a hub for sport related development that builds on and enhances the existing rowing and whitewater centres. A new circuit road could contain both venues, provide new entry points and improve access to the sites. A range of complimentary commercial uses such as tourism, educational, sporting and training facilities could be clustered along the circuit road and blend into the park setting.*

The request to modify the existing consent is supported by the Office of Penrith Lakes and a range of other State Government agencies and key stakeholders (including Penrith City Council). Please refer to letters of support attached.

The SIRC has demonstrated an ability to operate and comply with the ‘*Use of SIRC for Recreation*’ conditions for over a decade without any issues. Sport and Recreation are now seeking to modify the conditions of consent by requesting that the previous Condition A3 (which states that the consent would cease after 5 years) be removed.