

Submission:

Ermington Boat Ramp – Dec '22

ISSUE: Ermington Boat Ramp

SUBJECT: Consultation on the EIS for the Parramatta Light Rail Project which impacts on Boating Access to Parramatta River and Sydney Harbour

INTRODUCTION:

The Boating Industry Association Ltd (BIA) is the peak industry body in Australia that represents the interests of boating which includes designers, manufacturers, importers, brokers, insurers, retailers, charters, yacht and boat clubs, marinas, events, surveyors and trades from boat builders to riggers, and more. BIA is an advocate for boaters and the boating lifestyle and supports safe, responsible, and enjoyable boating.

The boating economy generates significant benefits through employment. Last year (2021) the industry reported national turnover of \$9.55 billion, directly employed more than 26,000 people with more than 8000 contractors. In NSW, the figures were \$2.83bn turnover, 8120 direct employment, 700+ active boating industry business, 542,000 boat licence holders and 241,000 registered boats. The bulk of this relates to the Sydney Region.

Seventy-five per cent are in small family businesses, employing local workers and supporting local communities.

With more than 85 per cent of the population living within 50km of the coast, it is little wonder that almost 1 in 5 households in NSW have a boat or watercraft. People of all ages, gender and ability can participate in boating across paddle, sail and power for leisure and sport.

BACKGROUND:

10 September 2021: BIA made a submission to Thompson Clarke Shipping who were engaged by Transport for NSW to conduct a survey of vessels using Parramatta River as part of considering a bridge between Archer Point and Ermington for the Parramatta Light Rail. No formal response to concerns was received.

December 2022: According to media reports: The state government expects it to take until 2031 before the second stage of Parramatta's multibillion-dollar light rail line opens to passengers, about five years later than originally planned.

Submission: Ermington Boat Ramp – Dec '22

An environmental assessment of the project also shows that construction of two bridges over Parramatta River for the light rail line will disrupt ferry services for months due to temporary closures of navigational channels. Hundreds of on-street car parks in fast-growing suburbs will also be permanently removed.

While the project is still subject to planning approval, the report by Transport for NSW reveals the agency anticipates construction to start in 2025 and take as long as six years to complete. The bridges will each take three years to build.

The two bridges are planned to be built over the river between Camellia and Rydalmere, and between Melrose Park and Wentworth Point.

Their construction will force the closure of car parking at Rydalmere wharf and Ermington Boat Ramp for three years. While the wharf will remain open, the boat ramp will be closed for about three years. The EIS describes the project use as 'full occupation' of the Ermington Boat Ramp.

9 December 2022: BIA raised concerns about the lack of direct engagement with key stakeholders such as the boating sector regarding the EIS. Consequently, an email was received from Community and Place (Parramatta Light Rail Stage 2), Greater Sydney, Transport for NSW, which advised: *'I wanted to let you know that we have engaged with the Department of Planning and Environment regarding an extension on a submission to the PLR Stage 2 EIS from the Boating Industry Association (BIA).'*

'The Department has noted that they will accept receipt of a draft submission by 16 December 2022, with a final, endorsed version of this submission to be received by 9 January 2023.'

'I trust that this additional time will be acceptable to you and the Association.'

15 December 2022: TfNSW further advised the following:

Thanks for the call. I'm sorry about the issues on the DPE Major Projects portal.

If you feel comfortable, please find cc'd the project email address for ParramattaLightRail ParramattaLightRail@transport.nsw.gov.au

You are on the correct site for submissions:

<https://www.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/major-projects/projects/parramatta-light-rail-stage-2>

Submission: Ermington Boat Ramp – Dec ‘22

The EIS is available via the project's [virtual engagement room](#), which also links through the EIS portal. More information is available on the [Parramatta Light Rail website](#).

OVERVIEW:

Located at the end of Wharf Road is the popular Ermington Boat Ramp, providing direct access into the Parramatta River. Ermington Boat Ramp contains a concrete ramp providing direct access into the Parramatta River and Sydney Harbour. Facilities include a jetty, public toilets, wash down bay and car parking.

The Project EIS Social Impact Assessment states: *Ermington Boat Ramp and Archer Park are located on Wharf Road and Waratah Street in Melrose Park. As discussed in Section 5.6.5, Archer Park includes parking for the boat ramp, and a public toilet.*

The boat ramp is used by local (correction: more than just 'local') recreational users, such as people using motorboats, row boats, canoes and kayaks, other sailing craft and recreational watercraft (e.g. stand-up paddle boarders). Many of these recreational boat users are likely to be participating in activities such as fishing.

Construction of the bridge between Melrose Park and Wentworth Point would take place adjacent to the Ermington Boat Ramp, which would be closed for up to three years.

During this time, recreational users would need to access Parramatta River from other nearby boat ramps. The closest alternate ramps are:

- *Silverwater Boat Ramp – located in Silverwater around five kilometres or eight minutes' drive*
- *Rhodes Boat Ramp – located in Rhodes around five kilometres or ten minutes' drive*
- *Kissing Point Park Boat Ramp – located in Putney around six kilometres or 15 minutes' drive.*

However, Silverwater Boat Ramp would not be able to be used to access areas of Parramatta River downstream of Wentworth Point for a period of up to three months when the navigation channel is closed for construction of the bridge between Melrose Park and Wentworth Point. During this period, the Rhodes or Kissing Point Park boat ramps (or those further east toward Sydney Harbour) would need to be used.

Submission: Ermington Boat Ramp – Dec '22

None of these boat ramps have the same level of parking provisions as the Ermington Boat Ramp, which has 52 boat trailer car parking spaces, and 62 spots in total. The car park at Ermington Boat Ramp would be reinstated following construction, however the presence of the project's operational infrastructure has the potential to result in a permanent reduction of about 10 boat trailer parking spaces.

This reduction in trailer parking may inconvenience users and could deter some users from participating in recreational boating and water sports at this location, which was raised by some social impact survey respondents as a concern. The reduction in boat trailer parking at the ramp has the potential increase the overflow parking activity in surrounding local streets, which could increase existing amenity issues.

Reduced participation in boating and recreational activities could impact quality of life and wellbeing for some.

Increased use of the Silverwater, Rhodes and Kissing Point Park boat ramps could result in increased traffic congestion and reduced availability of parking spaces, which may inconvenience other users and decrease pedestrian safety.

Recreational users of the river such as boat and watercraft users, as well as walkers and cyclists along the riverside pathways, are expected to experience reduced amenity due to construction activities. This may disturb and reduce enjoyment of the river for users close to construction activities. However, most users are expected to adapt and move to other areas on the river further from construction activities, which would reduce the intensity of impacts.

The EIS summary impacts states: Users of the boat ramps may also be deterred from participating in recreational boating and water sports due to the inconvenience of needing to use alternative ramp facilities. These disruptions may affect wellbeing for some.

The EIS conclusion reads: ... reduced access to and enjoyment of some community and recreation facilities directly affected by land requirements and construction activities, particularly Rydalmere Wharf and Ermington Boat Ramp, which may disrupt lifestyles and affect wellbeing.

The project Social Impact Assessment says:

Submission: Ermington Boat Ramp – Dec '22

Reduced access to and enjoyment of some community and recreation facilities directly affected by land requirements and construction activities, particularly Rydalmere Wharf and Ermington Boat Ramp, which may disrupt lifestyles and affect wellbeing.

BIA notes the above information extracted from the EIS as bad outcomes in many ways for the boating public, at a time when interest in boating is a record levels.

BIA notes that the EIS references Future Transport Strategy 2056 as applicable to the project. That Strategy states:

C4.8 Create safer waterway access and infrastructure

The NSW Government is committed to improving access for all boaters on the State's waterways.

We will continue to deliver in these areas through programs such as the Maritime Infrastructure Stimulus and Boating Now programs. We will also activate maritime and foreshore precincts to attract more visitors and private investment.

The NSW Government also has a role in balancing the increasing demand for on-water storage, with the impacts of moorings on the environment. We must also ensure people have safe and responsible access to the water.

SUBMISSION:

Re., Feedback on the EIS for the Parramatta Light Rail Project and impacts on boating access to Parramatta River and Sydney Harbour

We are concerned:

- the NSW Government has ignored concerns raised by the Boating Industry Association more than a year ago regarding significant impacts on access to the waterways and Sydney Harbour;
- the EIS describes the reduced access to the waterways as delivering social disruption, stress, along with damage to health and wellbeing ... without appropriate solutions to this social (and economic) disruption;

Submission:

Ermington Boat Ramp – Dec '22

- the State Government in the EIS acknowledges Future Transport as a guiding strategy for the project but this appears to be lip services as there is no indication of a well-considered package of alternatives and or solutions to the potential disruption and fails to meet the goal of 'improving access for all boaters on the State's waterways'; furthermore, the EIS indicates there could be a net loss of trailerboat access/ parking post project completion, which would be another fail.
- The NSW Government, unless it develops alternatives and solutions, looks set to:
 - prevent people for approximately three years from accessing the Parramatta River and Sydney Harbour at a safe, convenient and accessible location designed and built for that purpose;
 - force people to use Rhodes or Kissing Point which have insufficient trailer parking to accommodate the additional of usage flowing from Ermington;
 - force people to tow further afield adding to congestion, stress, access and parking issues elsewhere;
 - force people into already pressure areas for example Kissing Point which has an adjacent park that can lead to a number of single cars taking up available slots for activities to do not involve launching or retrieving a boat, which is the purpose of the facility; and
 - permanently reduce the available access and parking at Ermington Boat Ramp post construction for an 'operational building' in a valuable waterfront location.
- The NSW Government has not yet provided appropriate solutions or alternatives for people in Western Sydney and surrounding areas for having their access cut off for three years to what is the finest harbour in the world. This is compounded by the EIS which states: *'However, most users are expected to adapt and move to other areas on the river further from construction activities, which would reduce the intensity of impacts.'*
 - Unfortunately, this suggests the current strategy is to wait for the boating public to give up thereby negating the level of concern for the NSW Government.
- The NSW Government looks set to disrupt public amenity and access so that a construction company can have project accommodations and carparking on public lands which were designated for public use with facilities designed and built by the waterfront to provide people with access to the Parramatta River and Sydney Harbour.

The Ermington Boat Ramp has high value to industry and boating public who reside within 45 minutes (or more) from this access point to the key waterways of Sydney and

Submission: Ermington Boat Ramp – Dec '22

Sydney Harbour itself. The demographic impact includes, but not limited to, people of Western Sydney. The ramp is the one of the best in Sydney to access the waterways of Sydney Harbour. The variety of boats include motorboats, row boats, paddle craft and sailing craft. Many of these participate in fishing.

The EIS Social Impact Statements continues: *‘Construction of the bridge between Melrose Park and Wentworth Point would take place adjacent to the Ermington Boat Ramp, which would be closed for up to three years. During this time, recreational users would need to access Parramatta River from other nearby boat ramps. The closest alternate ramps are:*

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None of these boat ramps have the same level of parking provisions as the Ermington Boat Ramp, which has 52 boat trailer car parking spaces, and 62 spots in total. The car park at Ermington Boat Ramp would be reinstated following construction, however the presence of the project’s operational infrastructure has the potential to result in a permanent reduction of about 10 boat trailer parking spaces. This reduction in trailer parking may inconvenience users and could deter some users from participating in recreational boating and water sports at this location, which was raised by some social impact survey respondents as a concern.

The reduction in boat trailer parking at the ramp has the potential increase the overflow parking activity in surrounding local streets, which could increase existing amenity issues. Reduced participation in boating and recreational activities could impact quality of life and wellbeing for some. Increased use of the Silverwater, Rhodes and Kissing Point Park

Submission:

Ermington Boat Ramp – Dec '22

boat ramps could result in increased traffic congestion and reduced availability of parking spaces, which may inconvenience other users and decrease pedestrian safety.

Ermington Boat Ramp services a large proportion of recreational and boat-based fishers from an area 45in drive (or more) away. If the boating public were to lose access to the Ermington/Wharf Road Boat Ramp, the other ramps upriver could not sustain the increased numbers nor have the facilities to offer. To highlight the concerns, it is not uncommon at this ramp to wait up to 30 mins to launch/ retrieve your boat due to its popularity.

Ermington/Wharf Rd Boat Ramp has the ability to park 53 cars and trailers in marked bays, with the further ability to park another 20-25 on surrounding grass areas. During popular times, on weekends and during midweek, it is common to see overflow parking from the boat ramp into the surrounding residential streets. This ramp also has the ability to launch and retrieve three vessels at a time. It has a toilet facility, a fish cleaning facility and a generous floating pontoon area for safe access to less experienced operators.

The EIS states the Project references key state significant government strategies which includes Future Transport Strategy C4.8 Create safer waterway access and infrastructure.

Under this 'strategic direction' endorsed by the Minister, where C stands for Connecting our Customers, the commitment is as follows: *The NSW Government is committed to improving access for all boaters on the State's waterways. We have already made significant investments to improve boating access, infrastructure and amenities, dredge navigable waterways and install navigation aids. We will continue to deliver in these areas through programs such as the Maritime Infrastructure Stimulus and Boating Now programs. We will also activate maritime and foreshore precincts to attract more visitors and private investment. The NSW Government also has a role in balancing the increasing demand for on-water storage, with the impacts of moorings on the environment. We must also ensure people have safe and responsible access to the water.*

RECOMMENDATION:

Submission: Ermington Boat Ramp – Dec ‘22

That the Project Team (NSW Government & Contract Builder) note the above and for the duration of the construction period impacting Ermington Boat Ramp to deliver the following:

1. to not close Ermington Boat Ramp for the duration of the construction period which could be approximately three years;
2. if absolutely necessary, to not totally close Ermington Boat Ramp for the duration of the construction period;
 - a. for example to provide managed access for vehicles towing or carrying boats in order to continue to support access the waterway and Sydney Harbour
3. to not disenfranchise the public and restrict access to the waterway and Sydney Harbour, in order for the Ermington Boat Ramp site to accommodate project site sheds or offices, and or project car parking at a high-value waterfront location;
 - a. if such operational occupation is needed, use a site of less public amenity and public value that is not on the waterfront;
4. if there are to be restriction at Ermington Boat Ramp, the State Government must:
 - a. ensure alternative and adequate launching facilities are identified that can accommodate the range of vessel types, with appropriate access and parking space
 - b. ensure there are appropriate traffic management plans in place at Ermington Boat Ramp and any alternate boat ramps which incorporate the following:
 - i. access and parking appropriate to accommodate increased use due to restrictions at Ermington Boat Ramp
 - ii. an appropriate funded and sustained education campaign to raise awareness amongst the impacted public
 - iii. an appropriate compliance approach which enables people to access and park in and around these sites
 - c. if the closure goes ahead, provide owners of registered boats within a 60min drive of Ermington Boat Ramp with the following:
 - i. 50% discount on registration fees
 - ii. 50% discount on licence fees
 - iii. 50% discount on any Tolls accumulated in using alternate ramps to access the waterway and Sydney Harbour

We believe the EIS has exposed a range of significant social and economic negatives, including contradictions in NSW Government strategies which need to be addressed



Submission: Ermington Boat Ramp – Dec '22

before final decisions are made on this project. The BIA is prepared to work with Department of Planning and Environment, and Transport for NSW to consider and deliver alternatives and solutions in support of public amenity, and safe and convenient access to Parramatta River and Sydney Harbour.

Please do not hesitate to contact Mr Neil Patchett, General Manager Government & Public Relations, e. neil@bia.org.au or m. 0418 279 465 as necessary.

Issue date: 16 December 2022