

Northern Beaches Link – Impact on Northbridge Sailing Club during Construction

While clearly understanding there will be disruptions caused by major civil infrastructure works such as the Northern Beaches Link tunnel under Middle Harbour, it is always hoped these will be kept as minimal as possible for those directly affected.

Looking at the EIS and in particular the parts relating to the construction of the underwater tunnel between Clive Park, Northbridge and the Seaforth Bluff, the impact of the construction on my very strong and significant, local sailing club at Northbridge will be devastating. It will be like a cricket club have the wicket and centre of its oval ripped up for a number of years.

I am an ex-Olympic sailor still racing Laser, off-the-beach sailing boats at a very competitive level both in Australia and internationally (prior to Covid restrictions) who chooses to race at Northbridge Sailing Club (NSC) because of the fantastic club spirit, ethos and the great friendships I have enjoyed over the 27 years I have sailed there. It is also the place I chose for my children to learn how to sail because it is possibly the best club in Sydney for young sailors to start out and progress through to giving back by instructing those coming behind them.

This community based, not for profit, volunteer driven Club is too good to fail because the State Government and their contractors weren't able to allow us to keep running our sailing training and racing in a viable way on Upper Middle Harbour.

It is understood the more restrictions placed on civil contractors can make the cost of construction more expensive, but I feel with good consultation from TfNSW (Waterways?) with our Club, solutions can be found to improve what is proposed to enable us to keep training/racing, albeit in a restricted but not prohibitive way at little additional financial cost. As others have pointed out, we know these waters really well and are able to make a significant contribution to any consultations.

Things for consideration could be end to end moorings for both those remaining and to be relocated to save space, the best locations for relocated moorings, allowing racing by small boats through the moorings (not end to end ones), widening of the navigable waters between the coffer dams on non-work Sunday race days etc.

Importantly whatever is agreed to, needs to be sorted out early and put in the conditions/scope of work for any contracts so they actually happen and isn't left for the contractor to take the cheapest alternative.

Even so, even if restricted training and racing is made possible, the Club will lose some desirability and hence membership and income, weakening its position and strength. There is the possibility of a 'missing generation' of young sailors with the upstream flow on effect that will have. To maintain the Club's viability some form of financial support and/or compensation will be necessary so that when the tunnel is completed we won't be left in a terminally weakened state. These could be by helping with maintenance costs and loss of income from reduced boat storage and race fees as a result of a drop in the number of boats and members.

TfNSW may not be aware but in addition to sailing activities run by NSC, there are a number of yacht owners, me included, who enjoy using Upper Middle Harbour for both twilight sailing on Monday nights and for recreational sailing. The increasingly restricted opening times of the Spit Bridge mean there are a number of yacht sailors whose sole enjoyment of yacht sailing is restricted to the waters greatly affected by the tunnel construction.

So please don't let us be collateral damage to this large infrastructure project and understand the significant contribution our Club does for the mental and physical health of our youth and the local and wider sailing community by working with us.

Thank you.

Yours sincerely,

Tim Alexander

Cammeray