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**Joint Standing Committee on the National Capital and External Territories  
Inquiry into the Immigration Bridge Australia Proposal**

To the Committee Secretary and Members,

My submission is in regard to Terms of Reference Points 1(b) and 2. Considering Terms of Reference 1(b) “the interests of users of the Lake”, I submit that:

- *The process adopted by Immigration Bridge Australia and the National Capital Authority has not fully considered the utility, or lack thereof, of a bridge at the proposed location. This is evident by the absence of public and consultative studies into pedestrian, cycle and safety requirements. Studies would clearly demonstrate the limited utility to the public of a bridge. The bridge will be a navigation hazard and endanger people enjoying water-based activities.*

Turning to Terms of Reference 2 “the process that has been adopted by Immigration Bridge Australia to raise funds for the construction and ongoing maintenance of the bridge”, I put forward the following:

- *It is unlikely that the full capital cost can be community or corporate funded. There should not be an expectation that the taxpayer will bail out the bridge construction.*
- *The maintenance requirements for a large, technical and isolated memorial are high and not sustainable under a community or self-funded financial model. The lack of forward planning suggests these costs will be dumped on the taxpayer.*
- *Future major upgrades, liabilities (including insurances) do not seem adequately considered with a default expectation that the taxpayer would fund this additional financial burden.*

A memorial serves to preserve a memory but normally fulfils no other purpose or utility.

I commend Immigration Bridge Australia in their efforts to design a memorial that provides utility to the public as well as preserving immigration history and migrants individual stories. I support an affordable memorial in Canberra to immigration.

But a ‘bridge to nowhere’ provides no utility to the public. The controversy that will surround its planning, funding, construction, long term upkeep and safety will detract greatly from it as a memorial.

In this submission I have provided a suggestion for a more affordable memorial design.

The bridge is inept planning. A bridge should not be built.

Tim Glover

## *Supporting Information*

### **Why a bridge?**

There are no public explanations about the planning decisions that determined a bridge was required. The Immigration Bridge Australia website claims a bridge was suggested by the National Capital Authority which implies endorsement of Federal Government.

Why build a bridge here? A bridge is used to transit from one location to another to continue a journey. In this case, there is no journey to continue. There is no nearby resident population or substantial places of business to support use outside of its tourism potential.

Potential users of the bridge, in any reasonable number, could only be pedestrian tourists or cyclists. There is more likelihood of illegitimate users. The intoxicated, vandals and others attracted by its isolation at night.

### **Pedestrians**

The sole pedestrian utility would be linking places of tourism.

Moving westward there is no place of public interest beyond the National Museum. Tourism to the ANU buildings would be small.

Moving eastward, there are more places of public interest – the institutions and attractions between the National Library and Art Gallery – but these are a considerable distance for the pedestrian tourist.

The bridge does not provide a round trip for pedestrians. Pedestrians would be required to either park at the Museum or in the Parliamentary Triangle. Their journey would always require returning over the bridge. The pedestrian tourist has a substantial journey and a long day on their feet to use this bridge!

Many families – particularly with young children or accompanied by the elderly – would not contemplate the distances between the bridge and tourist attractions. For example, a visit to the Museum (2 hours walking inside), a forty five minute or more walk to Questacon or the Art Gallery (then 2 hours walking inside) and a return forty five minute or more walk. An outing could be 5 – 7 hours if a bridge crossing is included.

It is far more likely the pedestrian tourist would park at the Museum, enjoy the Museum and then cross and return over the bridge rather than transit to other attractions. Tourists to Canberra need good public transport and ample parking, not new bridges.

This is a 'bridge to nowhere' for pedestrians.

## **Cyclists**

Potentially a bridge offers greater utility to the cyclist.

Unfortunately the design of the bridge does not suit cyclists. Ramps are unlikely as there is limited land. A lift will be provided but the size is not clear.

It is unclear how cycle and pedestrian traffic will be shared on a narrow bridge. The potential for accidents would be high, unless cyclists are to walk their bikes across the bridge.

There are not many interstate tourists on cycle. The most likely cycle traffic would be local Canberrans undertaking cycling for fitness and general recreation on weekends and holidays. Weekday use would be limited and would not justify its construction. It does not enhance Canberra's cycle ways as it not a natural route into the City, although it may be of some use to a small number of ANU students.

The bridge would enable the addition of a short loop around the West Basin rather than crossing over Commonwealth Avenue Bridge for recreational cyclists.

While offering a pleasant ride on the weekend, it is doubtful that cyclists would argue that the bridge would provide them great utility. If cycles are to be walked across the bridge and if the lift facilities are small or only operate at certain times, then the utility for recreational cycling would be further reduced.

I am sure a poll of cyclists would confirm that a bridge without ramps, without sufficient room to ride quickly across, that doesn't really go anywhere, is not the top issue for Canberra's cyclists.

## **Fishing and Other Activities**

As a memorial fishing would presumably not be allowed. The design would be need to prevent fishing activity. Fishing is likely given the isolation of the bridge, regardless of 'no fishing' signs.

Fishing would create an unacceptable safety risk to boating – sail or canoe/kayak – moving underneath the bridge between the pylons.

Other activities at the bridge may not be positive. The isolation and low use may encourage skylarking, such as dropping objects from the bridge. The bridge may attract underage drinking, drug use and vandalism in the evenings. This could be restricted by gated stairs and restricted lift hours; these restrictions in turn reducing any utility of the bridge.

## **Water Based Activities**

I have confined my submission to safety aspects.

The lake is used by sailing, windsurfing, general boating, kayaking and canoeing enthusiasts. Importantly, many are learning their sport and some are using hire craft and may have very little skill. It cannot be assumed that all have a high proficiency and full control of their craft, particularly in adverse weather.

Lake Burley Griffin does experience adverse weather. This is not always forecast. As a shallow body of water wind has a dramatic affect on the conditions. The water surface can be turbulent with very high chop. These conditions can arise very quickly in front of a fast moving weather front.

It is common practice for all forms of boating that use the Western part of the lake to seek shelter in the wind shadow of the peninsula on which stands the National Museum. This is as the prevailing and strongest winds on the lake are from the West (I encourage the Committee to confirm this with the Bureau of Meteorology).

At the very position of the bridge, before moving into the safety of the full wind shadow of the peninsula and Museum, wind speeds increase. The tree and shoreline opposite the Museum causes a 'funneling affect' that increases wind speed. Watercrafts pass through the high wind funnel before reaching the safe area beyond the proposed bridge.

The novice and possibly young sailor will be faced with unnecessary dangers from the pylons at the very point at which they are most likely to not have full control of their vessel.

The pylons will reduce room to maneuver and increase potential for accidents and injury between large and small watercraft.

Immigration Bridge Australia or the National Capital Authority may suggest that the impact on safety is no more or less than Commonwealth Avenue Bridge. The Commonwealth Avenue Bridge is not a high wind area and is away from general recreational activities.

For a bridge of limited utility to the public, the navigation hazards imposed are not warranted. Regardless of the spacing of bridge pylons there will be increased danger to lake users.

## **Bridge Planning and Design**

I would logically assume planning for a bridge would include:

- Assessing the requirement for the bridge (ie traffic flows),
- Assessing possible site locations,
- Assessing navigation issues for the water way, and
- Evaluating designs that accommodate the above.

Drawing on the simple analysis provided above in this submission, I can only conclude that neither the National Capital Authority nor Immigration Bridge Australia has thoroughly considered the planning of the bridge.

While Immigration Bridge Australia may be following advice, if that advice is from the National Capital Authority it is deficient.

A bridge serves no planning purpose well.

- It provides poorly for general pedestrian traffic, as there are no destinations to reach, no resident nearby population and no large places of business in the surrounding locations.
- It does not suit the pedestrian tourist whose journey between major attractions requires car or public transport.
- It does not suit the cyclist as it has stairs and is too narrow to share with pedestrian tourists. It is not on a cycle route to the City and will not facilitate increased commuting by cyclists to their places of work.
- The stairs will need to be gated and the lifts locked to prevent vandalism and other illegitimate activity at night.
- It endangers water-based activity of all types, as it is a navigation hazard in adverse conditions.

Without adequate consultation the National Capital Authority has decreed a bridge at this location is required, when clearly it offers minimum utility to the public. Public planning decisions should be open and transparent, and most importantly, sensible.

The 'bridge to nowhere' is inept planning. It is obvious *the process adopted by Immigration Bridge Australia and the National Capital Authority has not fully considered the utility, or lack thereof, of a bridge at the proposed location. This is evident by the absence of public and consultative studies into pedestrian, cycle and safety requirements. Studies would clearly demonstrate the limited utility to the public of a bridge. The bridge will be a navigation hazard and endanger people enjoying water-based activities.*

### **Funding - \$30m of capital investment**

The bridge is an ambitious project for community funding. Immigration Bridge Australia seeks to raise \$30m, of which \$20m is to be from public donors – an exceptionally high amount.

This level of fund raising has only been achieved by a few charitable or community organisations. Generally, by organizations that have existed for many years, which have high standing in the community and are undertaking projects of universal appeal to many Australians. Immigration Bridge Australia does not share these aspects no matter how eminent the board members are.

Immigration Bridge Australia is relying solely on advertising to attract unsolicited public donations. This is its only method to raise an unprecedented amount for a private construction (with no return of funds raised to the community).

Other community and charitable organisations have many chapters and/or close ties to churches and other institutions, and draw on strong, existing bases of local support throughout Australia. These organisations also return funds raised to those in need. Immigration Bridge Australia does not have this important grass roots support or return funds to those in need.

There is no public information on how successful the Immigration Bridge Australia fundraising has been to date.

There is considerable risk Immigration Bridge Australia cannot raise the funds required and will seek taxpayer funding for this unnecessary bridge. The implied endorsement of the National Capital Authority is grossly irresponsible as it gives an impression there is access to Government funding.

*I submit that it is unlikely that the full capital cost will be community or corporate funded. There should not be an expectation that the taxpayer will bail out the bridge construction.*

### **Funding - Maintenance**

The Immigration Bridge Australia website declares the bridge is a 'gift to the nation'. Immigration Bridge Australia expects the maintenance, long-term upkeep and upgrades of this gift to be funded by the taxpayer.

The maintenance and upkeep would be considerable for any bridge. This is complex bridge with lifts and a solar roof. The roof is a technical and complex addition.

Overtime the bridge will need major work and the solar roof will need replacing.

The National Capital Authority does not have a budget for this bridge. Media reports suggest the Authority is strongly within its current budget.

If the bridge is to be maintained by the ACT Government, that should be made public to the voters and taxpayers of the ACT.

A bridge would be the most expensive of all memorials in the Canberra to maintain. A less ambitious and technical memorial, with far reduced maintenance costs, is more appropriate for taxpayer funding.

Limited utility would be return to the taxpayer for their funding of a bridge.

*I submit that the maintenance requirements for a large, technical and isolated memorial are high and not sustainable under a community or self funded financial model. The lack of forward planning suggests these costs will be dumped on the taxpayer.*

*I submit that future major upgrades, liabilities (including insurances) do not seem adequately considered with a default expectation that the taxpayer would fund this additional financial burden.*

## **Alternative Memorials**

I support Immigration Bridge Australia in looking to design a memorial that both preserves memory and provides utility to the public. This could be achieved for less cost.

I offer the following suggestion for a memorial:

- An over-the-water boardwalk, with short protruding jetties, from the Hospital Point wharf at the National Museum around the shoreline.

The over-the-water boardwalk could follow the shoreline to the site of the Ferry Terminal and Boat Hire. This area is Canberra's natural Darling Harbour and the boardwalk would complement future possible development in this area, and increase visitor numbers to the Boat Hire business.

Alternatively, the over-the-water boardwalk could follow the shoreline from Hospital Point wharf to the Acton Peninsula ferry storage wharf at the base of Lawson Crescent. This would provide magnificent views of the Lake from the boardwalk, complement the Museum and open the area to increased recreational activity.

The design could combine an over-the-water boardwalk with short jetties protruding out to the Lake. The jetties could be joined by interconnecting bridges that would provide handrails for inscription. The design would symbolise crossing and arrival stories through the linked jetties. Each jetty could represent a region, country or time period.

Public utility would be provided for fishing, kayaking and canoeing, boating and general recreation from the jetties. There are very few jetties on Lake Burley Griffin other than at the major boat ramps.

## **Conclusion**

There are many downsides to the proposed bridge and few upsides.

There are alternative memorial designs that could incorporate some of the bridge features, without the excessive cost and limited public utility.

The high chance of financial failure has the potential to leave many donors with a bad taste about giving to charitable causes.

The implied endorsement by Government is misleading to donors.

If the Immigration Bridge is to be, as claimed, the “most spectacular and beautiful bridge ever conceived in Australia, capable of world recognition” they are too late. We already have that bridge. It spans Sydney Harbour.

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission on this matter.