

25 March 2009

Committee Secretary  
Joint Standing Committee on the National Capital and External Territories  
Department of House of Representatives  
PO Box 6021 Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

**JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE NATIONAL CAPITAL  
AND EXTERNAL TERRITORIES**

**INQUIRY INTO THE IMMIGRATION BRIDGE AUSTRALIA PROPOSAL**

The opportunity to make a submission on the proposed Immigration Bridge intended to stretch over Lake Burley Griffin from Lennox Gardens to the National Museum of Australia on the Action Peninsula.

It is requested that my submission (attached) be taken into consideration.

Yours sincerely

  
Ken Cartwright OAM

**JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE NATIONAL CAPITAL  
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**INQUIRY INTO THE IMMIGRATION BRIDGE AUSTRALIA PROPOSAL**

**Introduction**

The following submission is made in response to the Joint Standing Committee on the National Capital and external Territories inquiry into the Immigration Bridge Australia proposal. The terms of reference for that inquiry were received via a media Release issued on 26 February 2009 by the Joint Standing Committee on the National Capital and external Territories chaired by Kate Lundy.

**Background**

The Media Release states that;

“The Federal Parliament’s National Capital Committee has begun a new inquiry investigating the Immigration Bridge Australia (IBA) proposal. IBA is proposing to build a 400m pedestrian bridge across Lake Burley Griffin to commemorate the migrant contribution to Australia for completion before Canberra’s centenary celebrations in 2013.

The proposed Immigration Bridge will stretch over the lake from Lennox Gardens near the Hyatt Hotel to the National Museum of Australia on Acton Peninsula. IBA is raising funds for the bridge by offering more than 200,000 immigrant families and their ancestors the opportunity to have their names engraved on the handrails of the bridge.”

The Terms of reference of the joint standing committee’s are as follows;

1. The process adopted by the Immigration Bridge Australia (IBA) to settle the design for the Immigration Bridge (the Bridge) taking into account:
  - a. the heritage values of Lake Burley Griffin and its foreshore, and
  - b. the interests of users of the Lake.
2. The process that has been adopted by IBA to raise funds for the construction and ongoing maintenance of the Bridge.
3. The approval process required under the *Australian Capital Territory (Planning and Land Management) Act 1988* if an application for approval of the Bridge were [sic] received by the National Capital Authority.

**Discussion**

**Terms of Reference 1a. The heritage values of Lake Burley Griffin and its foreshore..**

The IBA Newsletter states

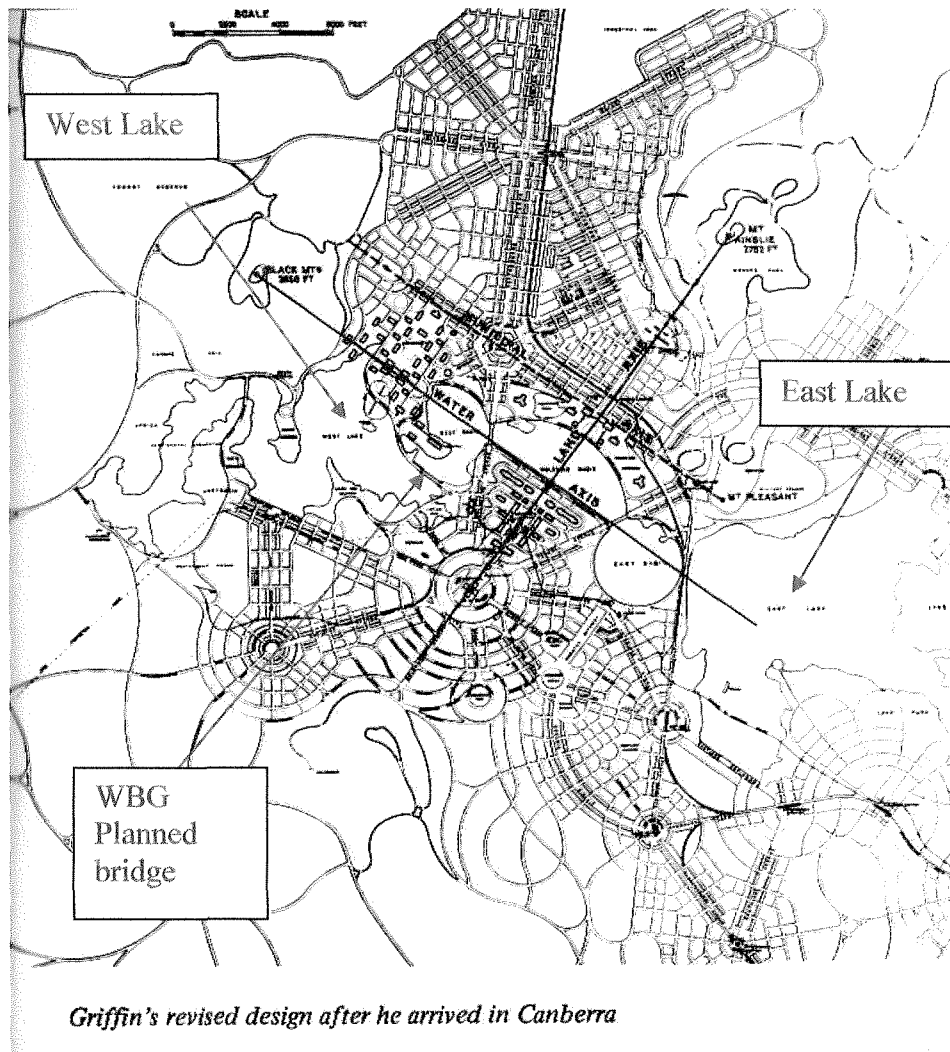
“A bridge across Lake Burley Griffin at this site is part of the **National Capital Plan** and part of the **Griffin Legacy** plans, and Immigration Bridge Australia has the in principle support of the National Capital Authority and the ACT Government. “<sup>1</sup>

This statement is being used by IBA group to justify the location of the proposed IBA. A road bridge near the proposed site is a part of the original Walter Burley Griffin Plan. That plan was modified when Griffin actually came out to Australia in 1913 and his plan was changed as far as

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<sup>1</sup> IBA News questionnaire in Website

the lakes were concerned in extending the length of West Lake to what it is today. The resultant Griffin design in 1913 is below.<sup>2</sup>



In 1950 the Griffin plan underwent three major changes, recommended by the National Capital Development Commission. One of these recommendations eliminated East Lake from the Griffin plan.<sup>3</sup>

Three years later it was recommended that the West Lake also be cut from the plan. This happened but the Parliamentary Works Committee reported to Parliament that West Lake was desirable and practical. It recommended that West Lake be restored to the plan as soon as possible. This was done some years later..<sup>4</sup>

Lake Burley Griffin was opened in March 1964. It is now a beautiful waterway which provides a remarkable landscape in the centre of Canberra changing the original flood plain and uniting the northern and southern parts of Canberra into a unified city.

The four Molonglo River crossings, Lennox Crossing, Commonwealth Bridge, Scotts Crossing and one below a weir upstream from Scotts Crossing were replaced by four high level bridges each with pedestrian pathways, namely Commonwealth Avenue and Kings Avenue bridges with a fifth bridge across the Scrivener Dam. Deletion of the road bridge in the Griffin plan between

<sup>2</sup> Lionel Wigmore *Canberra* page 67

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid* page 151

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid* page 152

Acton and Parkes has enabled the West Basin and West Lake to be viewed without hindrance from the Commonwealth Avenue Bridge pedestrian pathway to the Brindabellas.

The heritage value of Lake Burley Griffin is based on the design which constructed in the fifties and sixties and opened in 1964 and was the beginning of the heritage value of Lake Burley Griffin and its foreshores. The 1964 design has been altered with the extension of the Parkes Way and the re-routing of Lady Denman Drive during the seventies. These alterations reduced the width of the lake at the foot of Black Mountain and between Sullivan's Creek and the Acton Peninsula. In addition it reduced the foreshore space available for recreation at the northern end of West Basin.

To state that a bridge should be erected across Lake Burley Griffin because it was in the original Griffin plans is not justified. The present layout of the lake and its current bridges is very close to the Griffin design (with the absence of East Lake). The design of Canberra, as it developed over 50 years from 1913 did not require a bridge directly joining Acton Peninsula to the southern side of the Lake. Pedestrian access to the Acton Peninsula, which is sought after by the IBA Group is already provided by the pedestrian pathways on the Commonwealth Avenue bridges.

In summary, pedestrian access to the Acton Peninsula already exists and to build a bridge very close to the Commonwealth Avenue bridges is not necessary and will significantly alter the heritage value by reducing the visual beauty of the lake in a very prominent area. It would also pose a car parking problem. The existing car park at Lennox Gardens is frequently insufficient for the demand causing many motorists to park in the Hyatt Hotel Car Park.

#### **Terms of Reference 1b - the interests of users of the Lake.**

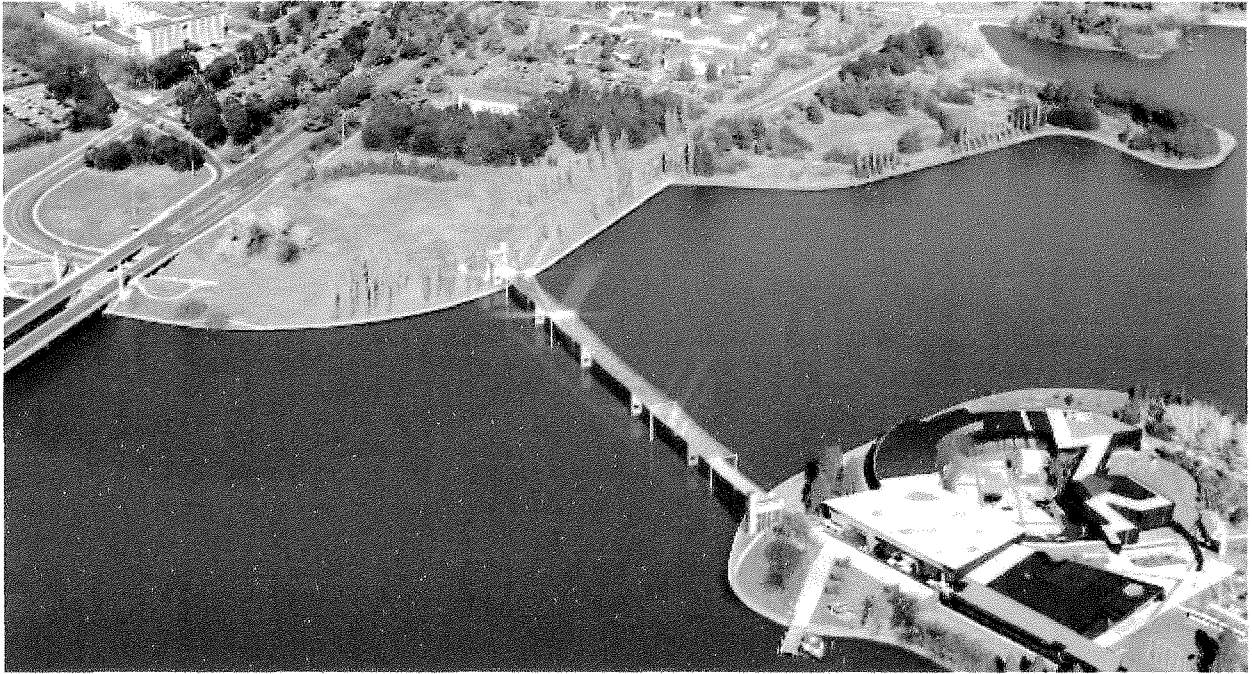
As proposed by IBA, the Immigration Bridge would detract significantly from a range of uses on Lake Burley Griffin which have been an integral to the life of the lake since it filled in 1964.

Most forms of non-motorised recreational boating including, most particularly, sailing, have thrived on Lake Burley Griffin since its very beginning. For all these forms of boating, the common features are that both the air and the water, and their interaction, are a fluid medium, in which precision of movement is always relative rather than absolute.

A boat can not be directed in the same way one can control a land vehicle. This factor adds greatly the risk arising from fixed obstacles and navigational hazards such as would be posed by the pylons of the proposed bridge.

The complexity of retrieving capsized and swamped boats and wet sailors is great when in close proximity to any fixed obstacle, and the highest demand for rescue inevitably arises in weather conditions which increase the difficulty of manoeuvre, even for a powered vessel. As a regular user of the Lake over the past 33 years both sailing and driving powered safety/rescue boats and as a former Commodore and as Rear Commodore Training of the YMCA Sailing Club and being in charge of that Clubs Rescue Boats, I have on many occasions experienced extreme difficulties in rescuing capsized boats and their crews in the vicinity of the Lennox Garden shoreline and at times actually from the rock face. A bridge in the planned position would increase the danger of damage and personal injury to boats and their crews.

The picture below from the current IBA website. Provides a good view of what the bridge might look like. It has been said that there will be at least 70 m between the pylons that support the pedestrian part of the bridge. It appears that the IBA Group has failed to mention the fact that the solar panels placed over the bridge overhang the 30m wide bridge by 5m each side and are supported by pairs of pylons based on the lake bed and are placed at intervals which bisect the distance between the bridge pylons except for the span in the centre of the bridge.



Current IBA picture of the proposed bridge from the IBA website.

Prevailing and often very fresh westerly winds mean that the only readily available relatively sheltered water is between the National Museum and the area to the north of Lennox Gardens. That need for refuge is at its greatest in the sort of challenging conditions which would radically exacerbate the navigation hazards posed by bridge pylons.

The wind shifts that typify Lake Burley Griffin and are, in some winds, exacerbated by eddies from shore structures around the lake, provide added challenge and risk to sailing craft that would be exacerbated by the proposed bridge. This is of considerable concern.

There have, over the years, been many national championships conducted on Lake Burley Griffin and some major events such as the Masters Games. These bring people and revenue to the ACT as well as providing an interesting spectacle to the populace boating organisations such as the Canberra Yacht Club have been encouraged by the authorities to pursue, conduct and participate in these events.

An often raised objection from interstate sailing clubs to Canberra's ability to hold major boating events on Lake Burley Griffin is the already relatively limited area of the lake. The proposed bridge would make a significant reduction on the available area, as well as imposing the navigational impacts discussed above. Canberra's ability to conduct major events on Lake Burley Griffin would be substantially diminished by the proposed bridge.

**Terms of Reference 2 The process that has been adopted by IBA to raise funds for the construction and ongoing maintenance of the Bridge.**

IBA asserts that "we are going to build a bridge across Lake Burley Griffin" and that "upon completion the Immigration Bridge will [be] presented as a gift to the Nation".<sup>5</sup>

Does this mean that, assuming approvals are forthcoming, the Government which owns and is responsible for Lake Burley Griffin will allow a private organization to undertake a major construction project spanning the lake in one of the most significant parts of the National

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<sup>5</sup> IBA website, Learn more about Immigration Bridge. Q and A Is this a Government project or initiative?

Capital. The IBA is an organization without apparent experience in this type of work which would be a difficult engineering construction project. The risk of cost and time overruns must be very high. Would IBA would cope with such situations.

The statement that "The cost has been put at \$30m, As a community project funded mainly by a combination of individual contributions (including the History Handrail Program), business sponsorships and income that will be generated as a result of the incorporation of a solar roof in the construction." <sup>6</sup> this is a dubious basis for handling a high risk construction project in which the estimated costs can at best be no more than approximate at this stage of the design process.

**Terms of Reference 3 - The approval process required under the *Australian Capital Territory (Planning and Land Management) Act 1988* if an application for approval of the Bridge were [sic] received by the National Capital Authority.**

It is relevant that the media release issued on 26 February 2009 implies that approval has already been obtained in the second paragraph which states

“The proposed bridge **will** stretch over the lake from...”

this seems to indicate that approval has already been given irrespective of what ever results any inquiry or review might produce.

It would appear that the NCA has already committed itself to supporting the project without the final design and funding being available. Any reliance on expecting the NCA to act as an impartial arbiter is wishful thinking.

The current thinking of the IBA Group is put at the beginning of my submission on the the Terms of Reference of the Inquiry and that is;

“A bridge across Lake Burley Griffin at this site is part of the **National Capital Plan** and part of the **Griffin Legacy** plans, and Immigration Bridge Australia has the in principle support of the National Capital Authority and the ACT Government.”

This emphasises the point that the NCA is not completely independent in its assessing of proposals in its area of interest/authority.

## **General Remarks**

### **Alternative**

I have no objection to a memorial celebrating immigration to Australia. I don't see that a bridge is appropriate.. A good place for an architectural memorial would be on the banks of Lake Burley Griffin in the vicinity of Citizenship Place in Commonwealth Park.

There is no way in which the current design of the Immigration Bridge will work together with the very simple and gracious lines of Commonwealth Avenue and Kings Avenue bridges. The Immigration Bridge in its proposed location will be within a view of the existing four bridges at the same time from various points around the lake.