

The Secretary
Joint Standing Committee on the National Capital and External Territories
Parliament House Canberra ACT

Inquiry into the Immigration Bridge Australia Proposal

As a regular user of Lake Burley Griffin, and a resident of Canberra, both since 1965, I have real concerns about the proposed foot bridge across the lake.

As a long time member and former Commodore (on two occasions) of the Canberra Yacht Club, I am aware that despite basic objections lake users have to the building of a foot bridge, there has been a process of consultation with a group of lake users and that some design changes have been agreed that will partly meet some of the concerns of that group. However, it seems to me that one of the major issues, that of safety to navigation and the detrimental impact to the use of that part of the lake for sailing, which is my interest, especially by juniors and trainees, has been ignored. I would urge the committee to review the process of consultation with the user groups, to consider seriously the issues raised by those groups, and to form an independent view about the impact that the building of a bridge in that part of the lake will have on sailing and other water activities.

As a citizen of Canberra, I am concerned about the usefulness of such a bridge, about the infrastructure required at each end of the bridge, and about the visual impact of a foot bridge. I am not an expert in the tourist industry but it is my understanding from general reading about tourism that the typical tourist stays in Canberra for a relatively short time, like 2 or 3 nights, and would be most unlikely to want to spend valuable time walking from one point to another. The available time to be spent at the various national institutions will be reduced by the amount of time spent walking. One possible indicator of the extent to which tourists look for means of transport other than private car or coach might be what I perceive to be limited use of the ferries on the lake and the 'hop on hop off bus' to move tourists around.

I am not aware – and I seriously doubt that the general public of Canberra is aware - of the detailed plans for access to the bridge at both ends and what impact those access needs may have on the wonderful open park areas we now enjoy in the Lennox Gardens/Albert Hall area at one end, and Hospital Point at the other. I doubt that the public of Canberra have been adequately informed about the infrastructure needs and about the costs to the taxpayer of re organising adjacent roads and building car parks which would intrude significantly on public green space.

No doubt, too, there are significant heritage issues associated with this special area of Canberra which others are in a better position to address than myself. In any event, an additional bridge at the proposed location will destroy the wonderful vista that we now all experience from the National Museum of Australia and from other points around the lake.

There is no doubt that immigrants have made a huge contribution to the development of Australia. However, their contribution is already visible in many ways and need not be marked by what is likely to prove to be a white elephant that will far from enhance Canberra as a mecca for tourists.

Peter Forster

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