

Yarralumla Residents Association
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Yarralumla
ACT 2600
26th March 2009

The Committee Secretary
Joint Standing Committee on the National Capital and External Territories
Parliament House
Inquiry into the Immigration Bridge Australia Proposal

Dear Madam/Sir,

Thankyou for this opportunity to make a submission to the Joint Standing Committee.

Summary Points

- Use of the lake
Difficulties in safety for those in the water and amenity for all.
- Heritage values
Heritage of surrounding buildings and the lake and its use needs to be considered
- A bridge to divide.
Far from the intended effect, the bridge is more likely to divide our community.
- Bridge Design
There seems to be more than meets the eye.
- The process adopted to raise funds is somewhat misleading.
The bridge has no approval, no costing and TV advertising has not been clear.
- Genesis.
Where it all started – without a need for a bridge
- A non-transparent, non-open, private design.
A design process for something as iconic (intrusive?) as a bridge should be part of a public competition, with community input at all stages.
- DA53
We should learn the lessons, and DA53 should be withdrawn entirely
- Parking.
Where will it be?
- A more appropriate memorial
Let the public have a say
- Bridge in Weston Park
There is no requirement for a bridge in Weston Park, which would also disrupt water activities and spoil the tranquil views over the lake and beyond.

Introduction

The Yarralumla Residents Association (YRA) is a community association that represents people in Yarralumla. More details on the YRA can be found on our website of www.yra.org.au

It is unclear if the appropriateness of having a bridge as a memorial to celebrate the contribution of migrants to Australia is within the terms of reference of the Joint committee, but I cannot see how you can adequately address the other terms of reference without this consideration.

Use of the Lake

There have been articles, letters and editorials in the Canberra Times addressing this issue in a number of ways. Some references are:

- Canberra Times Letters to the Editor 15/4/2008
- Lake plan under fire Fears pylons may pose safety risks - BRAD WATTS 26/11/2006

We believe there are concerns of safety and amenity regarding the use of the lake by sailors, rowers and canoeists/kayakers, both from the viewpoint of the number and location of pylons as well as height of the bridge. It is noted by the YRA that the Joint Committee has already received a number of submissions addressing this issue. We strongly support the recreational use of the lake by non-motorized craft, and believe that the bridge will negatively affect that use, both by its physical presence, and visual impact. The winds on the Lake can be both fluky and changeable, with strong winds springing up rapidly at times. Navigation of the lake will be made much more difficult as a result of having this bridge. There is also an issue of safety with the possibility of objects falling or being thrown off the bridge.

Heritage Values

The precinct where the southern side of the bridge would be, is where the Albert Hall, Lennox Gardens, the Hyatt hotel is. To have a huge area of 2000 sq meters that will be donated by the ACT Government for bridge access, lifts and ramps would detract from the heritage value of what is there now.

Additional heritage usage values should also be considered, such as the history of sailing on the lake over the past 40 odd years. The vistas, tranquillity and general peace of the area would be broken by the huge structure that the bridge would need to be.

Canberra should remain the bush capital, and not the bridge capital.

Again, a more appropriate and flexible solution exists for celebration of migrant contribution. It cannot be stressed enough, that Lake Burley Griffin is one of the centrepieces of Canberra in many ways – not only physically, but also bearing the name of one of Canberra's great planners. Much more care and public consultation needs to be made, as part of the planning process, before altering such a heritage icon so extremely.

Some mention has been made by the NCA and by IBA, that Griffin planned a bridge in this location. However, the actual lake is now different in shape to what was in the original plan, and the low,

elegant bridge that was conceived by Griffin is not possible now. It is a fallacious argument that IBA and NCA put forward, that the bridge is part of Griffin's plan.

Bridge Design

The design process for a bridge over the lake should be open and public. It is unclear on the IBA website that the intention is for bicycles to share the 6m wide bridge (as reported in Hansard, May 2008 Role of the NCA) as well as having stories and statues along the bridge. It is difficult to see just how closed in the design would be, along with its large roof with solar panels.

There seem to be so many holes in the design, that it is indeed conceptual. Issues such as disabled access (it has been mooted, we believe, that there would be lifts at one end – quite a bulky structure, with its own safety issues), cyclists, number of pylons, costs, use of the bridge.

There have been a number of artistic impressions, but it is quite unclear which if any are viable.

On windy days, especially in winter, it would not be very comfortable strolling over the bridge looking at names on plaques and statues with stories. It is unclear that even pedestrians would use the bridge very much!

A bridge to divide

It is entirely appropriate to have a celebration of the contribution that migrants have made to Australia. There are a number of examples around the world of this sort of celebration, with that of Ellis Island in New York being a most successful and appropriate example.

This bridge will include very few names of people who are able and willing to pay money to have their names recorded – it will not be recognition of migrants but of some migrants. We could have a more fitting memorial, which actually showed how migrants contributed to Australia, and include any stories of people who wanted to have them recorded for no cost. It would be far more informative, meaningful and inclusive. Perhaps something in conjunction with the National Museum or in Lennox Gardens near the Albert Hall where many early naturalization ceremonies took place.

A similar, paid migrant name listing memorial, The Welcome Wall in Darling Harbour, Sydney has a little over 16,000 names and has been "open" for about 10 years. According to IBA's website, there have been "*over 10 million migrants from 213 ethnic groups arrive*" in Australia since 1788. Even if the strike rate is higher than the past 10 years of the Welcome Wall in Darling Harbour, there will be little representation. Further, those whose names are **not** there, for whatever reason, are likely to feel that they somehow have contributed less or are somehow different.

I read with some disappointment, the condescending words on the IBA website regarding Aboriginal people, relegated to their Q&A section.

Even in their section titled "*Why is immigration being celebrated in this way?*" IBA provide **no** reason why a bridge should be used as the vehicle for celebration.

Other forms of celebration, such as museum displays, databases, artistic works and many more have far more flexibility as to how they can address any divisive issues, and more likely avoid them altogether.

The process adopted to raise funds is somewhat misleading

There is great support within Australia to pay tribute to and to recognise the contribution that migrants have made to Australia. This covers a huge area that includes cultural, language, food, lifestyle, labour, economic, business and much more.

Immigration Bridge Australia has not allowed for any separation of intent to recognise migrants and their families from their desire to build a bridge. I believe they would have had the same support for alternative forms of memorial, as the primary support focus is on migrants not bridges.

As stated above, The Welcome Wall in Sydney has a little over 16,000 gained in about 10 years, with approximately the same cost as IBA is proposing. Clearly, this will not meet IBA's target amount, which would require 200,000 names. Yet they do not address how the huge extra amount will be funded.

IBA's website gives a strong impression that the project has the support of Government and will go ahead. Clearly, we know that not only is there no approval, but there isn't even an application. IBA's television advertisements certainly did not make that clear, nor did it make it clear that there would be a cost of \$110, not all to be refunded if the bridge did not go ahead.

Without a transparent, public and open design process, it is unclear even how much the bridge may cost to build or to maintain. There is no indication as to how budget overruns (in building or maintenance) would be dealt with, other than the default of using taxpayer money.

IBA said as recorded in the May 2008 Hansard Report in The role of the NCA, that the IBA had costings "*from the people who were involved in the building of the Brisbane [pedestrian] bridge*". It is well known, and acknowledged in that same report, that the Brisbane Pedestrian Bridge ran well over budget. A strange place for IBA to source an estimate!

IBA also states that part of the funding will be raised by "Business Sponsorships" (refer to IBA website Q&A). This is unlikely to translate to the form of yellow archway looking pylons, but there is no reference as to what form of advertising these sponsorships may take. It all sounds so tacky, not very representative of the contribution that migrants made.

Genesis

This project, it has been acknowledged, started with a committee in Cooma, was brought to Canberra as it was believed that having a national memorial in the national capital would be more desirable. At that stage, the committee had not considered a bridge.

It was the NCA that suggested (and wanted to have?) a bridge.

It is believed that the bridge itself is the controversial aspect of this whole thing. If the bridge were to be removed from the Immigration Memorial [Bridge]" there would be little opposition, safety issues and community concern. Clearly, that is the direction to proceed.

A non-transparent, non-open, private design.

The design for the bridge has been done by a private company. The design is unclear. For example, there have been a number of different pylons reported from 4 to 12, making this quite a varied design, at least from an engineering viewpoint. The bulk and height of only 4 pylons seems to be prohibitive, and it has been suggested by others, and shown on the IBA website as having 8.

A far better and more appropriate way to arrive at the best architecture for a major work such as this would be to have a public open competition for the design, after receiving community, government and planning views that would be part of the brief. IBA and the NCA have gone about this exercise in reverse.

Of course, what should have preceded this would have been community consultation on how best to celebrate migrant contribution, but there seems to be more of a desire to have a bridge.

DA53

When DA53 was proposed by the NCA, with its changes to the Albert Hall precinct, the changes to the loop roads, addition of iconic buildings, addition of traffic lights and more, the Immigration Bridge was not the focus but did appear to be “sort of” part of it. History shows there was great uproar about DA53 which we believe lead in part to the enquiry into the NCA and the reduction in its size and funding.

Since then planning has moved on, but DA53 has not yet been withdrawn, and it should be.

It seems to be simply ludicrous to spend a fortune in these economic times in the implementation of DA53, to spend millions disrupting a good road system and then spend millions more building and maintaining a bridge that is not required. There have been no published studies that we are aware of, that show a need for a pedestrian bridge where it is proposed.

The YRA respectfully asks the Joint Committee to call for the withdrawal of DA53 and all that it contains.

Parking

Many people drive when they visit Canberra, and many people who live in Canberra drive or cycle for their leisure visits. Where will parking be provided? Will more space be taken away from the area surrounding the Albert Hall for this? Is this the real reason why DA53 was proposed, to remove the perfectly functional loop roads to make way for parking?

It is noted that IBA do not see parking as their problem, as they stated in the Role of the NCA enquiry in May 2008. This is yet another aspect of poor planning process.

A more appropriate memorial

As should have been done with the “bridge” idea, there should be open consultation on an appropriate memorial to the migrants who came since 1788. All Australians could have a say in this, and it would be a far better outcome as a result. In particular, Canberrans, who would have to live with the memorial, rather than just visiting it, could have a say on how it may impact their amenity in ways that perhaps people who live outside Canberra would not be impacted.

If IBA want to focus on a migration memorial, which they should, then address that issue, rather than a bridge!

Bridge in Weston Park

When we attended the public meetings in Weston Park, we were surprised to see a bridge in the plan there. We were led to believe that it was put there as some sort of token, and just “wouldn’t be going ahead”. Now it seems it has come to the attention of this Joint Committee.

Canberra does NOT need a pedestrian bridge to go over vast areas of beautiful, clear vistas of Lake Burley Griffin.

One could be forgiven for thinking that there are forces out there, trying to get some sort of a bridge “in there” without any need for it.

One of the nice things about Weston Park is the “non-through” traffic of people, cars and bicycles. The peace at the end of the peninsula would be severely affected by a bridge there. However, most importantly, there is no need, it would have negative boating safety and flexibility issues as well as spoiling the tranquil views of the lake and beyond.

In Conclusion

The Yarralumla Residents Association would like to see the Joint Committee recommend:

- The complete withdrawal of DA53
- A call for expressions of interest in a memorial celebrating migrants, without reference to bridges
- To not proceed with a footbridge in the proposed location.
- Reject the idea of a pedestrian bridge in Weston Park.

Thankyou for this opportunity to be part of the public consultation process of the Joint Committee.

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On behalf of the Executive Committee of the YRA

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