

## **SUBMISSION 27.1**

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Mr Stephen Boyd  
Secretary,  
Joint Standing Committee on the National Capital & External Territories  
Parliament House,  
Canberra, ACT 2600

Dear Mr Boyd,

### **Inquiry into the Role of the National Capital Authority, 2008**

#### **Immigration Bridge**

When giving evidence about Lake Burley Griffin on Friday 2 May 2008 at the above inquiry, Senator Lundy asked if I would provide comment on the proposed immigration bridge. My response is as follows.

The idea of a bridge across Lake Burley Griffin to commemorate immigration is an imaginative step forward from the approach adopted at the National Maritime Museum at Darling Harbour in Sydney. I am greatly impressed with this unique concept and the progress made to date by the proponent, Immigration Bridge Australia. I am not surprised with the level of in-principle support received for this unique project, as shown on the proponent's website.

It is difficult to make comment on a project of this nature without detailed knowledge of how it originated and what design decisions have been taken to date. What were the sites considered by the proponent for the bridge and what form and character is the bridge likely to take?

On the question of the bridge's proposed location it should be noted that the site selected is a very open and windy one. This seems unfortunate for those visiting the bridge and viewing its interpretive material on the rails and elsewhere. I suspect that the sailing fraternity will be concerned about a bridge here due to the suitability of the water in this area for sailing.

The National Capital Development Commission (NCDC) designed Lake Burley Griffin as one single element. It followed closely Griffin's original intentions. Presumably the NCDC did not build a bridge at the selected site for a number of reasons including that Griffin had never proposed one there. The bridge therefore needs to be designed to the highest standards to ensure that it does not have a negative effect on the authenticity of the lake as designed and constructed in the early 1960s. The bridge's visual impact on the vistas in this part of the lake needs to be very carefully assessed by the designer.

While it is clear from its website that the proponent is fully committed to this site, it seems appropriate to point out that there is an alternative site which the proponent could fall back to if it runs into design and construction feasibility problems. This is at Tarcoola Reach between Weston Park and Black Mountain Peninsula. Griffin recognised opportunities for a bridge in this area in all his plans between 1912 and 1918; the NCDC also envisaged a bridge there. Tarcoola Reach is in one of the most beautiful and protected parts of the lake. It has clear topographic advantages over the

selected site that would contribute to a minimisation of the visual impact of the bridge and perhaps achieve cost savings. The immigration bridge would work very well there in the beautiful landscape setting.

On the question of bridge design at the selected site there appears to be significant differences between what the NCA and the proponent are saying in relation to the form and character of the bridge. The NCA's view is expressed in the *Draft Amendment 61 – West Basin* document which was the subject of public consultation before approval by the previous government. At page 14 the intentions are illustrated as a bridge with a curved deck without roof that returns to the ground level on both banks. This approach reflects the form of the nearby Commonwealth Avenue Bridge and is similar to the two pedestrian bridges crossing Parkes Way. The illustration also shows this bridge as a suspended one with large pylons on both banks supporting the cables. The visual impact of the pylon on the eastern bank would be reduced by the existing stand of the now very tall mature Lombardy poplars. Additional tree planting on the western bank could be needed. This bridge form has been repeated in *Draft Amendment 53: Albert Hall Precinct*. In both cases no supporting columns for the bridge are shown.

In my view the proponent has proposed a bridge with a much greater visual impact on the lake's vistas. In the illustrations on its website the deck is horizontal and covered with a roof and each of the ends finish well above the ground level of the banks – it gives the impression of a barrier. Presumably stairs are to be provided for the public to transition to the ground. It is unclear how the design will accommodate the needs of the disabled in wheel chairs. Cyclists will not appreciate this arrangement.

It is difficult to say more at this stage, as it is still a work in progress. My understanding is that the proponent is working on an alternative. This may result in a design that is closer to the NCA's approach. In my view this would be a good step forward although I still worry about the height of the bridge at the centre so as to achieve water vessel clearances.

It will be interesting to follow the project as it proceeds. The proponent is obviously working to achieve a bridge of the highest possible quality that will be admired by all who reside in and visit Canberra.

Yours Sincerely,

John Gray

9 May 2008