

Hon Dr Bob Such MP
Member for Fisher

26 March 2009

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

Dear Committee Secretary

Inquiry into the Immigration Bridge Australia Proposal

I respond to the invitation to provide a submission to the inquiry into the Immigration Bridge Australia Proposal and offer the following suggestions in relation to the Terms of Reference.

After considering the issue, I am concerned that the proposed 400 metre pedestrian bridge, whilst symbolic and major, may serve little practical purpose. Although the concept of a migrant memorial is valid and could contribute to tourism in the region, such a commemorative monument might take a different form. Accordingly, greater community consultation is needed before a bridge is constructed that may hinder local enjoyment of the lake.

The process adopted by 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

There appears to be much confusion in the community over the plan for the proposed bridge. This should be addressed sooner rather than later.

Residents and tax payers in the area should have the right to be heard regarding changes likely to affect their enjoyment of the lake and its surrounds before an application is made to the National Capital Authority.

b. the interests of users of the Lake.

Lake Burley Griffin is a valuable community asset for Canberra and its residents, offering an idyllic setting for recreational and competitive water sporting activities. It is therefore essential that any action to erect a bridge in the proposed area does not impact negatively on these activities or nearby

businesses and organisations. Furthermore, the bridge should incorporate features and facilities to ensure that it can be enjoyed by all users, including cyclists.

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

It is a novel idea that migrants be given the opportunity to buy a piece of history, cementing their family's identity on what potentially could be a landmark in the area. It is interesting, however, that Immigration Bridge Australia has already fundraised money for the handrails and will retain a \$15 'administration fee' and GST if the plan is not approved, returning only \$85 of the \$110 received from those who have already purchased the honour of having their names recorded on the bridge.

The commemorative nature of the bridge certainly consolidates the values of a multicultural society. The same concept, however, could be used to fund another initiative in the region if the bridge is found to interfere too much with the users of the lake, eg a statue, pavers, an avenue of trees or a commemorative wall.

Solar panels should be included on the roof of the bridge if that has community acceptance.

The approval process required under the Australian Capital Territory (Planning and Land Management) Act 1988 if an application for approval of the Bridge were received by the National Capital Authority.

Since the local community continues to be poorly informed on the plan of the bridge, greater consultation is needed before it progresses to the approval stage. If approved, extensive public consultation on the requirements of the many users of the lake is vital to determine whether such matters as height and access are suitable under the plan.

Yours sincerely

Bob Such MP JP
Member for Fisher