

Office of the Commissioner for
Sustainability and the Environment

**Investigation into the state
of the water courses and
catchments for Lake Burley Griffin
– Users' Consultation Forum**

Wednesday 19 October 2011

Summary Record

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1. Welcome and introduction

Participants were welcomed to the Users' Consultation Forum. It was noted that it was National Water Week.

The Commissioner, Bob Neil, welcomed participants and acknowledged the Traditional Owners, the Ngunnawal people.

Participants were informed that the purpose of the forum was to:

- find out more about the investigation into Lake Burley Griffin and the work completed to date
- reflect on the use of the Lake and shared their views
- identify possible ways to reduce the impact of Lake closures on users
- find out how their views will be taken into consideration.

People from across Canberra who use the Lake commercially or recreationally were invited to attend the forum. A copy of the invitation is at **Attachment A**.

Eighteen users attended. A list of participants is at **Attachment B**.

Participants outlined their reasons for participating in the forum and their passion for the Lake. A summary of the key points were that the lake:

- belongs to us and the nation and is a national asset which is the centerpiece of green infrastructure in Canberra
- is a premier sporting, training and competition venue
- is a sole or significant source of income
- is a special experience that provides enjoyment.

2. Setting the scene

To set the scene two presentations were provided:

- background on investigation and work completed to date – Commissioner Bob Neil
- management of the Lake: roles and responsibilities – Gary Rake, Chief Executive, National Capital Authority.

Bob Neil addressed the group briefly. Key points from his talk were:

- the investigation started in May 2011
- terms of reference were confirmed
- a reference group was established
 - members include experts and some users
 - developed an approach to investigation
 - commissioned four papers which will be written and peer reviewed
 - next meeting is at the end of November
- reference group supported by an Advisory Group which has expertise in health, recreation, environment protection regulation and water policy, management and research.
- invited public submissions and 26 have been received

Setting the scene (cont)

- four papers commissioned are
 - Lake Burley Griffin water quality: current, historical and comparative to inform the Investigation in to the state of water courses and catchments for Lake Burley Griffin – Mr Ian Lawrence
 - Lake Burley Griffin water quality: health standards and protocols for lake closure to inform the Investigation into the state of water courses and catchments for Lake Burley Griffin – Emeritus Professor Ian Falconer
 - Burley Griffin governance issues relating to water quality and integrated catchment management. Including current and historical arrangements, challenges and opportunities – Professor Murray Raff
 - Economic impact of Lake Burley Griffin water quality issues (including lake closures) – Mr Ian Lawrence
- the Commissioner will provide a final report to Minister in March 2012.

Gary Rake addressed the group briefly. Key points from his talk were:

- the lake is an important part of the design of Canberra
- water quality of the Lake varies
- impacts of water quality now more significant
- NCA works in cooperation with directorates within the ACT Government including Health and EPA
- we ultimately take responsibility for lake closures
- we receive regular information on quality of the lakes
 - have a risk framework for secondary users
- tough for us because we are at the bottom of the pipe
- circulators are being trialed and they may be part of the solution
- OCSE investigation is broad
 - no single party is responsible for water
 - look hard at contributing factors.

3. Sharing what we already know

This was an opportunity for participants to share what they already knew about Lake usage before exploring and making suggestions to the Commissioner.

Participants worked in mixed groups (with representations from commercial and different recreational users) and used the following questions as a guide:

- What are the FACTS about lake usage? (things like how we use lake, how often, impacts of closures, how other jurisdictions manage usage etc)
- What feelings exist when we are able to use the lake as we wish?
- What feelings exist when the lake is closed?
- Putting yourselves in the shoes of other users and other stakeholders, what are their needs, interests and expectations?

Notes were taken during the discussions and these can be found at **Attachment C**. Participants read the notes taken by other groups and noted that there was significant consistency between them.

4. Information for the Commissioner

Participants explored ideas for reducing the impact of lake closures on users. They worked in the same mixed groups and once again answered questions to guide their exploration. The questions were:

- What helps us when lake closures occur?
- What hinders us when lake closures occur?
- What ideas do we have for reducing the impacts? (List as many as you like and don't be concerned about the merit of the idea. They can also be things that anyone can do, not just government. No need to get agreement.)
- Which ideas would have a greater chance of succeeding and why?
- What else do you want to say?

Notes were taken during the discussions and these can be found at **Attachment D**.

Participants then discussed the common themes and identified the ideas that they thought would have the greatest success and why. The key points follow.

- That the users are responsible for their own safety on the Lake:
 - commercial users have insurance
 - signs similar to the bush fire danger signs that spell out personal risks
 - provision of trend information on blue green algae levels.
- Stronger communication:
 - indicating when the Lake is open again for use after a period of closure
 - providing certainty about period of time it is closed and why.
- Non-closures for secondary contact.
- Toxicity testing so that decision makers and users know how toxic blue green algae actually is.
- Address governance issues so that responsibility for Lake closures lies more with ACT Government and not with NCA.

Participants were also encouraged to note down any other information they would like to provide to the Commissioner. This can be found at **Attachment E**.

5. Next steps

Participants reviewed the purpose of the forum and confirmed the key information for the Commissioner.

The Commissioner confirmed that a brief summary of this forum would be provided to him by the facilitator, Lesley Richards, and that the contributions from users would feed into his final report which will be completed in March 2012.

Attachment A - Invitation to Forum and Agenda



**LAKE BURLEY GRIFFIN INVESTIGATION
INVITATION to FORUM
Wednesday 19 October 2011
5.30 - 8.30pm
Manuka Oval - Bradman Room, Manuka Circle, Griffith.**

On behalf of the Commissioner for the Environment, you or a representative of your organisation are invited to attend a Forum to be held on Wednesday 19 October at the Manuka Oval - Bradman Room, Manuka Circle, Griffith.

The purpose of this Forum is to:

- find out more about the investigation
- share information about lake usage
- discuss the impacts of lake closures
- discuss ideas for reducing the impacts of lake closures.

Background to this Forum

The Commissioner is conducting an Investigation into the state of the water courses and catchments for Lake Burley Griffin including:

- (i) possible improvements for managing water quality and the appropriateness of the current protocols for lake closures
- (ii) identifying the causes of lower water quality, including possible resource implications of addressing them
- (iii) jurisdictional implications for water quality management of the lake
- (iv) the implication of these findings for the ACT's other major recreational waterways, such as Lake Ginninderra and Lake Tuggeranong.

The organisers will prepare a short report on the outcomes of this Forum, which will inform the Investigation.

Please RSVP to Mrs Narelle Sargent via email: narelle.sargent@act.gov.au or phone 6207 7127 by Wednesday 12 October.

Agenda

1. Welcome and introduction

2. Setting the Scene

- Background on investigation and work completed to date – Bob Neil, Commissioner for the Environment
- Management of the Lake: roles and responsibilities – Gary Rake, Chief Executive, National Capital Authority

3. Sharing what we already know

- How you use the Lake and frequency of use
- How the Lake closures impact on you

4. Information for the Commissioner

- When the Lake closes - what helps us manage the impacts and what hinders us?
- Ideas for reducing the impacts on Lake users
- Which ideas have a greater chance of succeeding and why?

5. Next steps

- What have we done this evening?
- What are the key messages?
- Next steps and final words

Attachment B - Participants

Name	Organisation
Commercial Users	
Cony Seers	Paddle boat hire
Jim Seers	Paddle boat hire
Jim Paterson	LBG Cruises
Scott Hunter	Wetspot watersports and LBG Canoe club
Brian Mariett	Canberra Southern Cross Club
Community Groups	
Ken Murtagh	Turner residents Association
Barbara Payne	Friends of Grasslands
Jenny Tyrrell	LBG Sea Scouts
John Feint	ACT Commissioner for Environment, Activities, ACT Scouts
Pip Muller	ACT Scouts, Lake users group representative
Brian Wells	Traditional Boat Squadron of Australia
Caroline Fitzwarryne	Vice President, Yarralumla Residents Association
David Bagnall	Rowing ACT
Stave Hough	Triathlon ACT
Leigh Baguley	ACT Waterski Association
Michelle Roffey	Canberra Dragon Boat Association
Bruce Grey	Scouts
James Hammond	Rowing ACT
Others	
Mr Gary Rake	NCA Chief Executive
Dr Kent Williams	Author of submission
Bob Neil	Commissioner for Environment
Joanna Temme	Project Officer

Attachment C – Sharing What We Already Know (notes)

Participants took these notes about what they already knew about Lake usage. They reflect exactly what was written and have not been modified.

Group One

What are the FACTS about lake usage? (things like how we use lake, how often, impacts of closures, how other jurisdictions manage usage etc) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Athletic – all year, weekly • Kayak – most of the year • Sailing – all year, some boats – loss of money/championships • Swimming - Everyday/half year • Canoeing – Everyday • Rowing – everyday <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ income lost room Regatta each time people don't renew membership. Clubs struggle • Hiring boats – everyday (8 months) - financial problem • Elite rowing program <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ cost to transport ◦ threat to move • VIC – don't care about secondary contact • Only jurisdiction closed compliantly • Advisory only in other junctions 			
What feelings exist?			
When we are able to use the lake as we wish? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Happy • Relief • Put kids in bigger boats so manage through clubs • Public liability insurance by clubs 		When the lake is closed? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No logic – not toxic for secondary contact 	
Put yourself in the shoes of other users and other stakeholders			
Who	Needs	Interests	Expectations
Commercial	Income	Reliable business	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lake open • Pay fee to me business
Rowers/sailors	Viability of sport	Reliable training and competition venue	Lake open unless seriously dangerous
Tourists	60% of commercial business	Sightseeing and healthy lake	De-values asset – liability
Government	Network of decision making – gridlock	Overly cautious – medical experts conservative	Risk aversion
Any other things to share			
No comments recorded			

Group Two

What are the FACTS about lake usage? (things like how we use lake, how often, impacts of closures, how other jurisdictions manage usage etc)

- Scouts – 5 times a week September to April
- Skiers – association (events 12 days limited), recreationally (booking system through summer daily, 10 boats per 4 hours)
- Triathlon ACT – 35 events/programs, training daily
- BGCC – daily for training, monthly for beginners courses
- Canberra Windsurfers – daily when wind is up
- Wet spot store – 2 to 4 days a week for demonstrations/lessons
- Grass Lands – heritage values/landscape asset

What feelings exist?

When we are able to use the lake as we wish?

- It is:
 - fun
 - relaxing
 - exciting
 - passion.

When the lake is closed?

- Anger
- Disappointment
- Frustration
- Loss of money
- Loss of future participants
- People leaving town
- Loss of members

Put yourself in the shoes of other users and other stakeholders

Who	Needs	Interests	Expectations
Tourists	Events	All sports	Being able to go ahead with a planned event
World champions	Tri athletes, windsurfers, rowers	Where will they go?	

Any other things to share

- Can we create functioning wetlands between the runoff and the lake?
- Can we get true local research into the actual incidents of sickness/injury and compare to the percentage of users?
- Economic impact just from the half ironman is \$2 million per year for one event!

Group Three

What are the FACTS about lake usage? (things like how we use lake, how often, impacts of closures, how other jurisdictions manage usage etc)

- in 1970 1 in 5 people were lake users (survey)
- Continuous usage for recreational purposes [all] year round
- 600 rowers serious/400 other rowers – 2-3 per week
- Commercial passenger use 3 trips x 20 people at best (2000 per year approximately)
- Triathlon events severely limited due to confidence gap
- Some events rescheduled to unsuitable weather times/water temperature – reduces participation
 - similar for rowing/scouting groups

What feelings exist?

When we are able to use the lake as we wish?

- Enjoyment for a limited time
- Feeling of a successful event with income

When the lake is closed?

- Frustration
- Despair
- Anger
- Loss of income
 - sports
 - commercial
- Suspicion of validity of test
- Lack of control in inflows
- Bureaucracy being over cautious
- Need to pin point zones of algae
- Need for responsibility of self

Put yourself in the shoes of other users and other stakeholders

Who	Needs	Interests	Expectations
No comments recorded	No comments recorded	No comments recorded	No comments recorded

Any other things to share

No comments recorded

Group Four

<p>What are the FACTS about lake usage? (things like how we use lake, how often, impacts of closures, how other jurisdictions manage usage etc)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Two to three days a month Half a year four times a week Towels on signs Insurance requirements, risk assessments Impacts does it really make you sick? Shallow All hours Sailing (re capsized) Red tape versus safety Small boats Cruise Old boat Dragon boats We try to stay out of the water (we encourage to get in the water!) Flooding Discharge/blue green algae okay communication Swim? Splash Seven days a week Gary's good. He is listening Rubbish down [the] drains Queanbeyan outfall Impacts = loss of money for business (small), recreational Is it a lake or a settlement pond? 			
<p>What feelings exist?</p>			
<p>When we are able to use the lake as we wish?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not when it is closed. Small business Commercial – yes no impact Water still hasn't settled – carp problem 		<p>When the lake is closed?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tells us when the lake is closed but not when it is open Visitors get half way here then can't launch Can't do training No Regattas ACT Development and go to off water training Loss of ability to train Australian Team 	
<p>Put yourself in the shoes of other users and other stakeholders</p>			
<p>Who</p>	<p>Needs</p>	<p>Interests</p>	<p>Expectations</p>
Commercial users	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Access Information open and closed Classification 	Money and tourism	Lake closed but we are still open
Recreation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clean water Lake open Notifications Capacity and sponsors for home for sports National events spectators 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Training Recreation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mitigation and risk management of BGA contact. What is the risk? Health notifications impact opening Educate people not to put rubbish in the lake/drains QBH tell us outcome Good publicity How clean can we get it? What about other water ways like Parramatta vs themes Need SMS/telephone from Gary Allows spectators toilets
<p>Any other things to share</p>			
<p>No fishing – catch 22. Can't fish, can't get the carp out, carp make the water worse.</p>			

Attachment D – Information for the Commissioner (notes)

Participants took these notes about the issues and their ideas for minimizing the impact of Lake closures. They reflect exactly what was written and have not been modified.

Group One

What helps us when lake closures occur? <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Timely advice• Alternate view. No closures but information. Nothing much helps• Information and explanation	What hinders us when lake closures occur? <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Business, survival of sport business• Loss of income. Loss of members
What ideas do we have for reducing the impacts? <ul style="list-style-type: none">• That we take responsibility for going on the lake. We have insurance. Those responsible for lake closures lose pay. How toxic is it really?• More flow through lake, better filtering/management nutrients• Non closures for secondary contact	
Which ideas would have a greater chance of succeeding and why? <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Non closures for secondary contact• A serious risk assessment of dangers of blue green, rather than speculations	
What else do you want to say? <ul style="list-style-type: none">• No comments recorded	

Group Two

What helps us when lake closures occur? <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Opening the lake	What hinders us when lake closures occur? <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Tests weekly are too slow to re open the lake
What ideas do we have for reducing the impacts? <ul style="list-style-type: none">• We need to hit the problem before it happens<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ wetlands built○ Queanbeyan sewage works fixed○ storm water runoff controlled○ fines for dodgy polluters• More detail in the testing program• Showers located at all launch areas	
Which ideas would have a greater chance of succeeding and why? <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Put the risk in the hands of the user – give warnings• Warning signs like bush fire signs	
What else do you want to say? <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Don't close the lake• Let's stop having investigations and actually do something!	

Group Three

What helps us when lake closures occur?

- Communication
- Better prediction strategy for opening and closing
- Probably does not help commercial users
- Early re opening
- Toxin monitoring is critically important (probably reduce closures)

What hinders us when lake closures occur?

- Excessive bureaucracy in administration
- Concern with organisation against NCA advice
- Loss of venue reputation for sport
- Balance media reporting

What ideas do we have for reducing the impacts?

- More warnings on closures
- Intense monitoring
- Only close sections of the lake (not the lot)
- Minimise geographic areas closed
- Transfer responsibility to users
- Not fully assessing the causes

Which ideas would have a greater chance of succeeding and why?

- Repeat above

What else do you want to say?

- Fence off the worst areas!
- Engineering solutions to water quality by pre treating large inflows in constructed wet lands
- Consider clay based chemical treatment to settle out nutrients during prolonged blooms

Group Four

<p>What helps us when lake closures occur?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell the public when it is open LOUDLY everywhere • Where else can we go? • Early notification so we can arrange to move equipment • Can testing be quicker/more frequent? • Signs • SMS/telephone calls • Emails/website • Not understanding risk – what is the impact and will it damage health? 	<p>What hinders us when lake closures occur?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not telling the public when it is open again • Telling the public what is primary/secondary gen – the public doesn't know that it means • Loss of money • Loss of insurance coverage
<p>What ideas do we have for reducing the impacts?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paint signs on drains that go into lakes (duck, platypus?) • SMS and telephone calls • Queanbeyan not to put sewage in! • Increase radio/web and TV that lake open (re open) • Clean up lake days • More carp out days • Early notification so that we can change plans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Filter water with filtration ponds* • Tell residents not to put leaves in the gutter* • Use plain language and signs (pictures) • Put floating pontoons with tomato plants on take out net lower blue green algae • Filter the rubbish out through drains
<p>Which ideas would have a greater chance of succeeding and why?</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SMS and telephone calls • Queanbeyan not to put sewage in! • increase radio/web and TV that lake open (re open) • clean up lake days • more carp out days • early notification so that we can change plans • filter water with filtration ponds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • tell residents not to put leaves in the gutter. • What is the cost (lost of reputation) • Education up stream • Update Queanbeyan sewage works! • More runoff so we can save the water so less goes into the lake • Houses need water tanks • Less gardens – more runoff
<p>What else do you want to say?</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Find a use for blue green algae and sell it as fertiliser • Education <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ signs/pictures ○ communicate ○ relationship ACT and NCA, Health and ENU ○ less risk aversion ○ ducks on drains 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ residents ○ less neutrals in water ○ tell us early ○ ourselves – what is the cost when it closes ○ worksheets in schools ○ BGA impact on health ○ mitigation of risks (who owns the risk?)

Attachment E – What else?

These additional comments to the Commissioner were provided by individuals. They reflect exactly what was written and have not been modified.

- Treat causes – inflows
 - eg Sullivans ok gross lack of sediment management in the pollutant traps
- Unify lake management and inflows management
- ACT Government is required to maintain inflows to the same level as if existed as rural landscape. Refer to Institute of Engineer Australia Infrastructure Report Card 2010
- More rubbish collection and deposit on bottles etc
- LBG has heavy metal pollution from the Captain's Flat mines. Sediment overlays the heavy metals and keeps it in place. Process that disturb the overlying sediment may expose the heavy metals and risks mobilising them
- Any process that disturb the sediments should be minimised as far as possible
- Take action to improve the quality of the water entering the lake. Examples of what might be done include:
 - construct more wetlands on water ways that feed into the lake
 - restrict rain gardens in streets, car parks to improve water quality/storm water. Melbourne Water is a good source of information or examples (way better than imposing fines)
 - replace dangerous, open, concrete storm drains with vegetated streams (see clear Paddock Creek restoration project in Sydney/Fairfield). Improves animosity and restores natural heritage values
- More wetlands!
- More work on preventing 'rubbish' entering the lake
- Include NSW in discussions/solutions