
Minutes of Meeting with Balmain Residents about Cruise Ships at White Bay
Date: 15 April, 2014 **Location:** Public Health Unit, Camperdown

Note – These minutes reflect what residents stated at the meeting, as individuals have different perspectives of the issues. It is important to note that what was stated by individuals is not necessarily agreed to as facts by all attendees at the meeting.

Present:

Maree Thomas, Valerie Sundquist, Kate Horrobin, Alan Rosen, (Balmain Residents)
Rhian Trough Mark Hanemann, Anthony Savage, Environment Protection Authority (EPA)
Karen Jones, Karen Harragon, Department of Planning and Infrastructure (DP&I)
Kursty Delmas, Leichhardt Council Richard Broome, Health Protection NSW,
Environmental Health Branch Leena Gupta, Catherine Bateman-Steel, Graham Burgess,
Public Health Unit (PHU)

1. Welcome

Leena explained that the purpose of meeting was to hear concerns raised by the attendees about cruise ships at the White Bay Cruise Terminal and to ascertain what actions could be identified to improve the situation from the residents' perspective and in addition, to seek updates from the relevant agencies.

2. Issue Raised by Residents

Maree Thomas, Valerie Sundquist, Kate Horrobin, gave a presentation. They advised that they were not a registered entity, and while they did not necessarily speak for all, they believe they represent the views of a significant number of people in their local community..

Their concerns as stated are that:

- The community has been significantly impacted by the arrival of cruise ships and it is a completely different marine use from the previous marine uses on these docks;
- There was a gradual realisation that the ships were making them sick. They reported respiratory symptoms, sinusitis, watery eyes, heart palpitations among others. Children were developing asthma; previously very well people were reporting symptoms; and people with existing respiratory disease were reporting exacerbations and increased use of relieving medications. Some representative case studies were tabled.
- The residents are concerned about:
 - 1) Air pollution emissions
 - 2) Noise and vibration.
- Monitoring is not a solution. They consider that compliance with air monitoring does not reflect what people are exposed to locally in their houses and yards. They know that the most toxic emissions from the ships pouring directly onto their homes are not even being measured, and the criteria for one of those measured far exceeds the daily sulphur dioxide that the World Health Organisation considers safe.

- Many of the ships coming to White Bay, because of their old technology, are not allowed into many Northern Hemisphere ports. In fact all of them would not be allowed to burn the fuel allowed within 50 metres of homes in Balmain within 200 nautical miles of the North American coast. In the last 6 months, 90 ships have used the terminal. Fuels have a high sulphur content.
- Southerly winds, which prevail in summer, carry even more emissions onto residential areas and people cannot go outside because of odours and fumes. In many cases the odour and fumes get trapped in homes.
- Ships generate significant vibration. While noise was considered in the assessment process, vibration was not considered as warranting measurement.
- Noise criteria were breached in 75 percent of ships' visits yet there have been no penalties
- People keep schedules at home of when ships are coming so they can plan to be away or stay inside. The schedules are often changed without notice causing added distress.
- The new adjacent temporary Convention Centre air emission exemptions are also an issue.
- A Community Meeting was held in December with 52 residents attending and another meeting in March with 105 residents attending.

In summary, the community prefers to seek solutions. They have requested short and longer term actions to:

- Enforce breaches of current approvals (of which engine noise is by far the biggest issue, along with noise from loud music, loading, unloading);
- Consider pollution alerts;
- Provide shore to ship power;
- Change to fuels of 0.1 percent sulphur or less, ideally road diesel
- Have better communication.

Alan Rosen (AR) raised the following points and stated the following :

- People are developing health conditions such as asthma because of fumes;
- Agencies need to act on issues raised by community;
- The additional air monitor is irrelevant;
- 'Most urgent public health priority is cruise ships environmental impact amelioration'. Need to change current operations;
- Need 'to conduct' a 'comprehensive ongoing' public health study.
- 'The new adjacent temporary Convention Centre exemptions from Generator noise & particulate matter & fumes controls are compounding this problem as southerly winds push these elements directly towards the same residents homes which are affected directly by the adjacent cruise ships'.
- 'The local community needs to know what practical action SSW PHU and other agencies intend to take and when, regarding ameliorating these known severe health impacts?'

3. The agencies responded as follows

EPA

Mark Hanehann advised:

- EPA is now responsible for environmental regulation of the site (the ARA).

- Concerns of residents are acknowledged and it is now a top priority for their organisation, with additional resources allocated.
- This is a national issue. EPA are looking at a range of measures to improve operation, with other agencies.
- A combination of changes will be required, some short term and other long term.
- EPA is seeking legal advice as there are State and Federal powers which govern cruise ships and they could be overruled.
- Monitoring results have limitations.

Ministry of Health

Richard Broome advised that:

- World Health Organisation Guidelines are recognised but there is already sufficient evidence in relation to health issues from pollutants. It is better to use this evidence than undertake another health study.
- "Health Studies" need a large population (eg 100,000), take time and may only, in this instance, show small statistical health variations, if any, and would be counter-productive.
- Health recognises there are concerns and will be working to assist agencies. Alan Rosen stated the following: 'As these concerning health impacts are well known, extrapolating from the known fuel contents and generator usage, then why is NSW Ministry of Health public health section and the SSWPHU still delaying taking action to insist on amelioration of these impacts at this site which is so immediately adjacent to a residential area?'

Planning and Infrastructure

Karen Jones explained the approval process that had applied and that the DP&I role is to ensure planning conditions are met.

DP&I has had numerous complaints and have had meetings with Ports and other agencies. DP&I cannot change current approvals, but there are now meetings with Ports at Director-General level with a view to dealing with the noise breaches. DP&I will work with Agencies on resolving issues as much as possible.

Leichhardt Council

Kursty Delmas advised that Council is not the ARA but is still receiving and logging complaints and will pass on, as required. The Council is concerned about delays in monitoring reports being posted. Alan Rosen advised he was a member of a Council committee.

4. General Discussion

Residents asked a number of additional questions about the planning process and it was agreed these would be taken on notice.

EPA was asked about Commonwealth regulation, especially for fuels, and advised the EPA was already looking into this.

Valerie Sundquist tabled a set of questions for health to consider.

5. Next Steps.

- PHU will draft health advisory in conjunction with Ministry of Health and agencies.

- Planning to respond to specific issues re the planning process and conditions of approval.
- EPA to continue to work on the matters it had reported on.

It was agreed that the meeting had been constructive and Leena Gupta thanked everyone for their valuable contributions.

It was agreed that a progress meeting would be useful, and this would be organised in early June 2014.

Meeting closed at 4.15 pm.

Minutes Endorsed at meeting 6 June 2014 as a true and accurate record



Leena Gupta
Director Public Health