

Executive Summary

The purpose of this paper identifies the potential issues affecting rowing on the Iron Cove regarding the Victoria Road upgrade – Iron Cove Bridge by the NSW Government. The New South Wales Rowing Association and individual rowing clubs initiated consultation with the NSW Government as the government had not undertaken consultation with any rowing club on the Iron Cove or the New South Wales Rowing Association.

On a daily basis, rowers are the biggest users of the Iron Cove who are training every day of the year. Rowing on the Iron Cove commenced over 125 years ago. The Bay Clubs include Balmain, Leichhardt, Drummoyne and UTS (University of Technology Sydney formerly Haberfield) which have traditionally, consistently and legally been rowing, and racing on the Iron Cove estuary. These clubs also host school rowing programmes.

Any change to the Iron Cove Bridge and/or constructing an additional bridge will have potential safety impacts on all passive recreational water users on the Iron Cove.

The only international rowing course on Sydney Harbour

The Iron Cove rowing course is the only 2000 metre Olympic Rowing Course on Sydney Harbour (Appendix A). There are approximately 9 annual New South Wales Rowing Association organised regattas held on the Iron Cove. There are also 3 schools regattas held on the Iron Cove. At any single regatta there are between 30 and 90 races being held with between 150 and 500 competitors. Additionally, on any given day there are club crews and school crews training on the Iron Cove. There are approximately 650 members of the Bay Clubs with approximately 400 active rowers as well as a further 400 school oarsmen and oarswomen using this stretch of water for training.

During the 2007/2008 rowing season there have been 50 regattas held in New South Wales. There have been 1,470 individual rowing events with 11,158 individual entries with 30,594 seats over the regattas. On the Iron Cove during this same period there have been 16 regattas, 422 individual rowing events with 4,311 individual entries with 9,305 seats over the regattas.

There are restrictions already caused by the existing Iron Cove Bridge and the entry into Birkenhead Point Marina. There will be potential additional restrictions caused by the changes proposed by the additional bridge over the Iron Cove. The rowing clubs situated on the Iron Cove believe that any new bridge will negatively affect rowing on the Iron Cove.

The *Assessment of options for new bridge over Iron Cove July 2008* only acknowledges minor impacts on sailing on the Iron Cove. The publication ignores potential safety impact on other passive recreational users, including rowers in the design of the new bridge over the Iron Cove. It is again requested that this be addressed as a matter of urgency.

Preferred position of the Bay Clubs and NSW Rowing Association

The current bridge proposal has three significant design impacts on rowing including daily training and Regatta racing:

1. The curved shape of the bridge separates the two bridges by the greatest distance in the middle of its crossing of Iron Cove and the 2,000 metre Regatta rowing course thereby creating a “double obstacle” for crews passing through and under the bridges.
2. The new bridge pylon footings at water level are wider than the existing Iron Cove bridge piers. This means that a crew may clear the old bridge piers safely but may not be able to maintain that alignment and have confidence of clearing the new bridge piers.
3. The new bridge piers are being represented by the Roads Traffic Authority (RTA) as being “in a line” with the old bridge piers, however that line is not parallel with the 2,000 metre regatta course or the general movement of rowers on this stretch of water.

If a new bridge must traverse the Iron Cove in the proposed curved alignment a safer environment for rowers can be created on water by reducing the number of piers to achieve a clear span across the centre of the Iron Cove and more particularly the 2,000 metre regatta course. This alternative is an option previously presented by the RTA as shown in appendix B, but which has now been withdrawn.

The Bay Clubs on the Iron Cove and the New South Wales Rowing Association’s preferred position is that any new Iron Cove Bridge is built so that no piers are constructed in the section of the bridge spanning over the rowing course and all other piers are altered so they align in both width and direction as the existing NSW Maritime registered 2,000 metres Regatta course and the existing old bridge piers. The RTA option at Appendix B graphically depicts this alternative.

The New South Wales Rowing Association and the Bay Clubs request the NSW Government to consult with them on achieving a viable workable alternative to that which is now proposed by the RTA.

The RTA bridge proposal

The documents published by the RTA make it clear that there will be a major impact on rowing on the Iron Cove as a result of the spans of the new bridge. The proposed new additional bridge to be constructed over Iron Cove will potentially result in a safety hazard for passive recreational waters users on the Iron Cove. The approach identified by the NSW Government through the Roads and Traffic Authority was that, “A new bridge would create an additional navigation hazard for waterway users in Iron Cove. To minimise the impact this would have, the new bridge piers would be aligned with the new Iron Cove Bridge....”

Despite the RTA findings quoted above by the option for a new bridge now being pursued and put on Public Notice is not the option which rowing is prepared to support, but is the option with multiple piers that will not align with the existing Iron Cove bridge.

The proposed bridge will require recreational water users and rowers to negotiate a total of 12 sets of bridge piers to safely navigate this stretch of Iron Cove.

The size of the proposed new bridge piers has not been accurately specified in RTA documents and whilst statements made by RTA representatives that the many piers are directionally in alignment. It is a fact that they will be wider than the existing old bridge piers and will not align with the 2,000 metres regatta course, thereby requiring rowers to deviate from their standard course when passing under the bridges.

The solution offered by the RTA to this impact is to realign the current 2,000 metres regatta course competition lanes by firstly narrowing them and then moving the outer two lanes to the other side of the piers and spread further apart than the inner lanes to avoid the piers.

This outcome is unacceptable to the NSW Rowing Association and the Bay Clubs when an alternate bridge solution is available.

To proceed with the proposal is an irreversible mistake which renders the only 2,000 metre international distance regatta course on the Sydney Harbour potentially dangerous to rowers and other recreational waterway users. All these failings will create an increased risk to rowers caused by the narrowing of the competitive lanes bringing rowing craft into potential unsafe proximity to each other in the running of regattas.

As outlined in the *Assessment of options for new bridge over Iron Cove July 2008* "A balanced cantilever bridge would have less impact on maritime activity due to the reduced number of piers in Iron Cove". In the opinion of the Bay Clubs and the New South Wales Rowing Association it is believed that cantilever bridge would minimize potential safety issues for passive recreational use and rowing on the Iron Cove. The RTA's document does not take into consideration the Conybeare Morrison *Victoria Road Upgrade Environmental Assessment Visual Amenity + Urban Design Report* that "The new bridge would be designed to minimize impact on the rowing course, which is located under the three central spans of the bridge. The existing vertical clearance would be maintained to the soffit of the existing bridge at the two central spans to ensure that the navigational channel, which is located between the central two spans, is maintained."

As can be seen by the above statements, there is ambiguity regarding the proposed new bridge and passive recreational use, including rowing. This matter requires urgent clarification and resolution.

Potential issues affecting rowing

It is anticipated that the Iron Cove will become more popular site for recreational users as a result of the intensification of powerboats and other craft on the Sydney Harbour and particularly the Iron Cove Bay. The Iron Cove Bay because of its closed configuration, numbers of launching sites and away from the main channel of the Parramatta River is particularly suited to and extensively used by passive water craft. It is noted that the following will be occurring:

1. Relocation of Dragon Boats (Aust) from Blackwattle Bay to the Iron Cove on the advice of NSW Maritime.
2. The relocation of Outrigger Canoes to Sisters Bay on the Iron Cove with the endorsement of Canada Bay Council.
3. The increased numbers of participants from both private and public schools that will use the Iron Cove due to the popularity of rowing.
4. The increased use of coach/safety craft on the Iron Cove.
5. The increased use of the Iron Cove by Associations from the Lane Cove River, Tarban Creek and the Parramatta River.

As indicated with the increase use of the Iron Cove Bay, it is essential that consultation is undertaken with the Bay Clubs and New South Wales Rowing Association. The preferred position as outlined above could accommodate both the new bridge and safe rowing practices.

Positive impacts of rowing on the Iron Cove and community participation

The positive impacts of rowing in the communities of Balmain, Leichhardt, Haberfield, Drummoyne and the Inner West are:

- Rowing for women
- Rowing for women and men from public school and tertiary education centres
- Community engagement
- General health and fitness
- Recreational rowing
- Learn to row programs
- Adaptive rowing
- Economic engagement in the local area
- Fundraising to benefit community facilities (eg hospitals)
- Rowers support their local environment by some living near the local government area
- Rowers support small businesses.

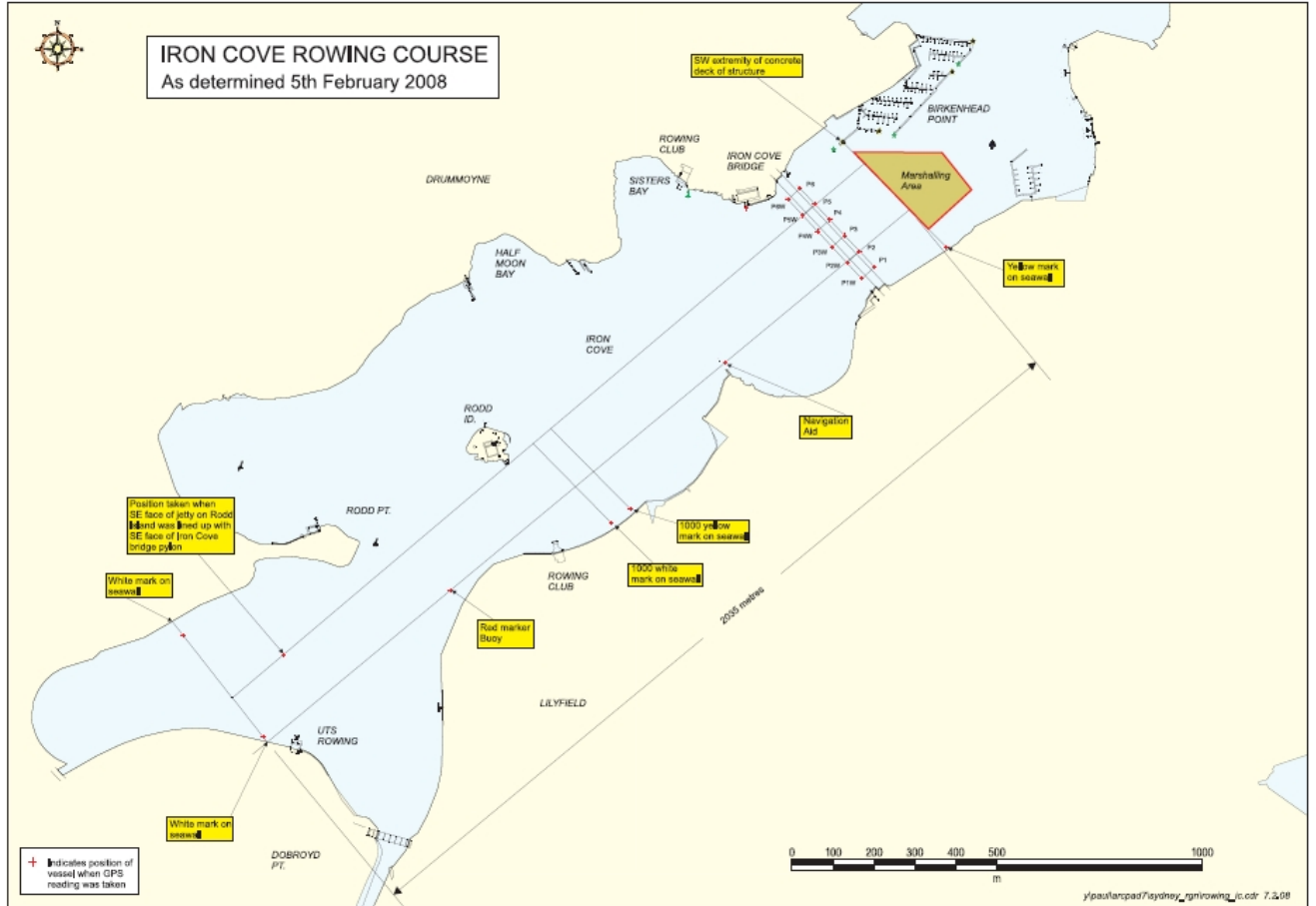
Consultation

The Iron Cove Bay Clubs and the New South Wales Association welcomes ongoing consultation with the NSW Government and its public agencies on the design and construction of the new Iron Cove Bridge and how it will potentially affect passive water recreational users, including rowers.

Appendix A

New South Wales Rowing Association 2000 metre rowing course

Races start north of the Iron Cove Bridge and pass under it



Source: NSW Maritime, 2008

Appendix B

Roads and Traffic Authority Bridge Options



Source: http://www.rta.nsw.gov.au/constructionmaintenance/downloads/victoriaroad/victoria_road_env-assessment.html, 12 December 2008

Appendix C

2007-2008 Season Entries/Seats Summary (as at 9/9/2008)

Regatta	Host Club	Events	Entries	Seats
AAGPS Schoolboy Head of the River	AAGPS	10	72	460
AHIGS-IGSSA		13	126	481
Balmain Rowing Club	Balmain	40	236	535
Combined Universities Regatta	Sydney Uni	40	192	515
Drummoyne Masters	Drummoyne	33	227	641
Drummoyne Rowing Club	Drummoyne	37	179	399
Edward Trickett NSW Grade Championship Regatta	NSW	46	289	700
Head of Middle Harbour	Mosman	20	19	96
Head of the Nepean	Nepean	20	11	52
Head of the Parramatta	Sydney	25	105	592
Head of the Shoalhaven	Shoalhn	20	20	96
Henley on Hunter	Endeavour	45	122	230
Iron Cove Masters Regatta	Leichhardt	33	280	790
Kings/PLC Sydney/NSWRA	NSW	34	293	1168
Leichhardt Rowing Club	Leichhardt	40	286	713
Loreto Normanhurst	Loreto N	23	254	889
Manning River Rowing Club	Manning R	50	629	1338
MLC School	MLC School	13	187	552
Nepean Rowing Club	Nepean	50	225	428
Newington College	Newington	28	181	908
North Shore Rowing Club	Nth Shore	44	496	1062
NSW Masters Rowing Championships	NSW	85	658	1880
NSW Schoolgirl Head of the River	CIS	13	197	655
NSW Sprint Championships	NSW	44	387	784
NSW State Rowing Championships	NSW	73	905	2236
NSWIS Time Trial 1	NSWIS	12	73	73
NSWIS Time Trial 2	NSWIS	12	96	96
NSWIS Time Trial 3	NSWIS	12	103	103
NSWIS Time Trial 4	NSWIS	12	113	113
NSWIS Time Trial 5	NSWIS	12	109	109
NSWIS Time Trial 6	NSWIS	12	76	76
NSWIS/NSWRA Regatta	NSW	40	219	512
NSWRA Schoolboy Head of the River	NSW	18	182	396
NSWRA Spring Regatta	NSW	38	396	835
Port Macquarie Rowing Club	Port Macq	40	576	1247
Pymble Ladies College	Pymble LC	13	179	513
Queenwood School	Queenwood	13	162	487
Riverview Gold Cup	St Ignatius	34	278	1324
Roseville College	Roseville	13	193	514
Rowperfect Indoor Challenge	Pymble LC	24	10	28
Scullers Head of the Parramatta	Sydney	16	102	102
Shoalhaven Sprints	Shoalhn	44	123	241
St George Rowing Club	St Geo	44	171	319
St Josephs College	St Josephs	28	170	844
Sydney Boys High School	High	16	130	628
Sydney Grammar School	Grammar	12	110	440

Sydney Rowing Club	Sydney	62	668	1722
The Scots College	Scots	28	165	784
The Shore School	Shore	16	134	644
UTS Harbour Classic	UTS	20	44	244
TOTAL: 50 Regattas		1470	11158	30594