

Appendix 1 – Consultation Responses

Community and Stakeholder Responses

1. How do navigation issues in Swansea Channel affect the economic value of boating in Lake Macquarie?

<p>We have in the past spent up to 2 months on the lake using professional shipwright services and riggers. We have also used local shops. I guess that we spent in excess of \$4,000 on the last visit in 2009</p>
<p>I think dramatically, any vessel with a draft of 4 feet or more can have navigation problems between the bridge and dropover, any vessel passing by the lake on a coastal cruise will simply keep going to Newcastle.</p>
<p>Being a keel boat owner and also owning a joint holiday property in Wangi Wangi, I would say the growth of the area is impeded by the difficulty in accessing the lake by keel boats or at least the reoccurring reputation of the Lake entrance posing difficulties for keel boats. Many people are turned off due to the uncertain nature of the channel at any point in time and the aversion to being 'skulled' across by a power boat towing the yacht from their mast head. The lake is very close to Sydney and well within a day's sail for most people and thus a highly attractive destination with great sailing, many sheltered anchorages and a high quality of facilities surrounding the lake both maritime and non maritime. There is also the potential for boaters to sailing up from Sydney to the lake for work to be performed if they can be comfortable crossing the entrance. The key problem is to have a management plan in place that improve the entrance reputation and breaks down the current negative perception that lake has built up.</p>
<p>Seriously prohibits commercial boating (tourist vessels/charterboats) as vessels can't easily enter or leave lake. This prohibits transferring vessels to other working locations based upon season need e.g. whale watching; offshore fishing. Recreation yachts no longer visit the lake due to perceived dangers of getting across the drop over. This includes large cruising groups who have historically come up from Sydney to cruise on the lake. Many deep draught vessels have moved permanently away from the lake as they do not wish to become trapped in the lake. All of these impact adversely on boat maintenance, brokerage, tourist and retail sectors. It also adversely impacts on existing yacht clubs as regattas are now being held elsewhere thus denying a significant income.</p>
<p>Many boats and boating groups have abandoned plans to visit or events because of concerns of difficult transit through the channel</p>
<p>It impedes participation in sailing regattas on the Lake by anything other than Lake Macquarie sailors, and it discourages cruising yachts from attempting to enter the Lake. The difficulty in entering the Lake has been a problem for a number of years and we feel there is now a perception amongst sailors that it is just too hard.</p>
<p>Tourists will go to other places with their dollars.</p>
<p>Plenty of boaties I know want to use the excellent marina facilities here but steer clear because the risk of damage entering and leaving</p>
<p>It stops some people from visiting, as they are afraid of running aground.</p>
<p>My boat draws 2m, and is worth \$750k. I am reluctant to keep it in Lake Macquarie when it gets stuck on entering and leaving the lake. I will leave my boat in Newcastle if the channel depth can't be improved, thus my marina fees and maintenance costs will go to Newcastle.</p>
<p>Cancellation of visits by cruising yachts to Lake Macquarie. Tourist destinations. Boat owners choosing Newcastle as a mooring Port for yachts unable to navigate channel means social, family, regattas held outside of Lake Mac. Boating and yachting brings other business, e.g. retirement, holiday home purchases etc</p>
<p>1. I travel from Sydney to Lake Mac. to have my boat serviced at Marmong Marina. 2, My boat was built & launched at Lake Macq. 3. I am a member of LMYC. 4. If i can't access the lake then there no reason to bring my business there & boat building operations are likely to close down & move resulting in loss of jobs, income for the area.</p>

Access to the Lake Macquarie (that is bigger than Sydney Harbour) is critical to the recreational and economic multiplier effect on the industries that "just survive" on the Lake. Lake access severely limits economic potential of the visitors to the natural waterway that was originally closed off because of the Polluting Power Stations and bridge construction by the State.

Boats and bank fishermen would have to benefit from a slower channel

The Coastal Cruising Club of Australia Inc holds an annual cruise to Lake Macquarie at Christmas time. A number of our members decide not to come for fear of grounding in the channel. As a result they miss out on a fine sail, great facilities in the Lake and the communities around the Lake are deprived on the economic input of these people who would stay for some time. In my own case my boat, a catamaran touched bottom in the channel a few years ago. My boat draws 1.05m ! We would all be pleased if there was a greater feeling of confidence in the ongoing maintenance of the depth of the Swansea Channel.

The RMYC Broken Bay has over 1,000 boat owner members and with our 'sister' club located at Toronto, many are regular visitors to Lake Macquarie. For the past 38 years we have also conducted an annual event called "Seafari" from Pittwater to Lake Macquarie & return. A min 30 cruisers and yachts need access through the channel which over the last few years has actually prohibited some from participating. 30 boats carrying an average 3.6 persons per vessel = 108 people x 3 days with an average spend of \$195pp (food, beverages, fuel, bus hire, entertainment, etc) = \$21,060 pa from this event alone!

we are denied a significant economic potential

By not being able to enter the Lake it stops a lot of boats (sail/cruiser) from entering , I have spoken to a few boat owners from Sydney that normally visit for either racing or just holidaying on their normal trip to our wonderful lake and they don t come for fear of damage to their boats and this directly effects all of the businesses be clubs or marinas and the like around the lake.

They impact it has is tremendously as larger vessels with a draft in excess of 1.4 metres are unable to access the lake with safety. We have a fantastic lake which should be shared.

2. How do you think this affects the image of Lake Macquarie as a place for safe waterway recreation or business?

Adversely, we did not visit from Sydney last year as the problems associated with access to the lake were too hard for our yacht - there was no guarantee we could get past the shallows. We were stuck fast last time we entered in 2009 and needed to be towed off.
I don't think it affects the image of the lake as a safe waterway, but they will not use it for the reason in Q1
As stated above, the reoccurring problems with the entrance have built a significant negative perception about the lakes safety for keel boat owners. I think there is a general agreement that the lake offers wonderful cruising grounds with safe and sheltered waters and anchorages which can make ideal cruising for families if it wasn't for the concern over the entrance channel. Personally, I have avoided sailing to the Lake due to the lake of depth at the entrance (drop over and Swan bay area) and I know many others that simply pass the lake in preference for Newcastle due to its ease of entrance.
This has suffered dramatically over the past 10 years or so. Lake Macquarie is unique on the east coast of Australia. It is seriously underutilised as a recreation and tourist asset.
I have contact with many yacht clubs and sailors from along the East Coast, and the impression they have is "Lake Macquarie, Beautiful but too difficult!" This is a very bad impression businesswise as these groups have the potential to inject a lot of money into the community.
Over a period of time navigation to enter the Lake has been seen as difficult and it encourages potential Lake visitors to bypass and go to Newcastle.
Lots of bad press now.
Well I tell anyone that is thinking about entering it is not a safe entry and should be avoided at all costs you may be stranded as I have for 3 years and may never get your vessel out again unless I road transport the vessel around the entrance
The entrance restriction gives the impression that LM is just another coastal lagoon and not a large , deep boating location.
Shocking!!
It reduces its viability as a destination.
I know many how just don't come here because they are "scared" to bring their boat in. As for as the image goes, I don't know.
Very negative perception of lake's accessibility in boating community currently.
1. Access to & from the lake is paramount for safe boating-commercially & recreational. 2. The area has many businesses that require access to from the lake-boat builders, fishermen, boat services for maintenance. If the lake cannot be accessed many business & jobs will be lost.
I have been forced to compromise my crews safety on just about every occasion my yacht navigates the waterway with structural damage to the Keel. This difficult stigma plus the coal seam depth sends a "do not come in" sign at the front door of the lake.
To promote fishing in the Blacksmiths and Swansea Channel we need to slow down the flow both in and out - even with what i think are large sinkers I can't hold bottom. People will come to this area is conditions are improved.
see above
The difficulty and restricted access is a significant negative and many boaters don't even consider it because of the concern with navigating and possibility of either damage to their vessel or getting stuck!
we are not considered as a safe haven
This effects the image very badly because it is not a safe to enter or leave. On Sunday 26 /08/12 I took my yacht to try and get out to see if I can go offshore racing and I ran aground in the middle of the channel just opposite the first sand island where the that so called dredge [was] pumping the sand, I did get out but only after a lot of difficulty and I am lucky to have a lift feel in my boat.
It does not affect the image of Lake Macquarie being safe it just reflects that the channel does not allow access or makes it very dangerous

3. How should the cost of managing the channel for safe navigation be shared between stakeholders?

Roads and Maritime should have the say with input from the local council whose residents gain the most benefit.
I think it is a state issue, Keep a charted navigable waterway navigable.
It would be hoped the cost of the channel management would be borne by all the involved stakeholders including: Local councils - constituents will benefit from increased business to the area and increased perceived worth of the lake area, NSW Maritime which is funded by the boating users that would benefit from the improved entrance - both recreational and professional The NSW State Government - as a state asset that has the ability to increase its commercial and non commercial potential and appeal and thus increase its value to the State as a whole. It would also be hoped the sand dredged from the lake could be used for a commercial purpose to partially offset to cost of its removal.
It needs to be shared - local, state and federal funding augmented by a possible levee on deep draught vessels kept on the lake. This could be a supplement to current registration (or even mooring) fees.
We feel that most boat owners already pay a lot of money in fees, registration and taxes to the governments and it has been asked in a number of boating publications what we actually get back from government departments in exchange. We feel that the responsibility should lie with State government to make sure boat owners can safely navigate the Swansea channel
State government only
Should be funded by the state govt as it is in every other state. To suggest otherwise is simply another delaying tactic by DPI who have a shocking record of managing this issue
The mooring and registration fees of LM boat owners should be directed to the costs. At an average of \$500 per year for the, say 2000 boaties, that makes \$1mil per year. That's a lot of dredging! The council has a responsibility as the lake is its focus as shown on its logo.
I don't know who the stakeholders are HOWEVER it JUST HAS TO BE DREDGED PROPERLY and on an ONGOING BASIS!!
Maritime should pay for it. We pay plenty for rego
My suggestion is a "registration levy" for all vessels registered in NSW to keep all waterways used by small vessels navigable.
Collaborative Partnerships? Will it work - budgets are tight. No one wants to pay? Levy? Not popular but possible. Sustainability is everyone's responsibility. Current process is untenable/has not worked. New solutions need to be found? Best government department able to currently secure funds e.g.: OEH? DPI
1. Like all waterways in the state, boat owners pay registration, mooring fees, & boat licence fees. 2. Just as the State Gov. is responsible for other services, and the maintenance of waterway access throughout the state, Revenue should come from all monies raised by Maritime charges.
Dredging can be easily funded by selling the sand to the recyclers and be at no cost to Council and keep the waterway clear. Also, bringing more boats safely into the lake to promote regattas, activities, fishing, water sports. Sailing for young and old alike on a State Local National International level.
If boats have problems a slow running channel has to help.
The same as the maintenance of other marine entrances along the NSW coast.
Existing Boat registration fees could be used as one part of contribution along with the local councils fringing the Lake and State Government.
local govt & state should fund a dredge on a semi permanent basis maybe shared with Newcastle
Why don't you put it back on the original people who dredged the channel to put the power station machinery in. (I know that's not going to happen) why can't they put it out to tender so that who wins the tender is allowed to sell the sand and maintain the channel surely the dredge could be utilised in Lake Macquarie, Central Coast and the Myall lake that way the council is being paid to have the job done. Maybe the royalties could be shared between the councils that are having the sand removed.
Government should bear the cost

4. What other thoughts or comments do you have in regarding to the development of the Swansea Channel Navigation Framework?

<p>As soon as the channel is safe for a yacht depth more than 2.5 metres we (and many friends) will return. It would be good to police the many fishing boats that make safe navigation difficult given the narrow channel available to a deep draft vessel.</p>
<p>please ensure the people who are making these decision know what they are talking about. A few years ago there were people on the committee deciding small boat safety policies that didn't know what a rowlock was.</p>
<p>Rather than continually dredge the sand form the problem areas, it would be hoped a more permanent solution could be engineered that would direct the main flow of water in and out of the lake to naturally keep the channel scoured and to open a reasonable depth. I would personally feel 2.5 m would be considered a reasonable depth by most people and allow the greater majority of boats into the lake.</p>
<p>Solution must be enduring. Permanent dredging could be required but composite solution could include engineering works to limit tidal flows to a narrow, deeper channel. It must never be forgotten that current channel and adjacent sand islands are completely artificial and thus do not warrant mindless 'environmental heritage' protection.</p>
<p>There is never a problem with depth from Swansea heads to Pelican as the channel has bends which naturally stay deep because of the flow of water. The accepted navigation channel from Pelican to the Dropover (which is not the original channel) is straight and will always have problems with shoaling. I would suggest the channel from Pelican to the dropover should follow the original meandering coarse to assist in creating a naturally deep channel. Many years ago an individual arranged a tug to come in and prop dredge a shortcut to Belmont from Pelican. This has since been adopted as the main channel. Much of the area between Elizabeth and Pelican Island is naturally 5m deep. The area known as the dogleg seemed to become a problem after the rock groin was built next to the boat ramp at the end of Pelican Airstrip and created a deep hole and altered the tidal flow. Incidentally the dropover, from my memory as a child, has progressed a lot further out into the lake in the last 40 years or so.</p>
<p>As owners of a deep keel yacht our ocean sailing/whale watching is limited by the current shallow condition of the channel. By the time we have to coordinate tides, weather, depth of the channel and sea conditions we find that our chances to take a spontaneous sailing trip along the coast is extremely limited. The elimination of tide concerns would greatly improve the formula. The current method if depth is not sufficient is to either drag the boat across the seabed or to induce heeling from the mast by power boat, (Marine rescue) this causes undersigned loads on the yacht rigging.</p>
<p>We need a permanent dredge. That would make it more difficult for the politicians to "duck the issue".</p>
<p>This latest discussion and consultation is just another talkfest on an ongoing issue trying to extend and avoid the inevitable, dredging is required every 3 years to a depth of 3 metres. The boating community and the community in general is tired of these type of surveys and banter. Govts and their departments mainly the DPI. Many officers of the spending their careers until retirement but the discussions continue consultants come and go but the Govt have continually avoided the issue, get on with it and get on with it quickly this is what is required.</p>
<p>I fully support this study as long as it is not just a vehicle to delay and kill the rectification of the channel. I hope the integrity of Umwelt prevents this happening</p>
<p>I am 57 yrs old and ever since I can remember the channel has been blocked. it is about time that someone does something to get it right!!!</p>
<p>It is vital for the sailing community and community in general that the channel is navigable for deeper keeled vessels. Many vessels wanting to enter or exit Lake Macquarie cannot do so under current conditions while many others are restricted to do so only being able to traverse on very high tides, and then with likelihood of grounding. My yacht has 2.1 metre draft and it makes channel traversing almost impossible. At the very least, 2.5 metres clearance should be readily available, irrespective of tide. Thanks for the opportunity to comment.</p>
<p>The options listed seem fanciful. If 2.5 metres could be maintained for a channel width of 50 metres there would be very few boats needing more than that.</p>

Consultation - more opportunity and awareness promoted. I found this small community notice by chance last Saturday. Wider consultation - through access to data bases. I am a member of two yacht clubs but heard nothing or not communicated about this. Transparency? No mention of consultation with our Indigenous community - Has this occurred? What are the local community's thoughts on this? Any potential obstacles not addressed in documents posted tonight. What environmental barriers might we face into the future. Bottom line: Please don't let our lake close to the ocean.

The problem with the channel "silting up" comes from the original opening up of the western sand bank to provide a "Flushing effect" for the perceived warming of Lake water from the power stations water entering Dora Creek on the western side of the lake. This was never necessary & is now no longer required due to the closure of the power stations. The best solution is to now provide a continuous sandbank/groin along the western boundary of the channel so that the lake is only flushed at the northern Drop-Off. This will prevent sand from silting the channel at every change of tide.

There should be a national compliance to keep our waterways safe and clear for all craft, inshore and offshore. This will promote the local boating business economy, local sports for young and old, tourism from other towns, states and countries. This all can be done just by allowing the contractor to sell the dredged sand to cover the costs of the dredging. Achieving a clear Swansea Channel waterway will enable the great economic and recreational potential of the Lake , without losing its unique attractiveness

Relook at it

The Channel needs to be fixed and maintained - and ultimately it is the Government's responsibility. We pay vehicle registration fees to help with maintenance of our roads - so vessel registration to help with maintenance of our waterways makes sense.

Remove the sand by consistent dredging & deposit the dredged sand where it won't wash back. Maybe it should be sold to recover the cost of the program

Maybe the money from the dredging could be used to fund a more permanent fix, some sort of fixed wall that keeps the sand from silting up designed by the appropriate marine engineer. It should be developed to allow access for everyone to use and use safely because I am sick of running aground every time I take my boat out and so are a lot of my friends and colleges. That little dredge they have there now is probably a waste of time because as soon as they dredge it out it is back, the person who doing well out of it is the dredge owner , to be quite honest the money they have spent over the years they could have bought a bloody dredge and saved the taxpayer a lot of money.

Having recently visited the macquarie harbour area in tasmania and taken a cruise from strahan out to hells gates, the commentary mentioned how this area (the entry and surrounds) was very dangerous due to the shifting shallows like swansea channel until in the 1800's a training wall was built that channelled the flow of water out of this area and maintained a permanent channel of around 7.5 metres until this day. This was all completed without computers, but a common sense approach, and the wall is still there. All you need is a retaining wall around the sand islands to the drop over and the increased flow will do the job of deepening the channel without the need for dredges and pipes that are a hazard to navigation Go look at Tasmania

Having attended the Swansea RSL unveiling of the 3 preferred options I was extremely disappointed that nowhere was a long term solution mentioned or even a plan that would stop the senseless waste of money that is simply shovelling smoke. As you know the start of any solution involves a retaining wall stabilising Salts Bay, stopping the erosion that is supplying the shifting sands. I thought you were supposed to supply an answer or at least propose one. How much money was wasted on this survey to again arrive at "maintenance dredging" that simply doesn't work. Extremely disappointed and feel another snow job has just been done by another government not addressing issues and you've given them the ammunition.