



Media Release

3 March 2023

NCA approves seaplane trial flights on Lake Burley Griffin

The National Capital Authority (NCA) today announced it has approved seaplane trial flights onto Lake Burley Griffin to test and refine operational arrangements prior to permanent operations commencing this year.

In response to stakeholder requests, primarily from lake user groups including the Canberra Yacht Club (CYC), the NCA is putting arrangements in place to enable test flights from 14 March to 19 March 2023 including the installation of a pontoon near the National Museum of Australia (NMA) on the West Basin for boarding and disembarking.

NCA Chief Executive, Sally Barnes, said the trial flights are aimed at fine-tuning the guidelines around seaplane operations and ensuring safety and minimal disruption especially to those who extensively use the lake for sporting and recreational activities.

The trial flights will include the Central Basin to evaluate this location as a potential alternative take-off and landing site during elevated levels of activity on West Lake and West Basin. Independent environmental and heritage experts will also assess the seaplane operations in detail.

Ms. Barnes said the NCA appreciates the active participation of stakeholders. Since the first demonstration flight in December 2020, the NCA has conducted meetings with lake users to investigate the operational and infrastructure implications of seaplanes on Lake Burley Griffin.

The NCA concluded that, subject to operational, safety, and infrastructure matters being considered, seaplanes can serve as an additional recreational and tourism activity for local and interstate visitors to Canberra. It may also prove to be a potential mode of transport to and from the National Capital.

“While the NCA supports the introduction of seaplanes to diversify the activities that people can enjoy on the lake, we will be guided foremost by the principles of safety and least disruption to Lake users. Seaplanes will only commence operations once we have sufficiently considered the input of the community and stakeholders as well as the environment and heritage consultants,” Ms. Barnes said.

Ms. Barnes added, “Once operations commence, the NCA will regularly review and fine-tune details in consultation with lake users and make adjustments, if necessary.”

Steve Hart, General Manager of the Canberra Yacht Club, welcomed the NCA’s decision, saying, “The NCA organised a meeting between lake user groups and seaplane operators in November 2022. In that meeting, we agreed to meet on-site in January 2023 so the operators could more accurately assess water traffic and activities, and particularly how different watercraft simultaneously use the Lake. We proposed the trial flights which the NCA considered favourably.”

Mr. Hart added, “The trial flights will examine options for take-off and landing including the viability of Central Basin as an alternative to West Basin, at times that the pilot judges Central Basin to be a safer and less disruptive option. We consider this a good and necessary step, and we are happy the NCA engaged with us.”

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