



Australian Government
National Capital Authority

Lake Burley Griffin user guide (Lake User Guide)

A guide in relation to the use of Lake Burley Griffin and
Adjacent Lands

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Lake Burley Griffin User Guide (**Lake User Guide**)

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Background

1. Introduction

The information in this User Guide will replace and provide information currently on the National Capital Authority's (NCA) website. In particular, it will:

- (a) replace the <https://www.nca.gov.au/environment/lake-burley-griffin/legislation-and-policies/lake-burley-griffin-recreation-policy#> 2017 (**Recreation Policy**); and
- (b) streamline other information and guidance in relation to permits for Lake based recreational and commercial activities currently on NCA's website.

1.2 About the NCA

The NCA is established under the *Australian Capital Territory (Planning and Land Management) Act 1988* (the PALM Act). The Minister for Regional Development, Local Government and Territories has administrative responsibility for the PALM Act.

We perform the role of trustee of the National Capital and, in this capacity, serve the interests of the Australian Government, the nation and its people. We are responsible for:

- (a) shaping the National Capital into the future;
- (b) managing and enhancing nationally significant parts of Canberra; and
- (c) fostering awareness of Canberra as Australia's National Capital.

1.3 What is covered by this User Guide

This User Guide will cover matters including:

- (a) the applicable regulatory framework including heritage considerations;
- (b) the use of Lake Burley Griffin, permitted and prohibited uses and associated safety issues;
- (c) an overview of water quality practices;
- (d) permit and licence guidelines; and
- (e) a contact for emergencies

This User Guide does not cover:

- (a) other lakes in the ACT; and
- (b) detailed requirements on water quality management.

1.4 Purpose of User Guide

In managing recreation on Lake Burley Griffin, the NCA maintains and encourages a range of compatible recreation opportunities consistent with the special characteristics and heritage values of Lake Burley Griffin and adjacent lands.

The purpose of this User Guide is to assist users of Lake Burley Griffin and adjacent lands to enjoy a range of recreational activities in a manner compliant with the NCA's regulatory framework.

This User Guide:

- (a) addresses key recreational management issues for Lake Burley Griffin and adjacent lands;
- (b) establishes the NCA's objectives for the management of water-based recreation; and
- (c) enables the NCA to manage use of the Lake and adjacent lands in an effective manner that promotes its national significance.

For the Lake's use and access, this User Guide informs:

- (d) the provision of free and open access to the Lake and foreshores by the public, specifically through:
 - (i) encouraging public access to the Lake for a variety of non-motorised, water based recreational uses which do not impact on other heritage values;
 - (ii) continuing to use the Lake as a stage or setting for large public events (which are temporary and do not impact on heritage values); and
 - (iii) providing opportunities for organised and informal community, social and family gatherings around the Lake.
- (e) matters relating to controlling recreational activities on the Lake to minimise noise and disruption to the water surface, avoiding impacts on the shore and shore users and minimising conflicts with other Lake users; and
- (f) frameworks relevant to ensuring the Lake is available and accessible for a range of uses by:
 - (i) managing water quality to enable recreational uses, including swimming and boating;
 - (ii) retaining existing points of access to the Lake for recreation (boat ramps and swimming areas); and
 - (iii) minimising uses that require closure of the Lake and foreshores (or parts thereof) to public access i.e. unpermitted private or corporate events.

The NCA is required to continue to monitor recreational use of the Lake to assess current patterns of use and determine future recreational needs.

2. About Lake Burley Griffin

2.1 Description

Lake Burley Griffin consists of the waters of the Molonglo River between Scrivener Dam and the Dairy Road Bridge comprising 664 hectares, approximately 9km long and of variable width, with a distance around the shoreline of 40.5km, foreshores providing access to 314 hectares of parkland and 142 hectares of the Jerrabomberra Wetlands, but does not include Kingston Harbour.

There are three large islands and three small unnamed islands within the Lake. Queen Elizabeth II Island (the site of the National Carillon) is located in Central Basin. Springbank Island and Spinnaker Island are located in West Lake.

The Lake area is subdivided and classified as follows:

- (a) East Basin (from the river mouth at Pialligo to Kings Avenue Bridge);
- (b) Central Basin (between Kings Avenue Bridge and Commonwealth Avenue Bridge);
- (c) West Basin (Commonwealth Avenue Bridge to Acton Peninsula);
- (d) West Lake (Acton Peninsula to Black Mountain Peninsula);
- (e) Tarcoola Reach (Orana Bay to Kurrajong Point);
- (f) Yarramundi Reach (Kurrajong Point - Governor General's residence); and
- (g) Yarramundi Inlet (Governor General's residence to Scrivener Dam).

Map of Lake areas



2.2 Brief History

Lake Burley Griffin, named after the winner of the design competition for the National Capital in 1912, is a key element in Walter Burley Griffin's Plan for the city. The heart of the plan was a central artificial lake that would cover the whole of the Molonglo River flood plain and incorporated a central trinity of formal basins. Griffin's triple basin concept, comprised of the East Basin, West Basin and Central Basin was envisaged as the heart of the city where nearby monumental public buildings would be reflected in the lake waters, while the two informal lakes would be places for recreation with associated botanical gardens, arboreta and forest reserves. The key elements in Griffin's design were the land and water axes; the land axis runs between Mount Ainslie through Capital Hill and on to Mount Bimberli. Intersecting the land axis was the water axis that ran from Black Mountain across the flood plain of the Molonglo. The East, West and Central Basins were located along the water axis and defined by circular and straight shorelines designed for drives and promenades. The Griffin Plan also included traffic bridges that would connect settlements either side of the Molonglo River and visually separate the three basins. Griffin's original plan was modified to become a lake controlled by a dam at a site originally suggested by Charles Scrivener. This is now called 'Scrivener Dam'.

In 1959, the Commonwealth Government agreed to the construction of Lake Burley Griffin. The design and construction of the Lake and Scrivener Dam were undertaken in two stages. The first stage commenced in 1960 and involved the construction of the dam, Lake floor, two bridges, jetties and edges of over 843 hectares of Lake foreshore. The impounding of the Lake waters commenced in 1963 with the closing of the valves of Scrivener Dam. Prime Minister Robert Menzies officially commemorated stage one, the filling of the Lake, on 17 October 1964. The second stage involved detailed landscape development of the foreshores and is an ongoing process.

2.3 Heritage values

Lake Burley Griffin and Adjacent Lands was entered in the Commonwealth Heritage List on 8 April 2022, under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*. Its official heritage values, in summary, relate to:

- (a) The establishment of Canberra and the design of the Lake to fulfill aesthetic, open space and outdoor recreation functions.
- (b) Stirling Park's layered collection of Indigenous, pastoral and early capital city features and Roman Cypress Hill as a significant historic planting area and the Lindsay Pryor Arboretum's association with the history of urban landscaping and city horticulture in Canberra.

- (c) The Lake as an exemplar design site that demonstrates design and planning characteristic of the two most important town planning movements of the twentieth century, the City Beautiful and Garden City movements.
- (d) The technology identified and built at Scrivener Dam (fish-belly-flap gates) is also rare in Australia and represents the development of standards in hydrology and dam engineering in its time.
- (e) Rare natural heritage values including remnant ecological communities and associated threatened species at Yarramundi Reach and Stirling Park.
- (f) Limestone formations occurring both above and below the surface of the Lake.
- (g) The potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of Australia's history and practice of urban planning, architecture and landscape architecture.
- (h) Indigenous research values.
- (i) Natural features of the place that have potential to yield information on threatened species and ecological communities of the local area.
- (j) Aesthetic characteristics valued by the Canberra community and Australians generally. These include the large size and varied shape of the Lake; the Lake's quiet and peaceful areas (particularly the secluded areas in the lower reaches); the water body and surface of the Lake (including the maintenance of its water level); and the reflective qualities of the water.
- (k) The Lake's design, development and final completion is considered by experts to be an achievement of creative genius and demonstrates a high level of technical engineering and urban design achievement.
- (l) Its importance to various communities (including the Canberra community) as a landmark and as a signature element of Canberra. It also acts as an important reference point in the construction of Canberra's place identity.
- (m) The many important people involved with the creative and technical aspects of the design and construction of the Lake.

The central basin of Lake Burley Griffin is also included within the Commonwealth Heritage List entry for the Parliament House Vista.

There are heritage management plans in place for both 'Lake Burley Griffin and Adjacent Lands' and the 'Parliament House Vista' that the NCA is obliged to manage in accordance with.

Regulatory framework

3. Overview

3.1 Context

This User Guide exists within a broader regulatory context which includes the:

- (a) *Australian Capital Territory (Planning and Land Management) Act 1988* (Cth);
- (b) *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (Cth);
- (c) *Australian Capital Territory National Land (Lakes) Ordinance 2022* (Cth);
- (d) *Australian Capital Territory National Land (Unleased) Ordinance 2022* (Cth);
- (e) *Australian Capital Territory National Land (Leased) Ordinance 2022* (Cth);
- (f) National Capital Plan; and
- (g) associated instruments, guidelines, and management plans (including those relating to heritage matters).

3.2 Role of the NCA

Under the *Australian Capital Territory (Planning and Land Management) Act 1988*, the NCA is responsible for fostering an awareness of Canberra as the National Capital.

Whilst the NCA is not a tourism agency, the NCA works with other stakeholders to encourage people to visit the National Capital, its national cultural institutions, and other attractions such as the Lake.

The NCA permits a number of community, cultural, and commercial operators on the Lake. These include boat cruises, self-skipped electric boats, paddle boats and a variety of other activities. Proposals for new commercial opportunities on the Lake are assessed by the NCA to ensure consistency with the regulatory framework.

3.3 About the *Australian Capital Territory National Land (Lakes) Ordinance 2022* (Lakes Ordinance)

In administering the Lakes Ordinance, the NCA undertakes measures to manage the Lake for a variety of functions and in accordance with objectives that reflect community values.

The Lakes Ordinance contains provisions relating to the following.

- (a) management and control of the Lake;
- (b) use of the Lake;
- (c) safety and associated investigations;
- (d) boating accidents; and
- (e) enforcement.

Using Lake Burley Griffin

4. Water Quality

The NCA regularly tests water quality. If necessary, the NCA will enforce restrictions to sections of the Lake for public safety reasons.

The NCA advises Lake users of any potential risk, and the level of caution needed to be taken. Any closures and warnings are promoted in Canberra's media and appear on the NCA website and at times through social media platforms. Members of the Lake User Group are also notified by email.

Safety signage at swim beaches and boat ramps provide the latest information on water quality and Lake safety measures.

For detailed information, please refer to <https://www.nca.gov.au/environment/lake-burley-griffin/water-quality>.

5. Permitted activities

The Lake and its foreshore provide the opportunity for a wide range of recreational and commercial activities.

These include but not limited to:

- (a) canoeing/kayaking/stand up paddleboards;
- (b) dragon boats;
- (c) fishing;
- (d) hire boats;
- (e) rowing;
- (f) sailing;
- (g) swimming;
- (h) traditional boats; and
- (i) windsurfing.

Certain commercial or regulated activities are permitted with NCA approval including:

- (a) commercial activities;
- (b) cultural and sporting events; and
- (c) other opportunities assessed by the NCA as consistent with the applicable regulatory framework.

6. Prohibited activities

The following activities are expressly prohibited by the Lakes Ordinance:

- (a) operating a hovercraft; and
- (b) houseboats.

The following activities are generally not permitted:

- (a) camping or caravanning on the adjacent lands;
- (b) water skiing, wakeboarding, wakesurfing, parasailing from a boat (including doing so without a rope); and
- (c) anchoring at night or overnight.

7. General Safety

7.1 Safe operation of boats

The following are expressly prohibited under the Lakes Ordinance:

- (a) operating an unsafe boat;
- (b) reckless or negligent operation of a boat;
- (c) exceeding the power rating for a boat;
- (d) dangerous operation of a boat; and
- (e) unsafe towing or pushing of a boat or object.

7.2 Conduct of people

The following conduct is expressly prohibited under the Lakes Ordinance:

- (a) doing something while on a boat on the Lake that is dangerous to the public; and
- (b) where a person is operating a power boat (other than a personal watercraft) on the Lake and the power boat is being propelled by its engine;
 - (i) another person extends a part of their body outside the perimeter of the power boat;
 - (ii) the person operating the power boat extends a part of their body outside the perimeter of the boat;
 - (iii) another person is on the bow of the power boat in a position that puts that person at an increased risk of falling overboard;
 - (iv) the person operating the power boat is on the bow of a boat (other than a personal watercraft) and is in a position that puts them at an increased risk of falling overboard;
 - (v) another person is on, or is hanging onto, a swim ladder or swim platform attached to the power boat or the transom of the power boat; or
 - (vi) the person is on, or is hanging onto, a swim ladder or swim platform attached to a power boat or the transom of the power boat.

7.3 Passengers on domestic commercial vessels

The following conduct is expressly prohibited under the Lakes Ordinance:

- (a) obstructing someone engaged in the navigation or operation of the vessel;
- (b) damaging a part of the vessel or equipment on the vessel;
- (c) using a part of the vessel or equipment on the vessel for a purpose for which it was not intended;
- (d) damaging or defacing a sign or notice on the vessel that relates to the vessel's safe and proper use; or
- (e) damaging or defacing a plate fixed to the boat indicating the boat's capability and capacity.

8. Events, Closures and Restrictions on Public Access

8.1 Events

Regulated events take place on the Lake and Adjacent Lands. Under the *Australian Capital Territory National Land (Unleased) Ordinance 2022* regulated activities (for example, cultural, recreational or commercial events, not-for-profit events and organised sporting events) require a permit and may require a licence agreement.

If applicable, Works Approval from the NCA is required for any construction (including temporary structures) or alteration of buildings or structures.

For further information, including the application process, enquiry, fees and charges, please refer to <https://www.nca.gov.au/events/venue-hire>.

8.2 Closures and Restrictions on Public Access

From time to time, a Lake area or part of a Lake area may be closed for reasons such as safety, maintenance or for an event.

Restrictions may also be enforced by the NCA due to water quality results. For detailed information, please refer to <https://www.nca.gov.au/environment/lake-burley-griffin/water-quality>.

Certain areas of the Lake are restricted to the public for safety and security reasons. These include:

- (a) The section of water 130 metres upstream of Scrivener Dam (as indicated by the line of buoys placed across the Lake);
- (b) the foreshore of Government House;
- (c) the foreshore and jetty at the maintenance area in Yarramundi Inlet, where a floating gate is housed for Scrivener Dam maintenance purposes; and
- (d) the water surface of Warrina Inlet upstream of the line of buoys placed across the inlet.

Permits, licences and other approvals

9. Permit, licence or other approval requirements

Permits required under the Lakes Ordinance:

- (a) Mooring permit; and
- (b) Regulated activity permit (issued under Australian Capital Territory National Land (Unleased) Ordinance 2022). Examples include a permit for a cultural, recreation or commercial event or commercial operations.

Approvals required under the Lakes Ordinance:

- (c) Use of a power boat;
- (d) Anchoring a buoy; and
- (e) Erecting a wharf or jetty.

A written agreement and/or a licence to undertake a commercial activity in the Lake area is required for the following commercial activities:

- (a) selling, or offering for sale, food, drink or other articles or goods;
- (b) letting, or offering to let, on hire bicycles, boats or other articles;
- (c) carrying, or offering to carry, passengers, articles or goods in or on a boat for fee or reward; or
- (d) carrying out the business of boat repair.

If applicable, Works Approval from the NCA is required for any construction (including temporary structures) or alteration of buildings or structures.

10. Use and operation of boats

Provisions governing the use of boats on the Lake are set out in the Lakes Ordinance.

10.1 How to obtain a boat permit

The NCA administers and approves power boat permits. To obtain a permit, please refer to <https://www.nca.gov.au/environment/lake-burley-griffin/boat-permits>.

10.2 Power boating permits

There are four categories of permits issued for power boats including:

- (a) Category 1 – conventional powered boats used as rescue, coaching or judging boats in support of aquatic sports;
- (b) Category 2 – electrically powered and solar powered boats and trailerable yachts with auxiliary power (including those power boats which will be using auxiliary power while on Lake Burley Griffin);
- (c) Category 3 – boats used for Lake management, special interest boats (such as ‘traditional boats’); and
- (d) Category 4 – commercial tourist use (e.g. ferries).

All permit holders are expected to operate their craft in a manner consistent with the law and applicable policies.

11. Mooring

The NCA administers mooring on the Lake. Mooring fixtures are inspected and maintained yearly by an NCA approved service provider at the boat owner's cost.

Moored boats must be insured, kept neat and tidy and are subject to Lake Burley Griffin boat permit requirements and conditions.

11.1 How to obtain a mooring permit

Enquiries can be submitted to the NCA by completing an application form and sending to: lakeburleygriffin@nca.gov.au

For further information, please refer to: <https://www.nca.gov.au/environment/lake-burley-griffin/mooring>.

The Lakes Ordinance prohibits actions that obstruct the approach to, or restricts or impedes the proper use of, a wharf, jetty, boatshed, slip, launching ramp, courtesy mooring or emergency mooring in the Lake area.

11.2 General guidelines

Mooring spaces are limited, and the following conditions apply to approved applications:

- (a) mooring fixtures remain the property of the mooring permit owner;
- (b) the mooring buoy remains the property of the NCA;
- (c) mooring permits are not transferable;
- (d) mooring permits are valid for a maximum of 12 months and expire 30 June each year; and
- (e) the NCA may at any time cancel the mooring permit and instruct the owner to remove the boat and the mooring at the owner's cost.

12. Commercial activities

The NCA manages regulated and commercial activities on the Lake and in adjacent lands.

12.1 Regulated activity permits

Regulated activity permits issued under Division 2 of Part 4 of *the Australian Capital Territory National Land (Unleased) Ordinance 2022* are administered by the NCA.

Uses of public National Land that are regulated activities include:

Regulated activity	Examples
A cultural, recreational or commercial event	Festival, parade, show, performance, concert or other public entertainment
A not-for-profit event conducted by a community organisation or charity	Fundraising barbeque, fun run
An event that is a religious or ceremonial service or commemoration	Wedding, remembrance service
An organised sporting or team event that involves the erection or placement of a structure	Triathlon or other sporting competition
A commercial operation that offers to sell goods or provide services to the public	Coffee cart, food truck, paid health and fitness activity
Filming for a commercial purpose	Advertisements
An event that involves the erection or placement of a structure	A public or private event that involves placement of a marquee

12.2 Agreement to undertake commercial activities on the Lake

To conduct a commercial activity on the Lake, an agreement under section 35 of the Lakes Ordinance and/or a licence agreement may be required. Further information is available at: <https://www.nca.gov.au/environment/lake-burley-griffin/commercial-activity>.

Emergency, enforcement and penalties

13. The role of the water police

The water police at Yarralumla Bay play an important role in ensuring public safety on the Lake.

Their services include:

- (a) to provide overall enforcement under relevant legislation;
- (b) to provide immediate response to incidents in the Lake (e.g. drowning and accidents);
- (c) to rescue watercraft and swimmers in distress; and
- (d) other duties involving obstacle removal, security and safety patrolling, general public safety during major public events and safety inspections of watercraft.

14. Emergency contacts

Contact ACT Water Police on 000.

15. Water police location

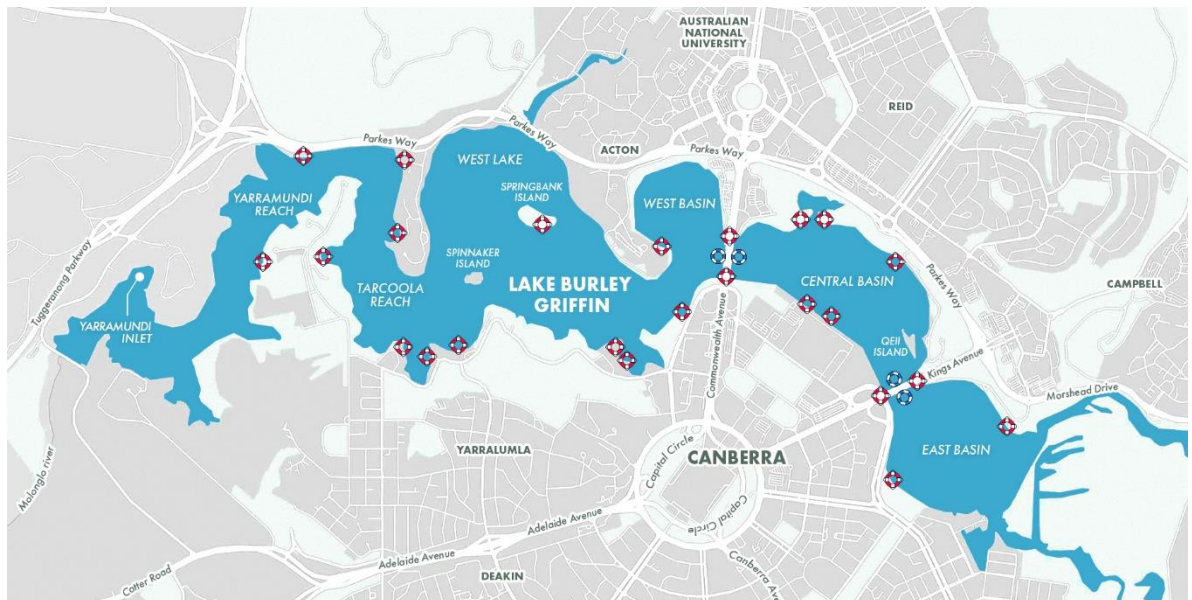
The water police station is located at Yarralumla Bay on West Lake.

ACT Water Police is not staffed 24/7, although maintains a 24 hour per day On-Call commitment. This can be activated through ACT Police Communications in an Emergency by calling either 000 or 131 444.



16. Life buoys

Life buoys are in nominated swimming areas, jetties, under bridges and high use areas.

Life buoy locations



Legend:

-  Life Buoy Box
-  Life Ring (mounted on the bridges)

17. Wildlife

For sick and injured wildlife, please contact ACT Wildlife on 0432 300 033 (24 hours) or visit www.actwildlife.net.

18. Rubbish Disposal

The public has a role to play to keep the Lake and surrounding areas free from trash. Please dispose rubbish responsibly. There are waste bins available in some areas around the Lake. If a waste bin is not available, please do not litter and take the trash for appropriate disposal.

Stakeholders

19. Lake User Group

The NCA facilitates the Lake User Group (LUG) which meets quarterly. Formed in 2004, the LUG facilitates the communication of Lake matters, events and management issues to those user groups and individuals who may be affected. Many LUG members are membership based organisations, peak sporting bodies and commercial operators.

A list of organisations who are part of LUG and their contact email addresses can be found on <https://www.nca.gov.au/environment/lake-burley-griffin/activities-and-lake-user-groups>

Groups interested in joining the LUG should contact the NCA via: LUG@nca.gov.au

References and further information

For further information contact the National Capital Authority:

BY VISITING

National Capital Authority
Treasury Building
King Edward Terrace
Parkes ACT 2600

BY WRITING TO

National Capital Authority
PO Box 373
Canberra ACT 2601

BY EMAIL TO

info@nca.gov.au

BY TELEPHONE

Telephone: (02) 6271 2888

BY VISITING OUR WEBSITE

www.nca.gov.au