
The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia

Inquiry into the Immigration Bridge Proposal

Joint Standing Committee on the National Capital and External Territories

May 2009
Canberra

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Cover front image: Artist's impression of the concept design for the Immigration Bridge. Courtesy of Immigration Bridge Australia, www.immigrationbridge.com.au

Cover back image: Aerial depiction of the Immigration Bridge concept design highlighting solar roof. Courtesy of Immigration Bridge Australia, www.immigrationbridge.com.au



Chair's Foreword

Since its inception Canberra has been designed with the highest ideals in mind. Its design elements are unique and it is home to some of the most distinctive landscape design and architecture in the country. Canberra as our national capital is the chosen location to commemorate aspects of our democracy and history.

The Immigration Bridge Australia proposal seeks to commemorate the contribution that migrants have made to Australia. The proposed 400m bridge will cross Lake Burley Griffin in the area of West Basin linking the National Museum of Australia with the parliamentary zone at Lennox Gardens.

While the objective of recognising the contribution that migrants have made to Australia's development is worthy, the proposal to build a bridge in this location has provoked concerns by parts of the community.

In view of this, the committee was pleased to receive the reference from Minister Debus to inquire into the Immigration Bridge proposal. The committee had been made aware of the proposal through evidence at previous inquiries and it was clear that there was some confusion within the community about the status of the proposal, the works approval process and the method adopted by the IBA to raise funds for the construction of the bridge.

The confusion in the community has been exacerbated by the television advertising and sale of family plaques on the 'history handrail' of the proposed bridge, despite the actual design of the bridge not being available and a development application not yet having been submitted to the National Capital Authority.

This report traverses the history of the proposal from its roots in the vision by migrant workers from the Snowy Mountains to commemorate the contribution of migrants to Australia's development, including the role the NCA has played over the years in supporting this proposal and the Amendment that inserted the footbridge into the National Capital Plan.

The report also details the final development approval process and required statutory consultation measures, including heritage assessment, that will ultimately determine whether or not the bridge proposal proceeds in its current form, a different form, in a different location or not at all.

Not surprisingly, the bridge proposal raised passionate views both for and against, but a uniting sentiment was that the national capital was the appropriate location for commemorating the contribution of migrants.

The committee's objective was never to adjudicate on whether the Immigration Bridge should proceed or not. The report provides clarity into how the proposal got to this point and what checks and balances are in place as the IBA moves toward making a development application to the NCA. The committee received over 80 submissions and there is now increased awareness of the consultation processes as the IBA advances its proposal.

The committee made three recommendations which if implemented will improve aspects of the process. First, the IBA in improving its transparency and accountability should clarify its refund policy and make its financial documents available on its website.

The committee also recommends that if the proposal proceeds and the bridge is ceded to the Commonwealth, the government should ensure that agreement to receive the bridge is met by increased government funding to the NCA to manage its ongoing maintenance.

The final recommendation encourages the IBA to reconcile competing issues relating to Lake users and the vista and heritage values of the Lake and its foreshores. If the IBA finds that this challenge cannot be met or its development application for the proposed bridge is unsuccessful then the IBA should consider changing the location of the bridge or propose an alternative memorial to migration.

I take this opportunity on behalf of the committee to thank all groups, organisations and individuals who contributed to the inquiry.

Senator Kate Lundy
Chair



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Membership of the Committee

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Terms of reference

On 25 February 2009, the Minister for Home Affairs, the Hon Bob Debus MP, requested the committee to inquire into and report on:

1. The process adopted by Immigration Bridge Australia (IBA) to settle the design for the Immigration Bridge (the Bridge) taking into account:
 - a. the heritage values of Lake Burley Griffin and its foreshore, and
 - b. the interests of users of the Lake.
2. The process that has been adopted by IBA to raise funds for the construction and ongoing maintenance of the Bridge.
3. The approval process required under the *Australian Capital Territory (Planning and Land Management) Act 1988* if an application for approval of the Bridge were received by the National Capital Authority.

The Minister requested the committee to report by the end of May 2009.



List of abbreviations

| | |
|----------|--|
| ACT | Australian Capital Territory |
| ACTPLA | Australian Capital Territory Planning and Land Authority |
| ANU | Australian National University |
| Board | Immigration Bridge Australia Board |
| CDBA | Canberra Dragon Boat Association |
| CHL | Commonwealth Heritage List |
| CNMC | Canberra National Memorials Committee |
| CSIRO | Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation |
| Cwth | Commonwealth |
| CYC | Canberra Yacht Club |
| DA | Draft Amendment |
| DCP | Development Control Plan |
| DEWHA | Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts |
| EPBC Act | <i>The Environment Protection Biodiversity and Conservation Act 1999</i> |
| FECCA | Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia |
| HMP | Heritage Management Plan |
| IBA | Immigration Bridge Australia |
| LUG | Lake Users Group |

| | |
|----------|---|
| NCA | National Capital Authority |
| NCDC | National Capital Development Commission |
| NCP | National Capital Plan |
| NMA | National Museum of Australia |
| PALM Act | <i>Australian Capital Territory (Planning and Land Management) Act 1988</i> |
| RNE | Register of the National Estate |
| Lake | Lake Burley Griffin |
| T1 | Transcript of evidence - 30 March 2009 |
| T2 | Transcript of evidence - 1 April 2009 |
| Trust | The National Trust of Australia (ACT) |



List of recommendations

Recommendation 1 (paragraph 2.104)

The committee recommends that in the interest of improving its transparency and accountability Immigration Bridge Australia:

- clarify its refund policy in relation to the History Handrail program; and
- make its financial documents publicly available on its website.

Recommendation 2 (paragraph 3.85)

The committee recommends that if the proposed IBA bridge is ceded to the Commonwealth, then the government should ensure that agreement to receive the bridge is met by increased funding to the NCA to manage its ongoing maintenance.

Recommendation 3 (paragraph 4.74)

The committee recommends that Immigration Bridge Australia seeks to reconcile competing issues relating to Lake users, vista and heritage value of the Lake and its foreshores.

If IBA finds that this challenge cannot be met or its development application for the proposed bridge is unsuccessful then IBA should consider:

- changing the location of the proposed bridge; or
- proposing an alternative memorial to migration.

