

Details of the ferries are as follows:

Wisemans Ferry No 8: 24 cars. 313 tonnes deadweight and 39 m long. The river crossing at that point is 366m. It used to be in service at the crossing to Harwood Island in the Clarence River before it was brought to Wisemans.

Wisemans Ferry No 55: Came from Berowra originally, and from Raymond Terrace prior to that. 8 cars, 122 tonnes deadweight and 18 m long. Same river crossing length.

Webbs Creek Ferry No 26: 16 cars, 190 tonnes deadweight and 25m long. It was built at Brisbane in 1956. River crossing is 414m. Serviced between 9.30 and 11.30am on the first Tuesday of each month.

Sackville Ferry No 5: 12 cars, 160 tonnes deadweight and 24m long. River crossing is 290m. Serviced on 1st Wednesday of each month between 1 and 3 pm.

Lower Portland Ferry: 6 cars, 65 tonnes deadweight and 15m long. River crossing 209 m. The ferry that is at Lower Portland now was originally at Berowra, then it went to Wisemans, then to Webbs Creek, then back to Wisemans, then it was sold by the DMR to Colo Shire Council. Serviced on the 1st Wednesday of each month between 9-11am.

The four DMR ferries are fitted with 354 Perkins diesel motors with a torque converted drive through a Sonnerdale reduction box. Motors are governed at 2200 rpm and the ferries should reach a maximum speed of 8 knots during the crossing.

Barring other events, the ferry cables are replaced at 12-15 month intervals, depending on the salinity of the water. The ferries have a major overhaul every three years at Mortlake, adjacent to the present Putney Ferry crossing. They are towed there by ocean-going tugs and the spare ferry is used to keep the service operating.

The ferries are operated by contractors who are responsible for supply of staff, fuel, and the day-to-day maintenance of the vessels. Contracts are for three year periods and are subject to adjustment in accordance with the Consumer Price Index.

Council provides a small maintenance unit to service the ferry system. It consists of two men, the ferry foreman and his assistant, equipped with the necessary tools and gear, including oxy-acetylene equipment, to work on the ferries. The ferry foreman inspects the ferries daily. No charge is made for the use of the ferries.

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APPENDIX TWO

Some technical information about the Ferries

Included in Russ Mitchell's talk to the Dharug and Lower Hawkesbury Historical Society were some details about the ferries and their operation which have been included here to provide more background to the drama.

The Hawkesbury River system drains an area of 22,000 kms, extending about 270 kms in a north/south direction and 145 km between the Pacific Ocean and the western limit of the catchment. Major tributaries are the Macdonald River, the Colo River, the Grose River, the Cox River, the Warragamba River and the Wollondilli River. At the junction with the Grose River the Hawkesbury changes its name to the Nepean River. The river is crossed by road bridges at a number of locations, extending along the river to Windsor.

Between the Windsor bridge and the crossing of the main northern highway at Brooklyn there are five ferry crossings. These crossings are at Sackville on Main Rd No 182; at Lower Portland on Council-controlled roads; adjacent to Webbs Creek on Main Rd No 181; and at Wisemans Ferry on Main Rd No 225. The fifth ferry crossing is in Berowra Creek.

Four of these ferries are controlled by the Hawkesbury City Council with funding provided by the RTA in the case of those ferries that are on the main roads system. The cost of the ferry at Lower Portland is jointly funded by the Baulkham Hills Shire Council and the Hawkesbury City Council. The ferry at Berowra is controlled by the Hornsby Shire Council in conjunction with the RTA.

The ferries are operated on a 24 hour basis. The smaller ferry at Wisemans is only brought into operation at peak periods or as traffic demands. There is a notice at the Wisemans crossing advising that the ferry is not in service between the hours of 10am and 12 noon on the first Thursday of each month, but in effect the ferries usually operate continuously as No 55 is used to transport passengers during these periods when the big ferry is being serviced.