

**INQUIRY INTO PERFORMANCE OF THE NSW
ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION AUTHORITY**

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially Confidential

29 August 2014

The Hon Robert Brown MLC
Chair, General Purpose Standing Committee No 5 Legislative Council
NSW Parliament, Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

cc: Jamie Parker MP, Member for Balmain

Dear Chair

RE: Submission to Inquiry into the performance of the NSW Environmental Protection Authority

Further to 1. (b) (v) of the Inquiry's terms of reference, I would like to make the following comments about the regulation of cruise passenger ships at the White Bay Cruise Ship Terminal at Balmain:

We are writing to voice our concerns regarding the pollution being emitted by the cruise ships at White Bay and the resulting health impacts on the community.

We almost bought a house in Wallace St Balmain, an area close to the ships and at the bottom of a hill where there is not much air movement. I realised only after one occasion when a ship was in that the pollution levels were unacceptably high after getting a headache that lasted over an hour after leaving the area, and this was after only a 10 minute visit. Needless to say we pulled out of our offer on the house.

Our house in Balmain is relatively close to the ships however at the top of a hill. I have been getting headaches when the wind direction leads to our house or a commercial ship is at the bottom of Donnelly St. We have a 3 year old and an 5 year old. The 5 year old only over this past year has started to complain of headaches but not previously in her life. We are also concerned for the pollution that we are breathing that sometimes cannot be seen or smelt but we know contains dangerous pollutants. We are now thinking of leaving Balmain altogether. We cannot imagine another summer with the pollution from the ships if no action to address the pollution levels is taken.

We believe the EPA should be given authority to monitor the pollution in the area and make recommendations that will be considered more seriously by the government.

We live on the Balmain peninsula, and our oldest child attends the local Catholic Primary School, Father John Therry, attended by over 400 children, directly across the

road from Balmain Public School, attended by approximately 300 children. Balmain is one of the most densely populated areas in Sydney and there are many young families that live in this area which is evident by the 5 primary schools and numerous preschools and daycare centres.

Father John Therry along with Balmain Public School opposite are located less than 400m from the diesel smoke stacks of the cruise ships at White Bay Terminal 2. The children participate in sport and activities at Birrong park, less than 50 metres from the diesel smoke stacks of the cruise ships at the second terminal.

When a ship is docked the smell of the diesel fumes is heavy in the air, not only do our children breathe this air in 5 days a week at school but most of us live on the peninsula and are affected by this every day a ship is in.

What is the most concerning about the diesel odour is that it is laden with heavy metals and chemicals. It has been brought to our attention that the ships that dock at White Bay do not comply with World Health Organisation recommended controls for emissions as follows:

1. Fuel sulphur content is up to 35 times higher at the White Bay Cruise Ship Terminal than allowed in Europe and North America

Cruise ships in Sydney Harbour are allowed to burn fuel with sulphur content of up to 3.5%.

In North America, once ships come within 200 nautical miles of the east or west coastlines, they are not allowed to burn more than 1% sulphur fuel and this will further reduce to 0.1% sulphur by January 2015.

In Europe, ships in port are also limited to 0.1% sulphur fuel.

It is inconceivable that the State Government has these facts yet nothing is being done.

2. Shore-to-ship power has not been provided

Over 100 ports around the world now provide the ability for ships to plug in to the local power grid so that they can switch off their engines stopping dangerous diesel emissions in port. Whilst there was a requirement to allow for shore power at the White Bay Cruise Terminal in the future, there is no requirement to actually provide it and as predicted Sydney Ports are reluctant to embrace shore power at the site.

Action is required immediately to protect the health of residents as our children cannot wait for future master planning.

3. Emissions monitoring criteria is inadequate and unsafe

It is well known that diesel emissions are carcinogenic containing the dangerous toxins: sulphur dioxide, nitrogen oxides, particulate matter (both PM10 and the finer and more deadly PM2.5), benzene, toluene and formaldehyde. Yet monitoring of the White Bay Cruise Terminal measures only two toxins: sulphur dioxide and PM10. It completely ignores the other dangerous emissions. By way of example, benzene is a carcinogen for which there is no safe level of exposure. Further, the criteria against

which sulphur dioxide is being monitored is woefully inadequate, with the 24 hour allowable limit 11.4 times higher than the World Health Organisation recommends.

4. There are no penalties for breaches of planning conditions

There is no provision for cruise companies to be penalised for breaches of the regulations that do exist (inadequate as they are).

This lack of regulation has already resulted in our community experiencing a range of health symptoms and exposure to serious known health risks - all of which could easily been avoided if the protective measures which were adopted long ago in the Northern Hemisphere, were implemented here.

The cruise passenger terminal emissions are having a terrible effect on our community, family and way of life. The health impacts of this type of diesel pollutant are documented around the world.

What is most alarming are the effects these dormant carcinogens have on our children, as once inhaled the toxins represent a serious on-going health risk.

The EPA (then known as the Department of Environment and Climate Change - DECCW) made a submission along with other government departments and members of the public on the adequacy of the Sydney Ports Environmental Assessment Report. Amongst other things, the submission stated:

- “DECCW considers that the adverse air quality impacts of the proposed CPT operations could be significantly reduced through the use of 0.5 per cent sulphur fuel”
- “DECCW still considers that adoption of shore-to-ship power would be the most effective and innovative way to satisfy Action for Air objectives of reducing air pollutants”

Despite these concerns the Director General of Planning signed off on what has proved to be woefully inadequate environmental controls a few days before ships began arriving on April 15, 2013.

Given these highly appropriate recommendations by the EPA were seemingly ignored by Sydney Ports and the Planning Authority, serious questions need to be asked about why? Had the recommendations been adopted, the community would not be suffering air pollution to the extent it is today. The EPA's role is to protect the NSW environment and community.

We request

- **that urgent interim measures are applied so that we do not have another summer inhaling these emissions and risking our children's future health**
- **that the government implement the EPA recommendations to protect the health of the community.**

There are thousands of children who live on the peninsula and whose health we need to protect.

Yours sincerely

