

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

Name: Professor Alan Rosen

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**NSW Legislative Council General Purpose Standing
Committee No 5.**

c/o Mr Samuel Griffith, phone (02) 9230 3543 or email
gpscno5@parliament.nsw.gov.au

Dear Standing Committee

**RE: Severe Health Impacts due to Inadequate Procedures &
Poor Regulation of the White Bay Overseas Cruise Ship
Terminal**

I wish to bring the following health matters to the attention of the Standing Committee.

I am a former department head over many years at Royal North Shore Hospital. I am currently a professorial fellow at the School of Public Health, University of Wollongong, and a clinical associate professor, Mental Health Policy Unit, Brain & Mind Research Unit, University of Sydney.

An apparent or possible cluster of new and exacerbated illnesses, particularly respiratory and headaches, light and vibration sensitivity and some streaming from conjunctiva & other membranes etc have emerged since the cruise ships started docking near Grafton St. Balmain. New asthma-type respiratory illnesses have appeared, as well as exacerbations in considerable numbers, in both infants, children and adults living in proximity to and over a wide residential area beyond the docking terminal, since these large cruise ships have been docking regularly at this site. These have been well documented medically, in some instances by a respiratory specialist, who can only attribute such impacts to the impacts of these cruise ships.

There also appears to be a strong association, well documented in the clinical literature, between the benzene, toluene, formaldehyde, sulphur dioxide concentrations far exceeding international safety standards, and possibly the nitrous oxide and particulate matter content of the unregulated highly toxic content of the fuels being used and decanted in refuelling, and longer term severe health deterioration, particularly including carcinogenic effects.

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This requires immediate amelioration, by means documented in the letter to Health Minister Jillian Skinner attached below.

She personally advised me to inform Dr Kerry Chant, Director of Public Health & Chief Medical Officer, NSW Ministry of Health, of our serious concerns. I have done so, and she has delegated Dr Richard Broome to attend meetings of all responsible NSW Government Departments and Leichhardt Council, originally convened by Dr Leena Gupta of the Sydney South West Public Health Unit. We have now met 3 times over the last 6 months but there are no immediate, interim or long-term practical actions towards amelioration or more definitive solutions yet in sight.

We are also concerned about the ever-escalating number of cruise ships booked to dock at this terminal with an estimated 130 this year, with much higher numbers in following years, compared with the 70 ships per year that local residents were informed about when the terminal was 1st proposed and built. We are even more concerned about the sub-standard and poorly equipped ships, which would no longer be permitted in well regulated northern hemisphere ports, and which are utilized and admitted to Sydney Harbour for this purpose.

We are also very concerned about the impacts of exposure durations of 10 or more hours per arrival as well as increasing overnight or multiple night stays, and the concurrent stays by more than one cruise ships.

Apart from the interventions listed in the letter below: the immediate steps that should be taken cooperatively by both state & federal governments to:

1. Identify ships which already have facilities for shore to ship power- Sydney Ports Authority undertook this on August 4th 2014 but we have not heard any further from them.
2. Negotiate temporary use of Garden Island dock facilities with the Royal Australian Navy and to require ships using White Bay which can already utilize such facilities for shore-to-ship power, to dock at Garden Island which has the shore-to-ship electrical equipment to accommodate them.
3. Immediately stop taking bookings from ships which are substandard in terms of not having shore to ship electricity facilities, and using the most toxic grade fuels, and putting the shipping companies on fairly short notice that in future they can only consign ships to this port if they comply with international standards for emissions, noise and vibrations, and low toxicity fuel use, and

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4. Proceed forthwith to cost, fund and connect up shore-to ship-power at the White Bay Terminal Site as soon as possible.
5. Align Australian federal regulation levels of emissions including fuels and particulate matter, noise, vibrations with current WHO and Northern Hemisphere standards.
6. Immediately replace highly toxic fuels used for refuelling the cruise ships at White Bay overseas terminal and throughout Sydney Harbour with much lower toxic content fuels.
7. Restrict length of stay for each ship to short turn-around, daytime only stays, no multiple cruiseship stays, and no overnight stays.
8. Conduct a qualitative and quantitative public health study triangulated with a health economics and social costs study of the likely short and long-term health impacts initially on the local community in Balmain, and ultimately on all residents near Sydney Harbour, whose health and wellbeing are likely to be most adversely affected by the continued poorly regulated local docking of these ships.

Conclusion:

The need for amelioration of these impacts at White Bay Overseas Cruise Terminal is urgent in the interests of addressing the immediate distress and adverse health effects on nearby residents, as well as the ongoing dangers to public health through-out Sydney Harbour and the region. If proper and timely action is taken at White Bay terminal to bring this facility and regulation of these ships into line with international (WHO) health and environmental standards, this precedent will be of ultimate benefit to all residents of Sydney.

Yours Sincerely

Professor Alan Rosen, AO.