

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

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**Date received:** 25/08/2014

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## Submission to Parliamentary Inquiry No. 5

Over the past year, there has been a major community campaign to seek improvement to the operations at **White Bay cruise ship terminal – to reduce air and noise pollution and to remove the health risks faced by our community.**

**The Balmain community has been exposed to air pollution for 10 hours or more a day (and increasingly overnight) from cruise ships. The fuels being used are amongst the worst in the developed world.** In some countries, ships are prohibited from using this low grade fuel within 200 miles of shore. Yet **it burns all day and even overnight here in Sydney Harbour, right in front of homes.**

**The number of cruise ships has been much more than was originally proposed.** It was suggested that 60 to 70 ships would come to White Bay. Last year, the very first year, it was 130 ships.

The significant Council and community campaign in 2009 and 2010 which opposed the location of the cruise ship terminal at White Bay highlighted the range of problems and risks that it would bring to the local environment. The **major concerns and risks were never addressed** and a distressing situation exists now where problems and risks, which were well covered prior to the approval are now having to be resolved more than one year after operations have commenced with the hope that any future measures will work.

Other key issues:

**1. Regulations relating to the operation of cruise ships at White Bay significantly lag behind other first world countries,** yet this terminal has been approved adjacent to our high density residential community. The ships smoke stacks are at the same height as peoples' homes and fumes directly enter homes.

**2. Approval of large scale, intensive and polluting industries within high density residential communities is fundamentally wrong** and represents the worst possible planning outcome. It places the health and amenity of these communities at great risk.

**3. Approval of activities which are allowed to cause pollution impacts for the entire time that they operate – within residential communities – is indefensible.**

**4. State and Commonwealth Governments must act together to regulate and control air and noise pollution from cruise ships especially within high density residential environments.**

**5. The sulphur content of the fuel is up to 35 times higher than allowed in Europe and North America.** Cruise ships in Sydney Harbour burn fuel with a sulphur content of up to 3.5%. In North America, once ships are within 200 nautical miles of the coastline, they are not allowed to burn more than 1% sulphur fuel and this will reduce to 0.1% sulphur by January 2015. In Europe, ships in port are limited to 0.1% sulphur fuel.

**6. Round 3 of the White Bay air quality monitoring (February and March 2014) showed that on all 20 days of this monitoring period, the 24-hour average sulphur dioxide measurement exceeded the levels recommended by the World Health Organisation.**

**7. Shore-to-ship power must be provided at White Bay.** Over 100 ports around the world now provide the ability for ships to use shore power so that they can switch off their engines. This greatly reduces dangerous diesel emissions in port.

**8. A continuing public concern is that the EPA, as the environmental protection authority, was unable to insist upon the provision of shore power** at the White Bay terminal, especially when the location of the terminal is in a high density residential area. Moreso, the EPA has since failed to adequately regulate to prevent the serious health impacts and loss of amenity for the adjacent community.

**9. High polluting ships need to be identified and relocated away from high density residential locations.**

**10. No overnight stay of ships should be allowed at White Bay.**

**11. No more than one ship should stay at White Bay at a time.**

**12. Emissions monitoring criteria is inadequate.** It is well known that diesel emissions are carcinogenic and contain 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 ignores the other dangerous emissions.

**13. There is a lack of information from authorities about the composition of fuels and the expected effects from exposure** to the variety of chemicals in these fuels especially given the very long durations of exposure faced by our community. **Communities need to be provided with information so as to avoid risks to their health and to avoid exacerbating existing health conditions.**

**14. It has been disappointing that the cruise ship industry - which is causing these problems - does little to acknowledge the community concerns, nor responds to these.** Any contact made by Government agencies with the industry has carried little regulatory weight. **Greater accountability and response by the cruise ship industry is needed and effective regulatory control of cruise ship operations by Government agencies, in particular the EPA, is needed.**

**15. Government should find an alternative location for cruise ships, away from White Bay, which will be more compatible with the way that this industry operates and will ensure that the significant impacts of the industry on communities is minimised.**

**16. Noise from cruise ships should be regulated, controlled, and managed by an independent government authority (such as EPA).** Current monitoring of cruise ships which visit White Bay show that a high proportion exceed the noise controls. The impact on residents from noise and vibrations is a cause of great disturbance. Yet, there appears to be no penalties for these ongoing noise breaches.

**17. Ship arrivals should not occur before 6.30am.** (An appropriate time should be canvassed with local residents.) Noise disruption and sleep disturbance from cruise ships has occurred before 5.00am.

**18. White Bay should be designated a ‘quiet port’ given its highly sensitive proximity to the high density residential community.** Operations which require noise should be conducted away from White Bay. Testing

of alarms, announcements, blasts of the ship funnel and other major sources of noise from the cruise ships have an enormous impact on households.

**19. There is a lack of consistency in regulation and compliance across industries. The cruise ship industry is able to pollute the environment and present health risks that would result in any other operators being closely monitored or even closed down until the situation is resolved.**

**20. Residential communities should not have to face the prospect or threat of 24/7 operations – such as the cruise ship terminal as well as all other proposed uses along White Bay – which are virtually unregulated and allow major impacts of air and noise pollution, loss of amenity, and increased traffic on an entire community of thousands of residents.**

**21. Government agencies which have responsibility for environmental protection should utilise historical information to assist their work. The adverse impact of 24/7 working harbour on the health of residents and on the quality of the local environment in Balmain is well known and well recorded and should not be repeated.**

**Cr John Stamolis (INDEPENDENT)  
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