Glebe Island Bridge and key maritime businesses in Blackwattle Bay and Rozelle Bay

Stakeholder consultation report

May 2012
Urbis’s Social Policy team has received ISO 20252 Certification for the provision of social policy research and evaluation, social planning, community consultation, market research and communications research.

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Executive Summary

The Glebe Island Bridge is a swing bridge which previously connected Pyrmont with Glebe Island.

Urbis has been engaged by New South Wales (NSW) Roads and Maritime Services to undertake consultation with key maritime businesses located in the Blackwattle Bay and Rozelle Bay foreshore areas.

Outcomes of these discussions may be used to inform ongoing planning and development considerations for the Glebe Island Bridge. Consultations included desktop research and telephone discussions with stakeholders.

Key findings of this report include:

- **Glebe Island Bridge** (the Bridge) is located on Sydney Harbour and spans a narrow channel of water to connect Jackson’s Landing in Pyrmont with Glebe Island in Rozelle. The Bridge structure is 108m long and is connected to the land by two artificially-formed abutments.

- The Bridge is not listed as an item of state heritage significance on the State Heritage Register under the Heritage Act 1977.

- The City of Sydney and Leichhardt Municipal Council have identified a long term opportunity to provide a cycleway over the Bridge. This is noted in the Draft City of Sydney Development Control Plan 2010 and the Leichhardt Council Bicycle Strategy 2007.

- Blackwattle Bay and Rozelle Bay form part of the Inner Sydney Foreshore area. As two of the few remaining working parts of Sydney Harbour, use of the bays by commercial and recreational operators has formed part of continued economic development.

- The Blackwattle and Rozelle Bay area is used by a number of different services, operators and the general public throughout the week (day and night).

- Blackwattle Bay and Rozelle Bay are unique within the Sydney Harbour landscape due to the mix of uses and accessibility. The area provides access for the general public, provides significant employment and is one of the only working harbour areas left in Sydney Harbour.

- The area is important to Sydney economically and socially. In addition, a number of businesses within the bay area provide important maintenance and services for the operation and use of Sydney Harbour as a working port.

- A number of stakeholders stated that the preference for any changes or redevelopment within the area should reflect the vision of the original Bays Precinct Masterplan (1998 and 2001).

- The proximity of the Blackwattle Bay and Rozelle Bay area to the Sydney CBD is an important factor for operators and workers. It offers access to the general public and is serviced by extensive private and public transport options.

- The enclosed nature of the Blackwattle Bay and Rozelle Bay area offers natural protection to vessels from currents and wind and the provision of deep water to enable larger vessels to move freely and easily onto moorings.

- The Glebe Island Bridge channel is narrow and is difficult to navigate due to the existing level of vessel traffic. There was a concern that reinstating the operational swing bridge may increase travel times and jeopardise safe navigation.

- It is suggested that significant development plans for the Blackwattle Bay and Rozelle Bay area may increase vessel movements and waterway traffic in the future. A number of business operators intend to redevelop the land and sea side of current services, particularly in Blackwattle Bay.
- It was reported that continued development and economic activity is contingent on access to the wider Sydney Harbour area.

- It was suggested by large maritime business operators that any additional impediments to exiting and entering the Glebe Island Bridge channel may disadvantage operations and negatively impact on the value the location currently provides.

- Overall, there was a view that the Glebe Island Bridge should remain open.
Introduction

The Glebe Island Bridge is a swing bridge which previously connected Pyrmont with Glebe Island. The bridge has been left in the ‘open’ position since 1995.

As part of the Bays Precinct Strategy, the New South Wales (NSW) Government and other key stakeholders are considering options for the future use of Glebe Island Bridge. The Bays Precinct Strategy is a broad policy initiative which aims to redevelop the inner Sydney foreshore areas including Blackwattle Bay and Rozelle Bay.

One option that has been suggested is to reactivate Glebe Island Bridge as an operational swing bridge. This would provide an additional access point connecting the communities of Pyrmont and Rozelle.

Urbis has been engaged by New South Wales (NSW) Roads and Maritime Services to undertake consultation with key maritime businesses located in the Blackwattle Bay and Rozelle Bay foreshore areas.

REPORT STRUCTURE

This report reviews the business operations of key maritime businesses and identifies the concerns of these stakeholders in relation to the redevelopment of the Glebe Island Bridge.

Section 1 reviews the site and interface of the Glebe Island Bridge with local area land and waterway uses. This includes an historical appreciation of the site and its present condition and functionality. This section also provides analysis of the Bays Precinct Taskforce and the key elements of this policy objective.

Section 2 profiles the large maritime business operators in Blackwattle Bay and Rozelle Bay. This includes an assessment of business operations and regular vessel movement in and out of the Glebe Island Bridge channel, in addition to agreed leasehold agreements and redevelopment plans.

Section 3 outlines the large maritime business operators consulted as part of this process and identifies key concerns in relation to potential changes to the current operation of the Glebe Island Bridge and the impact this may have.

The final section provides a summary of consultation outcomes and concerns.

METHODOLOGY

This report provides a summary of outcomes based on:

- Desktop review of existing data and documentation provided by NSW Roads and Maritime Services.
- Telephone consultations with nine large maritime business operators undertaken on 14 and 15 May 2012.

This report represents a snapshot of key perspectives and concerns. It does not represent a detailed assessment of needs or potential impacts associated with particular options for the Glebe Island Bridge.
1 Glebe Island Bridge

1.1 LOCATION AND CONTEXT

Glebe Island Bridge (the Bridge) is located on Sydney Harbour and spans a narrow channel of water to connect Jackson’s Landing in Pyrmont with Glebe Island in Rozelle. The Bridge structure is 108m long and is connected to the land by two artificially-formed abutments (See Picture 1)

PICTURE 1 – GLEBE ISLAND BRIDGE IN THE ‘OPEN’ POSITION

Source: Urbis 2012

The Bridge was formerly the only traffic link between Pyrmont and Glebe Island. The previous arterial link connected to Bank Street in Pyrmont and James Craig Road on Glebe Island. The usefulness of the Bridge as an arterial traffic route has been superseded by the construction and operation of the Anzac Bridge in December 1995.

In recent years Jackson’s Landing has experienced large scale redevelopment including high density residential land use and landscaping of the foreshore area for recreational uses. The foreshore area of Glebe Island continues to operate primarily as a working harbour with a diverse range of maritime land uses encouraged to begin operations in recent times. Key operators include recreational marine, charter vessels and construction and maintenance services. These are concentrated on James Craig Road, Rozelle NSW and Bridge Road, Pyrmont NSW.

It is understood that approximately 200 vessels a day rely on access through this passage, including commercial vessels, super yachts and other recreational vessels.
1.2 HISTORY AND CURRENT STATE

The Bridge is an electrically operated low-level steel swing bridge. Construction of the Bridge was completed in 1903.

The Bridge was designed to link traffic from Sydney’s western suburbs to the Central Business District. The Bridge also provided movement for vessels between Blackwattle Bay and Rozelle Bay to Sydney Harbour.

The Bridge stopped operating in 1995 when the ANZAC Bridge opened. The Bridge no longer forms part of the road network and cannot be accessed by the general public. The Bridge is permanently in an ‘open’ position at present.

Structural assessments of the Bridge indicate that it is in very poor condition. For instance:

- between 30% and 45% of the structural steel requires replacement or repair;
- the majority of timber safety fenders (located underneath the swing component of the Bridge when closed) have rotted through and snapped;
- a large proportion of the sandstone piers supporting the Bridge require repair or replacement.

Minimal maintenance work has been carried out on the Bridge in recent times and inspection noted that considerable rust and flaking paintwork is evident. The NSW Heritage Database notes the condition of the Bridge assessment as ‘poor’.

The Bridge is not listed as an item of state heritage significance on the State Heritage Register under the Heritage Act 1977.

The City of Sydney and Leichhardt Municipal Council have identified a long term opportunity to provide a cycleway over the Bridge. This is noted in the Draft City of Sydney Development Control Plan 2010 and the Leichhardt Council Bicycle Strategy 2007.

1.3 BLACKWATTLE BAY AND ROZELLE BAY

Blackwattle Bay and Rozelle Bay are located approximately two kilometres west of the Sydney CBD. The combined area of both bays is bounded by the suburbs of Rozelle, Annandale, Glebe and Pyrmont.

Blackwattle Bay is located between the Pyrmont Peninsula and the foreshores of Glebe. The foreshore area is irregularly shaped and is bounded by Pyrmont Bridge Road and Blackwattle Bay. It is approximately 1.3 hectares in area, part of which is reclaimed land with wharf structures built on piles over submerged land.

Rozelle Bay extends along the northern foreshore of Rozelle Bay from the old Glebe Island Bridge in the east, swinging around south of Whites Creek and terminating at the western edge of Bicentennial Park, east of the Light Rail viaduct. Victoria Road and The Crescent extend along the northern boundary of the foreshore area. James Craig Road traverses the site from The Crescent to the Glebe Island Dockyard area. Much of the Rozelle Bay foreshore is reclaimed and a piled wharf extends along a major portion of the waterfrontage.

Blackwattle Bay and Rozelle Bay continue as two of the few remaining working parts of Sydney Harbour and use of the bays by commercial and recreational operators has formed part of economic development.

Key landmarks in the area include:

- Anzac Bridge
- Glebe Island Bridge
- Sydney Fish Markets.
- Bicentennial Park
- Glebe Island.

Blackwattle Bay and Rozelle Bay form part of the Bays Precinct, located on the inner-city foreshores of Sydney Harbour.

The final version of the *Master Plan for Rozelle and Blackwattle Bays Maritime Precincts* (NSW Waterways Authority, 2002) proposed to redevelop the foreshore areas and was accepted by the now defunct NSW Waterways Authority in 2002. One of the key objectives of the master plan was to 'reinforce and complement the role of the precinct as a major inner harbour port and maritime location' (NSW Waterways Authority, 2002).

1.4 BAYS PRECINCT TASKFORCE

The Minister for Planning and Infrastructure has established the Bays Precinct Taskforce (the Taskforce) to recommend a strategic framework for the Bays Precinct for the next 25 years and beyond

The key terms of reference for the Taskforce include:

- devise and implement an effective consultative process to enable local and regional stakeholders to have informed input into the strategic framework for the Bays Precinct
- identify current and emerging issues affecting the Bays Precinct
- identify short, medium and long-term issues and constraints, and requirements to address these
- advise on appropriate land uses having regard to strategic transport, port, maritime and waterfront precinct priorities for adjacent local areas and communities, metropolitan Sydney and NSW.

The scope of work undertaken by the Taskforce is guided by:

- the economic, employment, cultural, environmental and recreational needs of adjacent local areas and communities, metropolitan Sydney and NSW
- regional and local transport infrastructure requirements and the need to address current precinct traffic and transport constraints
- the unique attribute of the Bays Precinct as the last remaining undeveloped foreshore area of the natural deepwater port of Sydney Harbour, and the ongoing port and maritime needs of metropolitan Sydney and NSW
- recognition that Glebe Island and White Bay will be used for ongoing and future port-related uses
- existing studies, reports and strategies developed for the precinct, including any relevant reports documented by Leichhardt Council and City of Sydney.

Members of the Taskforce include representatives from Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority, NSW Treasury, Department of Planning and Infrastructure, Transport for NSW, Sydney Ports Corporation, Roads and Maritime Services, City of Sydney Council and Leichhardt Municipal Council. The Taskforce is chaired by Department of Premier and Cabinet.

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2 Review of key maritime businesses

This section outlines the variety and mix of business operators currently using Blackwattle Bay and Rozelle Bay as a working harbour area. The operators range from recreational users such as charter boats and marina operators, to industrial barges and boat refitting and maintenance contractors.

Table 1 below provides a review of the key maritime businesses which operate large vessels and with long term, or a right to, long term tenure. It outlines the type of operations and services they offer. This consultation focuses on businesses which have established, or have a right to, long term tenure in Blackwattle Bay or Rozelle Bay.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BUSINESS OPERATOR</th>
<th>ADDRESS</th>
<th>BUSINESS DESCRIPTION</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recreational and commercial boating</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sydney Superyacht Marina</td>
<td>1 James Craig Road</td>
<td>Marina accommodates a wide range of yachts visiting the area, the majority of which are large ocean going ocean vessels. Sydney Superyacht Marina provides clients with complete flexibility and offers access to the marina at times convenient to client needs. There are from 10 to 15 movements per day through the Glebe Island Bridge access point depending on the season, although movements can be twice this during the weekends and peak summer months. The lease term agreement is in place until 2060 and considerable further investment is planned. There are three businesses operating on this site, the marina, yachting agents and a sales function. Yachting agents supply maintenance and logistical assistance to clients when boats are in dock.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sydney Boathouse</td>
<td>James Craig Road Rozelle NSW</td>
<td>The primary business includes a dry dock facility with a marina and commercial boat mooring. Further uses include a boat brokerage and back offices for recreational operators. Main users of the facility are Sydney Fast Ferries. A number of vessels are brokered from the site. There are around 10 larger vessels currently utilising the facility, but there is capacity to accommodate twice that number. It is estimated that current berth users activate up to 20 movements through the Glebe Island Bridge every month. The business has a 30 year lease agreement, activated when the site is fully developed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seawind Catamarans</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Business specialising in the manufacture, maintenance and berthing of large ocean going catamarans and trimarans. There are 17 berths available for holding large vessels and there is also a single marine charter boat used for client functions, etc. Of the 10 boats currently utilising the facility only one is a small vessel. Others are large and in peak season the business would expect to have full use of all berths. Movements can be unpredictable but in peak season there would be 24 movements per day on average, with around 4 movements per day during the low season. The nature of the business requires flexibility of vessel movement. Different business operations mean some movements are unpredictable specifically impromptu repairs, charter services and short notice test sailings. Agreement for lease is a minimum of 40 years once the site becomes fully operational.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sydney City Marine</td>
<td>James Craig Road Rozelle NSW</td>
<td>Boat maintenance, repair and refit business specialising in all types of vessel including sailing yachts, superyachts and commercial vessels. Business is based on constant stream of work with tight scheduling of lifting and entering of vessels from and to water at precise times. When the business is working at optimum capacity, the operators expect to make up to 10 vessel movements in and out of the Glebe Island Bridge channel per day.</td>
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<td>BUSINESS OPERATOR</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Charter vessel services</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>All Occasion Cruises at Blackwattle Bay Marina</td>
<td>Bridge Road Pyrmont NSW</td>
<td>The business operates a dual function. The Blackwattle Bay Marina is an 18 berth wharf that acts as a mooring for a mix of charter vessels. Three of these vessels are owned by All Occasions cruises and 12 are managed at the marina for other charter operators. The charter vessels are large with mast heights in excess of 5m. These vessels operate on the Sydney Harbour area and are primarily used for recreational and tourist operations. The business is dependent on good access to Sydney Harbour. Peak season for the business in November/December will often see more than up to 30 movements per day if all boast are in use. At other times movements average around 10 per day. Movements can be unpredictable as charters can serve patrons at different times of the day. Significant investment is planned for the site and the lease agreement with the business is scheduled for 35 years once redevelopment is complete.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blackwattle Bay Marine Operatives</td>
<td>37 Bank Street Pyrmont NSW</td>
<td>Lease of the wharf area and low level maintenance are key services operated by this business. The wharf area is leased by two charter vessel operators with a total of 24 vessels in operation. Up to 11 vessels have a mast height in excess of 5m. All maintenance is currently provided on the water and there is little room to redevelopment the land side. Vessel movements vary throughout the year, averaging up to 58 per week in March/April but increasing to more than 100 per week in November/December. The business intends to install a maintenance lift dock to increase the capacity of the maintenance and services arm, and to increase the wharf area to accommodate larger vessels. Redevelopment is anticipated to be complete and operational around February/March 2013.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Waterfront contractors</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Devine Marine</td>
<td>The Crescent Glebe NSW</td>
<td>Marine salvage company which uses large construction crane barges. The operator has a leasehold agreement for up to 10 years after full redevelopment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waterway Constructions</td>
<td>James Craig Road Rozelle NSW</td>
<td>Maritime contractor undertaking construction, maintenance and refurbishment of maritime structures including wharves and piers. Own a large and diverse range of floating plant including six construction crane barges. These vessels are large and require considerable clearance when cranes are at full capacity. Business operations can be unpredictable and movements in and out of the bay require flexibility of access. Movements can vary from daily to weekly depending on where cranes are required for service. Request for service can also come at short notice. The business has a key role in continuing to assist in the redevelopment of the foreshores area in Blackwattle Bay and Rozelle Bay, and the leasehold is expected to run for a further 20 years.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polaris Marine</td>
<td>James Craig Road Rozelle NSW</td>
<td>Business operates a range of salvage, towage, mooring and marine construction services. Vessel fleet includes tug boats and larger vessels that are greater than 5m in height. Leasehold is scheduled to run until 2018 in the first instance with an option to renew.</td>
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<td>BUSINESS OPERATOR</td>
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<tr>
<td>Australian Wharf and Bridge</td>
<td>James Craig Road</td>
<td>Maritime contractor undertaking construction, maintenance and refurbishment of maritime structures including wharves, marinas and piers. Business operates a wide range of large construction and maintenance vessels including three large construction crane barges up to 27m in height. Movements are unpredictable, barges can be in and out regularly or as little as once a month. This is dependent on where the contract is based and the term agreed. The leasehold will secure operations at the present site for up to 10 years after site development is compete.</td>
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<td>Rozelle NSW</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Industry</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hanson Construction Materials</td>
<td>Bridge Road</td>
<td>Business operates as a receiving and processing point for primary material aggregates for concrete manufacture. The site includes a berth area for a large cargo ship. Site lease expires in 2013.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Glebe NSW</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hymix Australia</td>
<td>Bank Street</td>
<td>Concrete batching plant site. Primary business does not employ vessels but does lease a portion of the site to charter vessel operators.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pyrmont NSW</td>
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|                               |                          | Other business operations                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 
| Sydney Fish Market            | Bank Street              | This business operates a lease of wharf service to a number of charter vessel operators including Manly Fast Ferry, Fusion Cruises and a number of privately owned yachts. These charter operations are serviced on two of the existing wharves. The primary business is fishing to service the fish market. The commercial fishing fleet contains 15 vessels at base level, all of which are large ocean going craft, with mast heights in excess of 5m. On average the wharf regularly contains 10 to 15 large vessels with movements of all these vessels on most days. The business intends to upgrade the land side of the site significantly, although full redevelopment plans have been abandoned for the time being. |
|                               | Pyrmont NSW              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Australian Heritage Fleet     | James Craig Road         | The Rozelle Bay workshop is a refitting and maintenance area for a number of historical vessels. Redevelopment plans include a sea heritage dock, heavy wharf and floating pontoon. Relocation to Blackwattle Bay would include the maintenance of current operations and continued servicing and housing of all vessels. Plans also include provision for common user boat ramp for use by smaller vessels for launching operations. |
|                               | Rozelle NSW              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |

Source: NSW Roads and Maritime Service
3 Consultation with key maritime businesses

The following provides a summary of key findings from consultation undertaken with large maritime business operators within Blackwattle Bay and Rozelle Bay.

3.1 LIST OF STAKEHOLDERS CONTACTED

Large maritime business operators consulted include:

- Sydney Superyacht Marina
- Sydney Boathouse
- Seawind Catamarans
- Sydney City Marine
- All Occasion Cruises/Blackwattle Bay Marina
- Blackwattle Bay Marine Operatives (Giddens)
- Sydney Fish Market
- Waterways Constructions
- Australian Wharf and Bridge.

3.2 KEY MESSAGES

Stakeholders included large maritime business operators in four main categories of operation with similar interests. These include:

- Recreational and commercial boating
- Charter vessel services
- Waterfront contractors
- Other business operations.

An overview of the businesses in each category is provided in Section 2.

Key messages are presented within the above categories to provide a concise understanding of the different concerns and issues identified during the consultation.

3.2.1 RECREATIONAL VESSEL SERVICES

WORKING HARBOUR

A common theme discussed by a number of marinas was the location of the bay area in close proximity to Sydney CBD, and the positive communications and relationships between public and private operations that occur within the area. It was recognised that the bay area is one of the very few places for commercial use and activity within close proximity to the Sydney Central Business District (CBD).

It was reported that the bay area is ideally located in relation to access with the Sydney CBD. The bay area is busy throughout the week, but it was noted that on special event days, including Australia Day and New Year’s Eve the bay area and Bridge Channel is extremely busy.
“Seasonal activity is intense and the free flow of vessels is key to achieving this optimum outcome on high activity days.”

The marinas consulted were asked to speak about what they would like to see occur within the Blackwattle and Rozelle Bay area moving forward. There was overall consensus that they would like to see the bay area continue to be a working harbour. One marina also stated that they would like to see more commercial operators within the area, operating in a clean and efficient manner.

“This is important for Sydney and commercially for the area, there is a good mix of recreational and commercial uses and convenience should remain as is.”

It was reported that the creation of Rozelle Bay as a recreational boating hub is an important part of the Sydney Harbour landscape and that it “makes sense” given the location to the wider harbour, NSW Maritime Services and other dedicated services for recreational boating in the area.

It was also stated by one marina that if the Glebe Island Bridge were to close, many customers would choose to store boats elsewhere if they could not access the harbour in a timely fashion. This would ultimately impact on the social and economic benefits currently experienced within the Blackwattle Bay and Rozelle Bay area.

INVESTMENT
A number of the marinas consulted indicated their intention to continue to invest in the Blackwattle and Rozelle Bay area, further expanding on upgrades and redevelopment of services and operations on their sites.

It was reported that a number of businesses have long term plans and investment within the Blackwattle and Rozelle Bay area. One marina noted plans to include a 300 boat dry boat store commencing in 2012 and completion in 2014, a commercial maritime building due to be completed in 2016 and in 2018, a multi-storey car park and further dry boat facility (DA approval up to 600 boats). Another business stated they have invested more than $15 million on their site in anticipation of the masterplan to develop the bays area.

One business stated that current and future upgrades on their site include building a small office complex with café and a slipway to assist with the maintenance of facilities. There will also be continuous business development regarding the marina, chartering and maintenance beyond 2015. A third marina reported they have a long term development plan for mixed use offices and retail as well as restaurants within the yacht club (2012 construction and operation from 2013 to 2015). Only one business stated that they had no current or future plans to develop or expand.

WELL PROTECTED BAY
The marina operators were asked about what they believed currently worked well within the Blackwattle and Rozelle Bay area. There was agreement that the bay area is well protected from weather and harbour elements, including; wind, currents and deep sea levels. One marina stated that the bay is:

“…well protected and good for boats, it is easy to house them, and accessibility to Sydney Harbour is excellent.”

The deep water of the bay area was also seen as a positive attribute for those vessels that access and use the bay area and that this is “…one of the very few in Sydney.”

Additionally, it was noted that the bay area does not have a lot of “wash” and this makes it a safer place to lift and launch boats. It was also noted that sailing within the area, with the speed restrictions in place, makes the journey into the harbour already onerous.

“Commercial boats find it difficult to get out of the bay area… any further delays would make business operations more difficult.”
ORIGINAL MASTERPLAN
One marina noted the significant investment already committed to development and upgrade of the site and that continued investment could only be assured if the original Bays Precinct masterplan was implemented going forward. Similar sentiment was reported from other marina operators.

ACCESS
It was noted by one marina that during peak movement times vessels have to queue to travel through the Bridge channel and currently this is dangerous. It is anticipated that there will be an increase in vessels within the area and this activity will exacerbate current issues in parking and movement through the Bridge channel. Currently, it was recognised that the Bridge channel is working well, however any increase in traffic, even with the Bridge open, will make it more difficult to navigate and decrease safety. One marina stated that removing the Glebe Island Bridge would mitigate against these issues.

It was stated by two marinas that the ANZAC Bridge now accommodates all access from and to Rozelle Bay area. “It makes no sense to have it there (Glebe Island Bridge) given the ANZAC Bridge and the large commercial shipping activity moving through the access point.”

Furthermore, it was noted that the Bridge channel is narrow and there are a number of safety issues currently experienced within this area that will escalate if the Bridge becomes fully operational and reverts to a swing opening and closing system. There is particular concern associated with boats doing ‘doughnuts’ while waiting for the Bridge to open as well as backing up traffic.

“Doing doughnuts in this environment is very dangerous, contemplating large numbers of vessels all trying to work around each other in this confined space.”

One marina noted that the “Glebe Island Bridge is in a serious state of disrepair and to fix it up would cost a lot”, however it does need to be done. It was also reported that if the Bridge was removed it would make the area safer.

“The channel is very narrow and traffic light system currently requires a lot of attention to the system… super yachts find it difficult to access as is.”

It was reported there were dangers for vessels launching onto the water, especially when there are high traffic movements through the Glebe Island Bridge channel. Unrestricted height access was an additional benefit of having the Glebe Island Bridge in the open position permanently, and was noted by a number of marinas.

It was reported that vessels choose the location of Blackwattle and Rozelle Bays due to access through the Glebe Island Bridge channel to Sydney Harbour and beyond, convenience to the Sydney CBD, and geographic location and protection of the bay area.

3.2.2 CHARTER VESSEL SERVICES
WORKING HARBOUR
Overall, the charter services suggested the current operations in the Blackwattle and Rozelle Bay area supports a working harbour.

INVESTMENT
Similarly to other lease holders within the Blackwattle and Rozelle Bay area, charter vessel services have large monetary investments associated with upgrades and developments of their services. One charter vessel service stated an investment of $20 million into the Blackwattle Bay area; this includes a 20 berth marina for charter boats only. Additionally, there are plans to redevelop their land with mixed use development including offices, function centres and back of house operation areas for charters (due to begin in 2014 – 2015).

Another charter service also stated that they have future plans to develop their site. This included a maintenance lift dock to be installed to increase maintenance operations for other vessels including yachts (December 2012). It was noted that there was intention to increase the wharf to accommodate larger vessels (February/March 2013).
One charter vessel operator also noted the importance of the working harbour and the employment opportunities created through continued investment.

“We employ up to 200 people and those jobs are in jeopardy if charter boats move out of the Blackwattle Bay area.”

WELL PROTECTED BAY

It was noted by one charter vessel service that a positive aspect of the Blackwattle and Rozelle Bay area was the protection of the bay and that it is a “nice, calm, protected area.” Another charter service stated that wave movements within the bay areas are minimal and this makes maintenance of vessels easier.

ORIGINAL MASTERPLAN

Charter vessel services were asked what they would like to see occur in the Blackwattle and Rozelle Bay area moving forward. Two charter services felt that it was important the implementation of the original Bays Precinct masterplan in 1998 and 2001 come to fruition. One charter vessel operator stated:

“The two bay areas were to be redeveloped contingent on the Glebe Island Bridge remaining open.”

Another charter vessel service stated that it would be important to meet the original masterplan requirements and vision. These included the redevelopment of the fish markets and the completion of the walk way around the bay area.

ACCESS

It was noted that one charter service believed closing the Glebe Island Bridge would place significant pressure on charter operators. There is an understanding by some operators that the Bridge would be left open except for one or two days a year.

“Access is the key concern.”

Overall, it was noted that charter services generally believed that to close the bridge for cyclists and pedestrians was not supported by operators.

3.2.3 WATERFRONT CONTRACTORS

WORKING HARBOUR

There is a concern that the harbour is losing maritime activity and working operations and that “maintenance still needs to be undertaken”. It was noted that access to the harbour in a short amount of time is of particular importance for maintenance and service operators in the bay area.

“When salvaging a vessel we need to move through the Bridge channel quickly.”

It was also noted that there is a large amount of development occurring within Blackwattle Bay and this may increase the number of vessels within the Bay and Sydney Harbour. It was believed by one operator that closing the Bridge will make Sydney Harbour less accessible and that this has implications in itself, including limiting accessibility and opportunities for activity on the waterways and concern associated with maintaining key waterway structures (bridges and ferry wharves).

“Sydney Harbour is only beautiful because of the activity that is allowed. We need access in and out and this will only work if the Bridge channel is opened.”

INVESTMENT

One construction business stated that they have been in the area for 20 years and hoped to continue in the area for another 20 years and beyond, working with NSW Roads and Maritime Services. They have been involved in all major foreshore redevelopments within Sydney Harbour.

Maintenance and service operators described Blackwattle and Rozelle Bay as well protected. It was noted by one operator that there is currently limited space within the Bays to expand, with some having to lease area within White Bay to supplement the space in Blackwattle and Rozelle Bays.
“From our requirements we need more space for current and future operations.”

It was reported that operations and businesses within the Blackwattle Bay and Rozelle Bay area relied on the key features of the location.

“Some activities cannot function without being on the waterfront… some businesses are also enhanced by being on the waterfront and depend on it.”

WELL PROTECTED BAY

It was reported that the current Bridge channel is narrow, while the bay is well protected from weather conditions. There was a concern that if the Glebe Island Bridge were to close, the channel may become dangerous. This was in reference to the large number of vessels queuing on either side of the Bridge, and movement through the channel when the Bridge opened.

“If there were to be three or four barges, commercial operators and fishing boats all trying to get through… you could have up to 100 vessels in the area at one time… this could take up to two hours to get through the narrow channel.”

ACCESS

A number of maintenance and construction services within the Bay spoke about the importance of ensuring that the Bridge is kept open for their operational purposes. This is of particular importance for these businesses because they access Sydney Harbour on a regular basis and sometimes with limited notice.

“The beauty of the bay area is always having the Bridge opened so that we can carry on work unimpeded.”

A number of services stated that if the Bridge was closed and access through the channel was only at certain times of the day that this would impact on the operation, maintenance and services readily available. For example, some businesses stated that wind and current movement can significantly effect work being undertaken. It was noted that in construction “things can always go awry” and for the large vessels that undertake repair and maintenance work, including barges, manoeuvring or waiting for Bridges to open and close can be dangerous and time consuming. Access through the Bridge channel is particularly important for services that salvage sinking boats. It was noted that the only control for big barges is if they are under tow (pushed). If this process stops it could become extremely dangerous for those on board and surrounding vessels or structures.

“At the moment the Bridge is open all the time and works very well – there is no lining up.”

Freedom of movement through the Bridge channel was believed by maintenance and service providers to currently work well in the Bay area. A number of stakeholders interviewed stated that they had experienced, over time, the Glebe Island Bridge as a continuously opened structure as well as operating as both opened and closed. There was overall consensus that maintenance and service operators would require more freedom moving forward.

“If the Bridge were to close it would cause major implications in movement of vessels.”

3.2.4 OTHER BUSINESS OPERATIONS

WORKING HARBOUR

Commercial operators within Blackwattle Bay stated that vessels use the Bridge channel most days of the weeks. For example, fishermen usually access the channel Saturday through to Thursday. There was a concern that Sydney has lost most of its working ports, and what has evolved within Blackwattle and Rozelle Bay is important for the activity and functioning of the Sydney waterways.

Further, Blackwattle Bay and Rozelle Bay are unique in that they provide access to the general public employment opportunities. One key operator noted there is an important ambience about the bays, where people are able to buy fresh produce from retail stores and sit by the bay and watch fishermen coming in
and leaving, undertaking their day-to-day activities. The more than two million tourists that visit the Sydney Fish Markets every year was provided as an example of why it is important to continue to employ a mix of uses at this site.

“It is important to preserve the working harbour and also ensure that it is accessible for the community.”

INVESTMENT

A key business operator noted that they have made significant investment in the area.

“In essence, we are here to stay; our lease is to run for another 34 years.”

They stated that they have no plans to move from the area and they are undertaking significant upgrades to improve their site.

“This shows we are about to invest in the precinct.”

ORIGINAL MASTERPLAN

Business operators believe that it is important for future redevelopment within the bay area to implement a whole of precinct approach. It was noted that too often a “piece by piece planning approach” has been undertaken. The different interests and concerns of the combination of business operators and community groups in the area should be considered.

ACCESS

There is a preference for the Glebe Island Bridge to remain in the open position. This allows free navigation of vessels and also preserves the visual aspect of the structure.

“It does need to be preserved but in terms of functionality, it needs to be open.”

One business operator believed the walkway around the foreshore is a good concept as long as it takes into account the different uses, including business operators within the precinct. It was also noted that it is important to consider public access and safety.

“If we lose this as a wharfing and berthing area for commercial fleet it won’t leave anything left in Sydney, it is important to keep this.”

3.3 KEY FINDINGS

- The Blackwattle and Rozelle Bay area is used by a number of different services, operators and the general public throughout the week (day and night).

- Blackwattle Bay and Rozelle Bay are unique within the Sydney Harbour landscape due to the mix of uses and accessibility. The area provides access for the general public, provides significant employment and is one of the only working harbour areas left in Sydney Harbour.

- The area is important to Sydney economically and socially. In addition, a number of businesses within the bay area provide important maintenance and service requirements to the operation and use of Sydney Harbour.

- The majority of those consulted stated they plan future investment in the area, including the upgrade of current facilities, expansion and development plans.

- A number of stakeholders stated that the preference for any changes or redevelopment within the area should reflect the vision of the original Bays Precinct Masterplan (1998 and 2001).

- The proximity of the Blackwattle Bay and Rozelle Bay area to the Sydney CBD is an important factor for operators and workers. It offers access to the general public and is serviced by extensive private and public transport options.
- A further positive is the readily available access connecting the Blackwattle Bay and Rozelle Bay areas to other parts of Sydney Harbour.

- The enclosed nature of the Blackwattle Bay and Rozelle Bay area offers natural protection to vessels from currents and wind and the provision of deep water to enable larger vessels to move freely and easily onto moorings.

- The Glebe Island Bridge channel is narrow and is difficult to navigate due to the existing level of vessel traffic. There was a concern that reinstating the operational swing bridge may increase travel times and jeopardise safe navigation.

- It is suggested that significant development plans intended for the Blackwattle Bay and Rozelle Bay area may increase vessel movements and waterway traffic in the future. A number of business operators intend to redevelop the land and sea side of current services, particularly in Blackwattle Bay.

- Overall, there was a view that the Glebe Island Bridge should remain open.
4 Conclusion

This report provides a summary of outcomes from consultations with a number of key maritime businesses in the Blackwattle Bay and Rozelle Bay areas. Consultations were undertaken to profile current operations, future plans, and key values and concerns.

The Glebe Island Bridge has been in the ‘open’ position since 1995. Since that time a number of large maritime business operations have commenced within the enclosed area of Blackwattle Bay and Rozelle Bay. These businesses operate large vessels which demand frequent, and in some cases unpredictable, movements in and out of the Glebe Island channel to access the wider Sydney Harbour area. Continued operation and further economic development is a key objective of foreshore redevelopment and is recognised by the Bays Precinct Taskforce and NSW Roads and Maritime Services.

The consultation identified a number of key messages from large marine business operators. Concern was most evident around the value of the working harbour and the significant advantages of operating in a protected and enclosed bay. The natural attributes of Blackwattle Bay and Rozelle Bay offer large maritime business operators significant advantage and have encouraged the continued redevelopment of the foreshore area and the emergence of further port-related economic activity.

It was reported that continued development and economic activity is contingent on continued access to the wider Sydney Harbour area.

It was suggested by large maritime business operators that any additional impediments to exiting and entering the Glebe Island Bridge channel may disadvantage operations and negatively impact on the value the location currently provides.
Appendix A  Large maritime business operator consultation discussion guide
Hi XXX,

My name is XXX, I am from a Social Planning and Research company called Urbis. I understand NSW Roads and Maritime Services recently contacted you to say we would be calling you regarding the Bays Precinct Development Strategy. NSW Roads and Maritime Services have engaged Urbis to consult with key lease holders in the Rozelle and Blackwattle Bay areas. This is to help inform an understanding of key issues and concerns around the Bays Precinct Development Strategy, how the area currently functions, current benefits, and future aspirations for the area, as well as the role of your business and operations.

We are talking with a number of other key lease holders in the area. We will be providing a summary of outcomes from these discussions to NSW Roads and Maritime Services. This will inform future planning as part of the Bays Precinct Development Strategy.

I have a few questions to ask you about this, is now still a good time to talk?

Please note that in order to preserve your privacy, responses will not be attributed to individuals in our reporting or discussions with NSW Roads and Maritime Services. However, we may report key issues for different operations.

We would like to take notes during today’s interview. If you would like a copy of these notes, please ask me at the end of our interview.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

Questions:

1. What is your main role within the Blackwattle and Rozelle Bay area? E.g. services and operations

2. How many vessels do you have which would not fit under the bridge when closed (ie. 4.7m)?

3. How often do these vessels move in/out the Bridge channel?

4. What are your short and long term plans for your business?

5. What you think currently works well in the Bays Precinct?
6. What do you think are the key issues or concerns within the Bay area? How do you think these may be overcome in the future?

7. What would you like to see occur within Blackwattle and Rozelle Bay moving forward?

8. Do you have anything else you would like to add?

Thank you for your time.
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