

NAVY LEAGUE of AUSTRALIA

SUBMISSION TO CRUISE SHIP ACCESS REVIEW

The League believes that priority must at all times be given to Navy operations. It is noted that the independent review is to assess whether there is scope to enhance cruise ship access to Garden Island *“without adversely impacting on its priority role of supporting Navy maritime operations, including repair and maintenance”*

The League is concerned that unless this priority role is at all times respected Naval operations will be adversely affected.

In the next few years Navy is to acquire two large Landing Helicopter Dock Ships and three Air Warfare Destroyers. It has recently acquired a Landing Ship Dock vessel. All these vessels are likely to be based at Garden Island.

It is hard to envisage where else on the east coast these ships could be based.

In addition to the ships mentioned other Royal Australian Navy ships and ships of foreign navies will require the use of the Garden Island facilities.

There is at present no alternative on the east coast capable of providing the support available at Garden Island.

To provide comparable facilities at another site on the east coast, assuming such a suitable site could be found, would be very expensive. It would also take some years to establish.

Establishing a base outside Sydney is not just a question of the physical facilities. Sydney has a large industrial base and a large population with a wide range of skills, including those required in operating a major naval dockyard.

It is desirable from the point of view of Navy personnel and their families that Navy bases be in or near large population centres.

It is the view of the League that there is no alternative site capable of meeting Navy operational and maintenance requirements on the east coast other than Garden Island.

Given that Navy will continue to operate from Garden Island what arrangements can be made that will permit access to cruise ships?

It is possible to consider alternative berthing arrangements for Navy ships (Glebe Island, at anchor in Sydney Harbour, Botany Bay, Jervis Bay ??) Setting up these alternatives will not be cost free.

Whatever alternative berthing arrangements may be established, the maintenance and support requirements of the fleet will still have to be met at Garden Island.

Assuming that suitable alternative berthing arrangements for Navy can be arrived at for the times when cruise ships are berthed at Garden Island, a number of issues will have to be addressed including;

- what happens if Navy has an urgent need to use the dockyard. This might be for urgent repairs. It might be to meet a requirement arising from a natural disaster. (the most dramatic example being cyclone Tracy)
- if large numbers of passengers are embarking/diseimbarking at Garden Island what security arrangements will be in place.
- Safety issues in a working dockyard
- The work of the dockyard must be unaffected. Large cruise ships generate a lot of activity. In addition to large passenger movements the cruise ships will generate traffic needed for their own support.

The League does not oppose cruise ship access to Garden Island Naval Base provided such access is compatible with the needs of Navy.

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Graham Harris
Federal President