

Heliport a must-have for CBD, says lobby



A permanent helicopter base should be included as part of the Barangaroo redevelopment.

SYDNEY'S peak tourism body has renewed a decades-long push for a permanent helicopter base in the CBD, arguing one should be included as part of the Barangaroo redevelopment.

In its submission to the government's review of planning for Barangaroo, the Tourism and Transport Forum says a heliport should either be in the proposed headland park or in the central part of the 23-hectare site. The TTF says Sydney's lack of a helicopter service operating close to the business district is in "stark contrast" to other major international cities including New York and London, which have established city heliports for tourism and to shuttle executives to the airport.

"TTF strongly supports the provision of a helicopter service that would provide a bird's eye view of Sydney Harbour and a unique way for residents and visitors to view its major attractions," the submission says.

Battles to establish a permanent heliport in Sydney have flared since the early 1980s when the heliport at Darling Harbour was removed in the redevelopment of the old rail yards.

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A former NSW transport Minister, Bruce Baird, now president of the TTF, pushed for a permanent base on the harbour in 1991 despite vigorous opposition from resident groups complaining about the likely noise.

The TTF said there was more need than ever to cater for the demands of "high-yield tourists" and a heliport would "cement Sydney's reputation as an international city".

TTF's chief executive, John Lee, said wealthy tourists who wanted a helicopter trip over the harbour had to take a hire car to Bankstown aerodrome, take a short flight over the harbour and then sit in traffic on the way back from Bankstown.

"If we are to be a truly global city it's time to have the debate about whether we have one - they do it on the Barrier Reef, they do it on the Yarra; it's a no-brainer to do it in Sydney," he said.

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