

North Sydney Council moves to ground heliport

MAYORS of North Sydney, Mosman and Woollahra will meet with Newcastle Helicopters to halt progress on a floating heliport in Sydney Harbour.

The move comes after residents raised concerns about noise levels from helicopters flying low over residential properties.

David Morris, of Cremorne Point, said flights should be restricted from 9am-5pm to limit the impact on harbour properties, recreational fishers and those enjoying a "quiet walk" along the foreshore.

"Unrestricted flights during daylight hours will have no benefit to residents," he said.

Last night (Tuesday, November 27) North Sydney Council voted to hold a public meeting with residents from Mosman and the eastern suburbs in late December to discuss the heliport project.

"We wouldn't want a jet boat service operating every 15 minutes off Kirribilli Wharf, this is the equivalent in the air," Cr Tony Carr told the chamber.

"We're here for the residents and the residents don't want this," Cr Steven Barbour added.

North Sydney mayor Jilly Gibson said it was "extraordinary" harbourside councils were not consulted about the proposal but only received a letter of intent from the operator in October.

"There were no details about flight times, paths or location of the heliport," she said.

"Our residents do not want to live next to a mini air-strip."

<<TELL US: Do you support the heliport proposal? Will additional helicopter flights over Sydney Harbour affect you? COMMENT BELOW>>

But Cr Tom Robertson, a Liberal Party member, supported the move saying noise impacts would not be significantly greater than that produced from existing helicopters flying overhead.

He also blamed "media hype" for bringing unnecessary tension to the issue.

Mosman Mayor Peter Abelson said increased activity on the harbour was expected and most residents would not object if flights were "well-regulated".

A spokeswoman for Deputy Premier Andrew Stoner said helicopters would comply with strict aviation rules and not deviate from existing flight paths.

North Shore State MP Jillian Skinner has requested an urgent briefing to "better understand the plans" and relay concerns to the operator.

North Sydney MP and shadow treasurer Joe Hockey will also look into the potential impact of the heliport on his electorate.

HELIPORT PROJECT:

* Roads and Maritime Services has issued an aquatic licence to allow Newcastle Helicopters to run flights from a heliport in Sydney Harbour.

* The barge will be built east of Fort Denison, feature two helipads and is expected to be built next month from December.

* Deputy Premier Andrew Stoner said it would cater for tourists and business executives looking for an easier way to get from the airport to the CBD.

* It will be the first heliport in Sydney Harbour since the late 1980s.