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Time for truth on heliport in Sydney Harbour

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Concept image of the heliport in Sydney Harbour, to be berthed near Pyrmont and operating east of Fort Denison daily.



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KIRRIBILLI and Kurraba Point residents will suffer the worst impacts from "noisy" helicopters flying in and out of Sydney Harbour when a floating heliport starts operating east of Fort Denison, North Sydney Mayor Jilly Gibson said.

The operator, Newcastle Helicopters, has promised flights will remain at least 600m from residential properties but Cr Gibson said this was still too close.

"A helicopter flying 600m from a residential home isn't far enough away - residents will have helicopters right outside their windows," she said.

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Cremorne Point resident Pierre Metraux also raised concerns about lack of regulation after he noticed seaplanes flying in and out of Rose Bay had increasingly "encroached" on buffer airspace in the last two years.

The seaplanes were so noisy he could not hear the television or use the phone.

"They're not sticking to the flight paths - I recently counted 18 flights in two hours, they make up their own rules," Mr Metraux said.

"The helicopters will also gradually take liberties."

He added Sydney would be "laughed at" by overseas guests travelling from cities where heliports were ripped out years ago to preserve the natural beauty of their harbours.

The heliport, which has been approved by the Roads and Maritime Services, will offer transfers from Mascot airport, scenic flights over Sydney Harbour and flights to the Hunter Valley, Port Stephens, Blue Mountains and other regions.

The operator said it would "provide enhanced access to the CBD by helicopter and avoid the additional time required to route via the airport."

PUBLIC MEETING:

* In response to the lack of public consultation about the heliport project, North Sydney and Mosman councils will hold a public meeting about the proposal next Monday, December 17.

* Representatives from Newcastle Helicopters will answer questions on the location, flight path, environmental impacts and expected use of the heliport.

* It will be held in Hutley Hall, 200 Miller St, North Sydney at 6pm.

* Details: see maps and information about the heliport at www.newcastlehelicopters.com.au

FLOATING HELIPORT:

* The mobile, powered barge with two helipads is expected to be berthed in the Pyrmont area.

* It will operate east of Fort Denison and daily movements will be coordinated with Sydney Harbour Vessel Traffic Services.

* Flights will occur between 7am and last light and will conform with existing routes.

* The Roads and Maritime Services has approved the heliport, which is expected to be built by mid-2013.

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