

Angry North Sydney residents fight heliport proposal at public meeting

ONE thing was clear from the angry crowd at North Sydney's public meeting about the heliport proposal on Monday night - many lower north shore residents do not want it.

Three representatives from Newcastle Helicopters (the heliport operator), including CEO James Guest, copped a grilling from about 100 North Sydney and Mosman residents who attended the meeting at North Sydney Council chambers.

Some called for a petition to be handed to deputy premier Andrew Stoner and the Roads and Maritime Services (RMS) to ground the project, others demanded the council take legal action to stop it.

"We live in a noise tunnel, we have to wear ear plugs - more helicopters will make it unbearable," Kirribilli resident Andrew Fraser said.

Leigh Fincke, of Cremorne, said the harbour did not need any more tourist attractions.

"We don't want any more speed boats or joy flights, we want peace and quiet."

North Sydney resident Jillian Christie argued the operators had not sought an impact statement from the heritage office.

"Fort Denison is a heritage item, it will be the greatest horror to have more choppers ruin our harbour," she said.

Mayor Jilly Gibson criticised the lack of consultation, saying the plan had been on the boil for at least nine months but only publicly aired in the last three weeks.

Residents demanded details about flight paths and frequency, noise, visual and heritage impacts.

Mr Guest said the choppers were free to use existing flight paths (some of which fly over land) but would stick to over-water routes.

He added the heliport could facilitate up to eight flights per hour.

"If we had customers wanting 5 minute flights, we could have a swift turnaround of four per hour (or eight per hour with two helicopters in use)," he said.

Former UK military pilot Kevin Ratcliffe said the "quiet-technology" choppers would have a "fly neighbourly, fly friendly" policy, meaning they would minimise blade slap noise (when a chopper hovers).

The heliport, has been approved by the RMS under a 12-month licence.

HELICOPTERS:

- * Eurocopter EC120 "quiet technology" helicopters will operate from the floating heliport.

- * The choppers will be 62 decibels at 300m (about 1000 feet), a human speaking voice is 60-65 decibels.

- * There will be an unlimited number of helicopter movements using existing flight paths permitted from 7am to last light.

- * Helicopters will keep a minimum distance of 600m from the nearest residence and must fly at 1000 feet east of the harbour bridge and 500 ft west of it.

- * The movable barge will be 37m long and 12m wide and be situated about 500 metres east of Fort Denison. It will be berthed at Rozelle.