

Feasibility of Sydney heliport questioned

AAP

The plan to have a moveable helicopter barge on Sydney Harbour has been put on hold following community criticism over a lack of consultation and safety checks.

Newcastle Helicopters was given approval last month to operate a floating heliport from the harbour, which it said would provide quick transfers to and from Sydney airport and scenic flights across the water.

But it announced on Saturday that it would be halting the plans until further notice.

"Effective immediately, Newcastle Helicopters has put the project of the Sydney Harbour Floating Heliport on hold until further notice, in order to consider the feasibility of the operation," it said in a statement.

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The announcement came after Fairfax media reported on Saturday that the Roads and Maritime Services (RMS) approved the project two weeks before it asked the Civil Aviation and Safety Authority (CASA) about air safety or air traffic control regulations.

In a letter dated December 4, Fairfax reported that RMS director Tony Middleton wrote to CASA asking a series of questions, including whether it required the authority's approval and if the helipad had to be a minimum distance from residents and/or the shorelines.

The reports sparked renewed criticism from federal MP Malcolm Turnbull, who on Saturday urged people to "take a moment to sign a petition to voice your concerns about the heliport project".

"Sydney Harbour is owned by all Australians and it is vital they have a say in the way it is managed," the federal member for Wentworth wrote in an email to supporters.

By 8.30pm (AEDT) Saturday, the Stop the Harbour Heliport petition by the community group, Friends of Sydney Harbour, had garnered almost 1000 signatures.

"Sydneyiders were not adequately consulted - nor their concerns heeded - when the NSW government approved a heliport to be located in the middle of the harbour," the group said.

Newcastle Helicopters said it planned to "address the relevant concerns and queries with thoroughly considered and accurate information.

"(It) is taking the appropriate steps to do so," it said on Saturday.

A spokesman for NSW Deputy Premier Andrew Stoner said: "Newcastle Helicopters has advised the NSW government that the Sydney Harbour Floating Heliport project has been put on hold, pending further discussions with relevant stakeholders."