

Harbour heliport wants more flights



"[The heliport] will be a blight on Sydney's most beautiful asset, Sydney Harbour" ...
Jilly Gibson, North Sydney mayor.

THE company granted a licence to operate the controversial heliport from the middle of Sydney Harbour has already approached another helicopter company for a partnership in joy flight operations, industry sources say.

Fairfax Media has been told Newcastle Helicopters plans to run 12-minute joy flights from one end of the floating platform and has already given another company, Sydney HeliTours, the green light to run 20-minute joy flights from the other end.

Asked whether her company had already been out trying to sell packages for joy flights from the heliport, the general manager of Sydney HeliTours, Cate Pleass, said, "It's not something I can comment on at this stage. I can't confirm or deny. It's not information that's in the public domain."

Due to mounting public anger about the helicopter service, which the state government approved without a tender, public consultation or environmental checks, Newcastle Helicopters has delayed the launch of the helicopter service from early December until late January.

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It said it would run a demonstration flight and consult residents and harbour users.

The mayor of North Sydney, Jilly Gibson, said on Friday the heliport "has been a cover-up from the start".

"We weren't given the full information," she said. "It will be a blight on Sydney's most beautiful asset, Sydney Harbour."

Ms Gibson will be attending a protest meeting on Saturday morning at McMahons Point Community Centre, which is expected to form an opposition group to be called Save Sydney Harbour.

The federal opposition frontbencher Malcolm Turnbull will also attend the meeting, along with the solo round-the-world sailor Ian Kiernan and an expected 100 others.

The organiser of the opposition group is John Molyneux, a Kirribilli resident and occasional helicopter pilot.

"I know the impact that helicopters will have from a safety point of view and from a noise point of view," Mr Molyneux said.

"Sydney Harbour is probably the greatest harbour in the world and it needs to be for the use of all the people, not just overtaken by a private operation."

Newcastle Helicopters could not be reached for comment.

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