



MEDIA RELEASE

10th March 2015

Boating infrastructure and marine habitats in Sydney Harbour

Transport for New South Wales, NSW Maritime, The University of New South Wales, and the Sydney Institute of Marine Science are collaborating on one of the largest studies of boating infrastructure undertaken in Sydney Harbour.

Transport for NSW has begun a large collaboration with the Sydney Institute of Marine Science and the University of New South Wales to examine how recreational boating facilities interact with marine ecosystems. The collaborative team led by Professor Johnston has secured funding through the Federal Government's Australian Research Council Linkage Program.

Professor Emma Johnston, Director of the Sydney Harbour Research Program at the Sydney Institute of Marine Science said: *"Sydney Harbour is a stunning paradox; it is incredibly biologically diverse, and yet a busy hub of commercial and recreational activity. The Harbour is home to over 17 000 recreational vessels delivering substantial social and economic benefit to the people of Sydney. The information gained during these studies will help map the seascape's diversity and structure and will contribute to planning for future boat storage solutions"*.

The team has now begun a series of studies to understand the plants, animals and natural processes that occur across current boating storage facilities, including Sydney Harbour's extensive mooring fields and marina facilities.

"Managing this confluence of intense human activity and incredible biodiversity requires credible scientific data and rigorous assessment" said marine ecologist Dr Luke Hedge, lead research associate on the project from the University of New South Wales.

Dr Hedge is spending the next month on the harbour using cutting edge imaging and sub-sea positioning equipment with his team of divers and researchers. *"This approach has never been used in the harbor, we are collecting information on a very fine scale that maps and reveals the structure and the impacts of our activities"* Howard Glenn, General Manager of Maritime Management Centre said *"Until now, a comprehensive study of the way boating infrastructure affects marine habitats and aquatic animals has not been undertaken. Understanding the impact boat storage infrastructure has on marine life is key to developing future policies and standards to achieve this."*

Boat numbers in Sydney Harbour are set to grow at around 2.9 % annually. Transport for NSW has developed a Sydney Harbour Boat Storage Strategy that sets out several options for increasing the capacity of both on- and off- water boat storage to keep pace with demand. The results of the study will provide an important evidence base to inform potential reform options to assist in increasing boat storage capacity whilst minimising environmental impact", said Mr Glenn.

NSW Maritime is also providing logistical support to the researchers and policy makers, and Angus Mitchell, Director of NSW Maritime said *"We are pleased to be able to provide support for this worthwhile study. The greater our understanding of the effects recreational boating and storage options have on marine ecosystems, the better placed we will be to shape ecologically sustainable growth."*



MEDIA RELEASE

10th March 2015

Filming and photographic opportunities are available with UNSW Divers and researchers.

Contact

Dr Luke Hedge l.hedge@unsw.edu.au , 0438645742

Prof Emma Johnston, e.johnston@unsw.edu.au

Mr Nam Tran, Transport for NSW, nam.tran@transport.nsw.gov.au