



Submission - Commercial Vessels/ Noise

ISSUE: Commercial Vessels on Sydney Harbour

SUBJECT: Code of Conduct - Commercial vessels using amplified sound systems on Sydney Harbour

BACKGROUND: – Transport for NSW is reviewing the Code which was originally drafted circa 2008. Whilst the review timing at the start of the boating season is less than ideal, BIA supports a review to ensure the Code remains relevant and appropriate.

Deadline for feedback: 2 November, which should be emailed to Damian Logue damian.j.logue@transport.nsw.gov.au

SUMBISSION

The Boating Industry Association Ltd (BIA) is the peak body in Australia that represents the interests of recreational and light commercial boating. BIA is an advocate for boaters and the boating lifestyle and supports safe, responsible, and enjoyable boating.

The boating economy generates significant social benefits through employment, much of which is supported by family businesses. In 2021 the industry reported a turnover of \$8.835 billion, directly employed more than 27,630 people with more than 10,000 contractors¹.

Seventy-five per cent are in small businesses, employing local workers and supporting local communities.

There are more than 925,000 registered vessels and a countless number of craft (such as paddle craft) which do not require registration or licensing. New boat registrations number more than 18,000 a year².

Boating is also a significant contributor to the economy that spans metropolitan, rural and regional Australia.

The BIA welcomes the opportunity to provide input to the Code of Conduct - Commercial vessels using amplified sound systems on Sydney Harbour.

BIA has a number of members who operate vessels under this Code. We also recognise the need for the commercial vessel industry to operate harmoniously with the local community.

¹ [2021 BIA Industry Data report card](#)

² [2021 BIA Industry Data report card](#)



Submission - Commercial Vessels/ Noise

We would like state that one issue that has changed over the life of the existing Code is the increase in residential accommodation near wharves in the harbour which is likely to be a factor in any increasing complaints about noise from commercial vessels. It is important, the regulator keeps this demographic trend in mind, along with the central fact that recreational and commercial vessel operators are customers of Transport for NSW. We can only encourage Transport for NSW to ensure it works to keep the 'customer at the centre' of all its plans, programs, tactics, policies and strategies. And for Transport for NSW, that means the maritime/ boating customer should be at the forefront when it comes to competing interests with, for example, owners of residential properties built on and beside what is a working harbour.

BIA would also encourage the regulator to ensure all relevant data collected by Transport for NSW officers and Police is combined and shared to ensure the total picture is as good as it can be when it comes to data.

We support the decision to not overly change the code of conduct. The code has been in place for many years and has done well to inform operators of their responsibilities around noise pollution.

BIA recognises the industry has changed over the years and additional guidance may be necessary. That is why we support development of a guideline (see under) for operators to develop their own plan of noise management which will be developed by operators and customised to their own unique operation. Attached below are some strategies which could be used as best practice, which are already utilised by some of the larger operations in Sydney Harbour.

In terms of the actual changes to the code of conduct we would recommend not including the decibel range of 35 - 40 decibels. As the background hum of a refrigerator is measured at around 50 decibels, we believe that this could be misconstrued as a "reasonable" noise level for vessel operators to abide by.

We would also recommend changing the wording of section 4.3 from being restricted to anchoring more than 200 meters from "any shore" to not anchoring within 200m "of an inhabited shore". We believe that this could encourage those operators who have clients who would like to anchor to swim or for any other reason to move toward an uninhibited shoreline and away from residents who may be more inclined to make a complaint.

The guideline:

NOISE REDUCTION STRATEGIES TO INCLUDE IN A PLAN OF NOISE MANAGEMENT



Boating Industry Association

Submission - Commercial Vessels/ Noise

- Download and review the Code of Conduct for Charter Vessels Operating with Amplified Music Systems and make sure your operation is complying with existing regulations.
- Create a physical document which lists the steps you take to minimise noise pollution from your vessel.
- Significantly reduce volume or stop playing music altogether while approaching or alongside a wharf.
- Plan your voyage with consideration for noise pollution hotspots. Try to avoid cruising in close proximity to residential areas whilst using amplified music systems as much as possible.
- Share your plan of management for noise with patrons and promoters to ensure everyone involved with your cruise is aware of your noise pollution responsibilities.
- Be aware of the limits of your own sound system, and the levels which are appropriate for your operation.
- Monitor the forecast weather conditions both before and during your event. Understand calm weather conditions facilitate the transmission of sound more easily and could increase your sound footprint.
- Be aware that different styles of music can potentially travel further or be more prone to cause complaints from residents.
- Register your contact details with water police and maritime so that a line of communication can be established in case of a complaint being made.
- Consider purchasing a decibel reader and logging readings at different times, function styles, and distances from your vessel.

The BIA commend Transport for NSW for the opportunity to provide our input.

Please do not hesitate to contact Mr Neil Patchett, Co General Manager, e. neil@bia.org.au or m. 0418 279 465 on this matter.

Issue date: Tuesday, November 2, 2021