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March 2026



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# Uncertain future for marine businesses in Sydney's Rozelle Bay as rezoning looms

MARINE businesses in Sydney's Rozelle Bay face an uncertain future due to a possible decision to rezone the area for more housing.

According to a report on ABC Sydney Radio in early February, the New South Wales Government's Cabinet Office is examining the potential of housing coexisting with the working port.

And, according to a story by ABC Radio Sydney journalist Declan Bowring, the future of some of Australia's oldest ships is uncertain as harbour leases near expiration and development pressure comes to bear.

A business known as Sydney Heritage Fleet (SHF) maintains and restores some of Sydney's oldest marine vessels, including the tall ship *James Craig*, built in 1884, the 1927 steamship *John*

*Oxley* and the 1912 Sydney ferry *Kanangra*.

SHF spokesperson Brett Smith was reported as saying the Rozelle shipyard's lease on the Government-owned land expires in 2028 and he is concerned the organisation may be left without a home if the land is acquired amid Bays West transport oriented development (TOD) rezoning.

Mr Smith says there is nowhere else in Sydney that could accommodate the fleet: "There's nowhere left because it's all been developed and sold off. It's not just water frontage – it has to be water frontage in an area where you can make a bit of noise. If they did come to us and say, 'Sorry, you're out in 2028', we don't know where we're going to go."

Across a 10-lane highway connecting the city's Inner West to the Anzac Bridge is the site of

the future Bays Metro station, which is due to be completed in 2032, the story says. Plans for the development include rezoning land for new homes within 1,200 metres of the station.

A Department of Planning, Housing & Infrastructure website said the plan would be made public by 2025 but that date has been missed. A Department spokesperson told the ABC the plan was subject to a review of the working port by the State's Cabinet Office.

Mr Smith says moving the working port for housing will make repair and maintenance jobs in Sydney Harbour more expensive.

"If the right balance isn't struck on the housing versus commercial-industrial use of this land ... I know that governments will look back and really regret that," he said.



A metro station is planned for the Bays West precinct by 2032 to connect open spaces and social infrastructure. (Photo: Infrastructure NSW)

“The only way to maintain things in and around the harbour will be to bring things in from other ports via barges. There’ll be extra costs involved in that, all sorts of issues with weather, when you can’t actually do those sorts of transport work.”

Other marine companies based at Rozelle Bay say they have leases until 2028 and are also facing an uncertain future. Clement Marine Constructions director Richard Oppedisano told the ABC he does not know whether they will be able to continue to do emergency work on ferry wharves.

“I’m not sure if we can even carry out the work that we do now and meet our obligations under our contracts, because part of those obligations are we’ve got time limits on how long it takes us to get the equipment to the job site,” he said.

Mr Oppedisano said the company had not had alternative locations proposed by the State Government.

Brad Hosemans from Polaris Marine, a maintenance contractor for Transport for NSW, wrote a submission during the Bays West station consultation process in which he said there was no other site on the harbour that would allow the company to continue at the same scale.

“That is because no such site exists,” he said. “The combination of deep-water access, industrial zoning, sufficient land area and continuous navigational access does not exist elsewhere in the harbour.”

Mr Hosemans rejected the idea of moving to Port Botany or Port Kembla, south of Wollongong, because it would make the day-to-day maintenance of harbour assets untenable.

The ABC reported that, despite the planning department website stating the Bays West TOD



*Rozelle Bay is home to a mix of commercial, recreational and historical vessels. (Photo by Declan Bowring, ABC Radio Sydney.)*

rezoning plan would be publicly available in 2025, they have not been published.

Bays West is one of eight TOD precincts in Sydney and is the only one that does not have a finalisation report exhibited. The website states that the Bays West TOD rezoning will track on a different timeline due to the need to “resolve working harbour and ports uses”.

The spokesperson for the Department of Planning, Housing & Infrastructure told the ABC the rezoning proposal is subject to a review led by the Cabinet Office, and that the review is examining the potential of housing co-existing with the working port, according to a 2025 Transport for NSW report.

“The review has involved extensive consultation with stakeholders, including leaseholders operating out of the precinct,” the spokesperson said. “No decision has been made on the future of the precinct. The NSW Government will have more to say once it has considered the findings of the review.”

The precinct includes parts of the working harbour at Glebe Island in White Bay, which handles large amounts of the State’s cement, sugar, salt and gypsum.

To learn more about Sydney Heritage Fleet and the fight to protect the future of Rozelle Bay as a maritime precinct, click on this video link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B0bkGQSGNIM>

## STOP PRESS

ON March 3, NSW Premier Chris Minns issued a media release saying bulk port operations on adjacent Glebe Island would cease by 2030 but promising that “working harbour operations across the precinct will be consolidated, mostly into (nearby) White Bay, ensuring the precinct will continue to provide critical services for the harbour, including boat maintenance and marine construction and as a base for tug boats and for emergency services”, and including the Sydney Heritage Fleet (SHF).

When contacted, a spokesperson for SHF said they had seen the media release, but were waiting for more details.

Mr Minns said urban development on the site would include up to 8,500 homes.

Further information: <https://www.nsw.gov.au/ministerial-releases/minns-government-to-deliver-thousands-of-homes-near-bays-metro-station-while-retaining-our-working-harbour>