

Environment

Protecting the Sydney Harbour Foreshore

**North Head v Georges Heights v Middle
Head**

**Woolwich v Cockatoo Island v Garden
Island**

The Howard government's plan to return Sydney Harbour foreshore defence sites to the people of Australia and protect the natural and heritage values of those sites.

Protecting the Sydney Harbour Foreshore

Sydney Harbour remains the gateway to the nation as it has for the past two Australian Centuries.

As the cradle of European settlement and the focus of Australia's most populous city, the Harbour is the quintessential image of our nation abroad. It will be the centre of international attention during the 2000 Olympic Games.

For the people of Sydney, the Harbour provides an avenue for commerce and the transport of people. The Harbour and its foreshores are a focus of

city living and of recreational pursuits.

For these reasons the Coalition remains committed to preserving the Harbour and its foreshore for future generations.

Over the last century, the Commonwealth has been custodian of some of the foreshore areas of greatest natural and heritage significance. Those lands have been used by the Department of Defence for the activities of both the navy and army.

Defence is relocating from **North Head, Middle Head, Georges Heights, Woolwich** and **Cockatoo Island** as part of the government's program to improve the defence of Australia.

The Howard/Fischer government will protect and return these sites to the people of Australia. The government recognises that it has a 'duty of care' to clean up the sites and preserve their natural and cultural features.

The government has therefore decided to provide **\$90 million** from the Federation Fund and establish a **Sydney Harbour Federation Trust** to maximise public access and preserve and rehabilitate the natural and heritage values of these areas.

\$6 million from the Federation Fund will also be provided to the Department of Defence to establish public access to parts of **Garden Island**.

The Sydney Harbour Federation Trust

As defence relocates, the **Sydney Harbour Federation Trust** will assume management and planning responsibilities for the five foreshore defence sites - North Head, Middle Head, Georges Heights, Woolwich and Cockatoo Island - for a period of ten years.

The Trust will be established by legislation as a statutory body responsible to the Commonwealth Minister for the Environment. It will assume responsibility for those areas already vacated by defence and the remaining areas as defence relocates.

It will be required to manage the five former defence sites with the objective of:

- maximising public access to the sites;
- cleaning up contaminated areas;
- rehabilitating bushland; and
- preserving heritage buildings and features of the sites.

The Trust will be administered by a board of six members - four appointed

by the Commonwealth (including the chairman) and two nominated by the New South Wales government. It is expected that board members will have experience in conservation and heritage (including specifically defence heritage), planning and business.

It will commence operations with a 'clean slate' in determining future arrangements for the five sites. The Trust will be required to develop management plans for the sites within 18 months of its establishment.

In developing those plans, the Trust will conduct heritage and environment assessments of the sites and undertake extensive community consultation.

To assist in that process, community advisory committees for each site will be established.

The Trust will be a transitional body to ensure that the Commonwealth's duty to rehabilitate the current defence sites is fulfilled and that they are returned to the people of Australia in good order and with a sustainable financial base for their on-going management.

It will therefore be required to complete that task within ten years.

After that time, the Commonwealth government will transfer North Head, Middle Head and Georges Heights to the New South Wales government for inclusion in the Sydney Harbour National Park.

At that stage, the Commonwealth will consider future management arrangements for Cockatoo Island and the Woolwich site.

Funding Arrangements

The Howard government will provide \$96 million from the Federation Fund to support the rehabilitation and preservation of the five sites and to establish public access to Garden Island:

- \$40 million will be provided to the Trust to support the clean up of contaminated areas on Cockatoo Island; and
- \$6 million will be provided to the defence department to establish permanent public access to parts of the Garden Island naval base.

The defence department will also be provided with \$50 million to meet costs associated with relocation from these sites and to remove surplus buildings that are not of heritage value or required for the operations of the Trust following relocation.

The Trust will finance other rehabilitation works and the enhancement of the sites from commercial activities and the redevelopment of parts of the sites.

In considering commercial proposals, the Trust will be required to give paramount consideration to the public amenity and the aesthetic, heritage and conservation values of each site.

The Trust will not be required to generate a profit for the Commonwealth government.

Arrangements with the New South Wales government

The Howard/Fischer government will work co-operatively with the New South Wales government to ensure that the sites are protected.

A Coalition government will seek to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding with the New South Wales government to confirm management arrangements for the sites and the conditions of transferral of North Head, Middle Head and Georges Heights to New South Wales at the end of the ten year life of the Sydney Harbour Federation Trust.

About the Sites

North Head is a 74 hectare site surrounded by the Sydney Harbour National Park. The site is essentially vacant following the relocation of the School of Artillery to Puckapunyal in 1997.

Middle Head and **Georges Heights** are two contiguous sites covering over 100 hectares between Cobblers Beach and Chowder Bay.

Army water transport relocated from Middle Head earlier this year. The relocation of defence facilities (which include Army Headquarters Training Command, 1 Commando Regiment, 8 Brigade and the army maritime transport unit) from Georges Heights will occur progressively over the next few years.

The **Woolwich** site includes two parcels of land separated by a public reserve. It includes the historic Mort Dock. Army relocated from the site earlier this year.

Cockatoo Island is located between Woolwich and Pyrmont. It has been the centre for industrial and naval shipping activities for around 100 years. It houses several buildings and structures of outstanding heritage significance.

Industrial activity has, however, heavily polluted the Island. It is for this reason that \$40 million has been allocated from the Federation Fund specifically for remediation.

Garden Island is located at the northern end of Potts Point. Garden Island will continue to serve as a major naval facility and dockyard. Part of the site

(the most northerly point), however, is primarily green space suitable for public recreation.

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