

Senator the Hon Robert Hill



Leader of the Government in the Senate

Minister for the Environment and Heritage

Unlocking Sydney Harbour

Magnificent tracts of Defence land on Sydney's Harbour will soon be open to the public for the first time in more than a hundred years following the handover of land to the Sydney Harbour Federation Trust.

After today's official handover, The Sydney Harbour Federation Trust will spend the rest of the year developing plans to manage the sites and their facilities in the future.

The sites are Middle Head, Georges Heights, Chowder Bay in Mosman, the former Artillery School on North Head, Woolwich Dock and Cockatoo Island.

Federal Environment Minister Robert Hill said the Harbour Trust would develop plans for the sites to protect their cultural heritage, conserve the environment and provide maximum public access.

He said the Commonwealth Government wanted to ensure the land was a lasting legacy for Sydney and for all Australians.

"After so many years of isolation, the challenge ahead of the Harbour Trust is to weave these sites back into the life of the city," Senator Hill said.

"While the Harbour Trust is taking on a huge job and an immense responsibility, this must also be seen as a remarkable opportunity for Sydney and for Australia."

"The opportunity to return some of the most spectacular harbourside land in Sydney to the people is one that does not come along every day."

"Today we celebrate the fact these lands, which are no longer required by the military, will not be sold off, but remain in public ownership and be preserved and protected in perpetuity," Senator Hill said.

"It is appropriate that in the year of the Centenary of Federation, we start the process of repairing these lands for the future use and enjoyment of the people."

At a handover ceremony in Mosman today, Senator Hill received a scroll entrusting former Defence lands for the future use and enjoyment of the people."

The handover event was marked with a full military ceremony on the Parade Ground at Georges Heights, Mosman with the stunning view of Sydney Harbour as the backdrop.

'A' battery, Royal Australian Artillery, fired a salute to signify the handover of each of the sites and the Australian Army Band performed. Senator Hill was presented with the scroll by the Parliamentary Secretary to Defence Dr Brendan Nelson.

Senator Hill thanked the community which had fought hard over the years for the establishment of the Harbour Trust and the protection of the Defence sites.

"We would not have achieved this outcome without the vision and dedication of many community groups and the local councils.

"The Harbour Trust will continue to work with these groups and local government to ensure the plans that are produced result in the best outcomes for each of the sites and for Sydney as a whole."

Senator Hill said he looked forward to returning to these lands in the future when they were being actively used and enjoyed by the community.

The Harbour Trust is also developing plans for the future of Macquarie Lightstation and Snapper Island.

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