



Senator the Hon Robert Hill

Leader of the Government in the Senate

Minister for the Environment and Heritage

New Legislation Will Return Harbour Land to the People

Agreement on The Sydney Harbour Federation Trust Bill has been reached between the Government and the Democrats with Federal Environment and Heritage Minister Robert Hill describing the breakthrough as a “significant win for all Sydney residents”.

Senator Hill said the passage of this legislation, which was further amended in the Senate last night, is now expected to be enacted in the near future. The bill ensures six of Sydney’s most magnificent harbour lands will remain in public ownership.

“The most welcome news for Sydneysiders is that the legislation limits the sale of harbour land,” Senator Hill said.

“The legislation establishes the Sydney Harbour Federation Trust which will prepare management plans to protect the future of the former Commonwealth lands of Middle Head-Georges Heights in Mosman, the Artillery School on North Head, Woolwich Dock, Cockatoo and Snapper Islands and Macquarie Lighthouse.”

“The lands cover 130 hectares and include 408 buildings, a number of which are heritage listed, 14 Aboriginal sites, areas of pristine natural vegetation, and structures such as docks, wharves and cranes.

“Most of the lands have been closed off to the public for many years due to their use for military and other special purposes.”

The Sydney Harbour Federation Trust, which has been operating under an “interim” status for just over 12 months, has been drawing up plans for how the six harbour lands will be managed in the future. These plans were now expected to be released soon for public consultation.

Senator Hill said formal establishment of the Trust is evidence of commitment by all parties to returning these lands to the people of Sydney.

“The Trust will produce plans that protect and enhance the natural and cultural features of the lands, enhance Sydney Harbour and most importantly, provide maximum public access,” Senator Hill said.

“The Trust is working closely with the community to ensure the plans that are produced result in the best outcomes for each of the sites and for Sydney as a whole.

“The Trust consists of a team of highly skilled staff with extensive experience in planning, built heritage, architecture, landscape design and asset management.”

The only land that can be sold by the Trust are former defence houses in a Mosman street – Markham Close. Senator Hill emphasised that the land will not necessarily be sold and a decision is subject to Plans of Management being drawn up by the Trust, for all the former Defence lands in the area.

Senator Hill explained that the legislation had been held up in the Senate for some months, as amendments were made and subsequently debated. He acknowledged the contributions of community groups, local residents and councils who have worked hard for a long time to see the Trust established.

February 8, 2001

Contact: Belinda Huppatz (Senator Hill’s office) 02 6277 7640 or 0419 258364
Kate Langford (Sydney Harbour Federation Trust) 02 8969 2100