



MEDIA RELEASE

Federal Member for Warringah

Tony Abbott MHR

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RESTORATION OF HISTORIC BOAT PROVIDES TRAINING AND EXPERIENCE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Minister for Employment Services and Member for Warringah, Tony Abbott today visited Chowder Bay in Mosman to meet the young people who are restoring an historic timber navy boat under a work for the dole program.

Mr Abbott said the project had been organised by the Interim Sydney Harbour Federation Trust, who have been established by the Government to plan the future of Chowder Bay as well as a number of other former Commonwealth sites on Sydney Harbour.

“This is a highly commendable and worthwhile project for the local area,” Mr Abbott said.

“A significant vessel associated with Australian Naval and maritime history is being restored, while at the same time, young people from the north shore are receiving on-the-job training in boat-building.

“The Trust is also pleased that the fully equipped boatshed at the old Army Maritime School is being put to good use.

“While the Trust develops plans for the future of the rest of their site, they are keen for appropriate facilities, such as this boatshed, to be used.”

The 30 foot long timber boat was originally built in 1947 in England. It is one of two vessels that were acquired by the Australian Navy to serve as the Captains launches to the aircraft carriers, HMAS Sydney and the HMAS Melbourne.

The historic Captains launch or Fast Motor Boat being restored at Chowder Bay is the only remaining cabined example of this type of vessel in Australia, and possibly the world. The other launch is believed to now lie at the bottom of Lavender Bay.

Both have an innovative construction involving double diagonal mahogany planks, copper nailed with a linseed oiled canvass layer between. Apparently this resulted in a strong vessel that is relatively light in weight.

For much of the last decade, the surviving Captains launch has been deteriorating without maintenance on Spectacle Island. Early this month it was given to the Trust for restoration, free of charge from the Navy.

On his visit to Chowder Bay, Mr Abbott met Ian Smith an experienced and well known shipwright who is supervising the restoration project.

“Over the next six months, Ian and the trainees will be restoring the boat’s timberwork, replacing the engine and cleaning fittings,” he said.

“Once the boat has been fully restored, the Trust will use the boat to access many of the harbour sites they are managing, particularly Cockatoo and Snapper Islands, and Woolwich Dock.

“The costs involved in restoring the boat are significantly less than if the Trust were to rely on the use of commercial transport, or purchase a new vessel with the same operational capability.”

Mr Abbott said the restoration project was of great benefit to all involved.

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For more information, contact:

- **Simone Holzapfel, Media Adviser, Office of the Hon Tony Abbott MP on 0417 656 668**
- **Kate Langford, Public Information Officer – Interim Sydney Harbour Federation Trust on ph (02) 8969 2100**