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Sydney to finally get a foreshore walking track to Balmoral

By the middle of 2004, Sydney-siders will have foreshore access from Taronga Zoo to Balmoral Beach.

Executive Director of the Sydney Harbour Federation Trust, Mr Geoff Bailey, said that after three years in planning and public consultation, he had received approval today from the Department of Environment and Heritage for the track to go ahead.

"We proposed this walking track back in 2000 when the Harbour Trust was first considering how best to open former Defence lands to the public," Mr Bailey said.

"The walking track will link with existing foreshore routes that from Taronga Zoo to Manly."

Mr Bailey explained how following concerns raised about the environmental impacts of the walking track, the Harbour Trust had referred the matter to experts in the Federal Department of Environment and Heritage.

"The Department had a number of questions and sought more information, but they have now come back to us saying the walking track can go ahead without any further delay."

Mr Bailey said that work would commence on the track early in the New Year with completion expected before the middle of the year.

The track runs adjacent to HMAS Penguin Naval Base down the hill from Middle Head Road to Balmoral Beach. The area where the new track is to be constructed is an existing firebreak and already quite disturbed and degraded.

The new track will connect to the bushland walking track completed by the Harbour Trust in early 2002 that opens up the former Defence bases on Georges Heights and Chowder Bay.

"These walks provide magnificent views of the harbour and city, and should be accessible to all."

Mr Bailey said the Harbour Trust will be taking special measures with construction of the walking track to minimise spread of the disease *Phytophthora cinnamomi* that is known to occur in the area.

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