

## Questions & Answers Session – 23 June 2021

(held via webinar due to COVID-19)

*Members of the public are invited to submit questions in writing to the Harbour Trust prior to Questions & Answers Sessions which are held twice a year (immediately following Meetings in Public). These questions are addressed by the Members of the Trust and the Harbour Trust Executive during the Q&A Sessions.*

*In addition to questions submitted prior to a Q&A Session, the Chair has the discretion to allow questions to be taken without notice during a Q&A Session.*

---

### FILMING / VENUE HIRE

Luke Torrevillas (Location Manager, ecomlocations)

With Premier Gladys Berejiklian recently in the spotlight promoting film production in NSW, and despite Australia's Film Industry being busier than it's ever been, why does the Sydney Harbour Trust make it extremely difficult to process filming applications with lengthy application times of 3 months. Film and TV projects don't have this lead up time and it would seem that the Trust is not interested in pursuing this sector as a commercial enterprise and as a result not supporting the arts industry. Any government agency that looks to do business should have a welcome mat and a customer service focus. So why doesn't it?

#### Answer

The Harbour Trust actively welcomes filming, events and venue hire at our sites. There are many examples where the Harbour Trust has supported this industry in recent months with filming productions through Endemol Shine and cultural events such as the Biennale of Sydney in 2020.

The nature of Harbour Trust land, due to its heritage elements, public use and proximity to residential areas does mean filming requests need to be carefully considered by multiple parts of the organisation. Currently, the Harbour Trust requires a **minimum 14 business days** from application submission to stage any low impact permit for filming or venue hire. For medium impact filming and venue hire, the Harbour Trust requires a **minimum 12 weeks** from approval of licence to stage the event or filming production.

Many of our venues and locations are heritage listed; as such, the Harbour Trust carefully considers the impact of filming as part an initial assessment.

---

### EVENTS ON TRUST LAND (SPECIFICALLY NORTH HEAD)

Sarah Dinning

**Context:** It is now longstanding practice across many parklands and iconic historic sites in Sydney that rigorous assessments of proposed events and sites are done to inform use and to ensure sustainability. A number of agencies have policies and frameworks to guide management of events from small to large with diverse offerings. These are based on thorough consideration of appropriate activities including suitability, frequency, visitor numbers, access and transport among other things. These frameworks for events (some available on websites) both inform and are informed by the agencies' asset management strategies which align to the objects of their relevant legislation. They also usually involve engagement with the community and stakeholders.

**Questions: Does the Harbour Trust have a framework for assessing suitable sites and events based on what the sites can sustain? What assessments has the Harbour Trust conducted for the proposed concert series at North Head? Who has been involved? Thank you**

Answer

In June 2020, the Harbour Trust conducted an event management audit. One of the outcomes of this audit was to review, update and publish the *Harbour Trust Venue Use Guidelines*. These guidelines provide a framework for assessing suitable sites and events. Additionally, the audit has suggested the review of the Events Strategy, Events Policy and Events Support Policy at which time we will review how the Harbour Trust can include more specific precinct-based assessments.

Harbour Trust sites are activated from time to time for events such the North Head concert series, consistent with the object of maximising public access to Harbour Trust lands. This is not dissimilar to occasional cultural events held at other sites, such as Opera Australia or the Biennale of Sydney at Cockatoo Island.

In-principle approval has been provided at this stage. Before full approval can be given, the organisers of the North Head Concert Series will need to provide a comprehensive event plan that addresses a range of potential impacts and operational issues including the place's heritage values; flora and fauna; noise; traffic and transport management; and a Bush Fire Emergency Evacuation and Action Plan. The approach to the event's transport requirements will be fundamental to ensuring that potential impacts are minimised or avoided. The Harbour Trust will carefully assess the submitted information before determining whether to grant final approval.

## **COCKATOO ISLAND DRAFT CONCEPT VISION & NORTH HEAD SANCTUARY DRAFT CONCEPT**

*Dr Kathryn Jeans, PHD Research title: *Biloela: afore and beyond**

**How will this brutal period in Australia's social history be presented on Cockatoo Island in the new vision?**

**Currently there is no thoroughly researched responsible text about the Girls on the island or on the official website.**

Answer

A detailed interpretation strategy will be developed as the draft concept vision progresses to a masterplan. This interpretation strategy will consider how the various layers of the Island's history can be shared with visitors using both traditional and modern methods.

The Harbour Trust is currently researching this period of Cockatoo Island's history with the intention of updating our website pages in the coming weeks.

**Lisa Paulsen**

**Mr Danny Goldberg wrote to his friends on June 9, 2021, criticising the SHFT's Concept Vision for Cockatoo Island, accusing it of being "dull and lacklustre". Further, he insinuated that the Trust vision bears "an amazing similarity to many parts of our own concept plans". (These plans done in consultation with the Trust over a 5 year period — with the word "our" referring to Mr Tony Berg and a substantial national and international team).**

**What is the Trust's response to Mr Goldberg's communication?**

### Answer

The conversation about the future of Cockatoo Island started 20 years ago with the development of the Harbour Trust Comprehensive Plan. The Draft Concept Vision was further informed by community feedback and suggestions gathered from the community during a consultation process in 2019. This feedback can be viewed in the Cockatoo Island Dialogue on the Harbour Trust website.

The Trust Members (board) reviewed a preliminary version of the Cockatoo Island Foundation submission. It was rejected at the time as it was not in line with the objects of our legislation and plans. Under no condition will the Trust Members consider privatising Cockatoo Island or any other asset or parkland. Public access and public amenity are fundamental principles guiding our work.

### Linda Bergin OAM

- **Where is the business-case for the proposed North Head Interpretive Centre?**
- **Why has this been proposed before tenure is finalised?**
- **Was consideration given to potential gridlock in Manly being a hinderance?**
- **Where is the business-case for the Cockatoo Island Concept Vision?**
- **Did the Trust obtain cost estimates for the conversion of the Eastern Apron into parkland, where there is likely very expensive ground contamination and potential convict artefacts?**

### Answer

The development of a business case and detailed master planning for both sites will be undertaken as part of the next stage towards restoring and activating these sites. The Harbour Trust's focus presently is ensuring the Draft Concepts align with the community's aspirations for the sites.

### Linda Bergin OAM

**Why is a "destination playground" a suitable use for a World Heritage site? Isn't this an exclusive use of public land?**

### Answer

A destination playground was proposed following the first round of community feedback, which showed our community wanted the site to offer more diverse experiences in order to reach a greater diversity of people with children, young people, and families commonly identified groups where the Island's offering is believed to be lacking.

The Draft Concept Vision proposed a range of offerings for the Island to provide differing experiences. The playground concept would allow the heritage of the Island to be shared through storytelling and play-based learning; providing a way for young children to learn about the Island's history.

## HARBOUR TRUST

### Maria Bradley

- **Why is the Trust being "joined up" with NSW?**
- **Will the Harbour Trust lands receive funding from the NSW Govt?**
- **Will the Trust seek to fund the Harbour Trust Lands via leases of commercial spaces?**
- **Are there currently any unsolicited tenders for leasing of commercial spaces or development proposals?**

### Answer

Last week, Parliament passed legislation that establishes the Harbour Trust as an ongoing entity. This means Harbour Trust lands will be retained by the Commonwealth and the Harbour Trust will continue to conserve and protect these lands for future generations, noting that management of North Head Sanctuary is based on a Deed of Agreement between NSW and the Commonwealth, currently due to expire on or before 1 January 2032.

The relationship between the Harbour Trust and the NSW Government is particularly important. With Harbour Trust sites neighbouring State Government sites, a shared vision and strong working partnership is particularly important.

The Harbour Trust allows the adaptive reuse of existing buildings across Harbour Trust sites when the uses meet the Harbour Trust Comprehensive Plan and each site's Management Plan. Sympathetic reuse of heritage buildings allows the built heritage of these important building to be protected while also providing access to the public.

There are currently no unsolicited tenders for leasing of commercial spaces or development proposals.

All long-term leasing opportunities are subject to an open market process as required under the Leasing Policy.

*Wayne Olling, Blacktown & District Environmental Group*

**Members of Blacktown & District Environment Group Inc are concerned about access to those lands which were supposed to be returned to the public through establishment of the Sydney Harbour Trust. I therefore lodge the following question to be answered at the Board meeting to be held this June:**

**"What assurance will the Harbour Trust give that land and foreshores in its trust will not be given into the hands of any entity, either by sale, lease or other means, that precludes "no cost" public access to any or all parts of the lands that were intended for return to the public through establishment of the Harbour Trust?"**

### Answer

The core objectives of the Harbour Trust are to preserve, conserve and interpret the environmental and heritage values of Harbour Trust land. The Trust Members (board) will make decisions for the sites in line with this and the other objectives of the *Sydney Harbour Federation Trust Act*.

Under the *Sydney Harbour Federation Trust Act*, the Harbour Trust cannot sell Harbour Trust lands or assets.

Commercial leases for appropriate sites have a maximum term of 35 years with leases of longer than 25 years subject to a disallowance by Parliament.

The direction of the Trust Members very clear - there will be no privatisation of any Harbour Trust site. We welcome partnerships where they support the core mission and objectives of the Harbour Trust.

Jennie Minifie

**Does the Harbour Trust recognize that it has a unique opportunity to demonstrate its expertise in presenting all of its sites as exemplars of “best practice” in conserving our environmental heritage and management of significant landscapes?**

**Please be aware that the community has been very supportive of the work of the Trust since its inception, and is supportive of the sound principles that were the basis of its wonderful achievements over more than twenty years.**

Answer

Yes and we agree. The Harbour Trust is striving to achieve best practice as it restores and activates each of our sites.

Sub Base Platypus was recently recognised by the National Trust, Australia’s leading conservation body, as the winning case study for adaptive re-use, at the 2021 National Heritage Awards.

Kate Eccles OAM

**One of the Trust's objectives as expressed in the Comprehensive Plan is to provide public access to its sites. From the Comprehensive Plan: "Access is also an important part of interpretation - retracing the historical routes into and through heritage places helps (us) to understand how they functioned and enriches our experience."**

- **Does the Trust interpret providing public access primarily as increasing the number of visitors?**
- **Is this at odds with the original vision of preserving and interpreting the heritage of the sites?**

Answer

At its core, the role of the Harbour Trust is to protect our heritage assets and maximise public access. We consider providing access in a number of ways that support the preservation and interpretation of our heritage sites:

- Adaptive reuse of buildings, not only to ensure the heritage of buildings is protected through the reuse but to ensure a mix of uses that allow public access such as restaurants, cafés and public facing services.
- Sharing the stories of our sites through interpretation, storytelling, tours, experiences and digital content.
- Increasing the public’s awareness of Harbour Trust sites, and the importance of these sites.
- Encouraging people to get more out of their visit, visiting for more reasons and learning about the site as part of their experience.

#### **HARBOUR TRUST - STATEMENT OF INTENT ‘RESPONSE TO MINISTER LEY JULY 31, 2020’**

Linda Bergin OAM

**“In order to ensure effective oversight and transparency...we have established a Member Sub-Committee to act as a Reform Steering Committee”**

- **Who are the Members of the Committee?**
- **Can we see the quarterly status updates?**

### Answer

The sub-committee consists of a sub-set of Trust Members and the Harbour Trust Executive Director. A Quarterly update is provided by the Harbour Trust to the Department. The Department makes a public update available through their website as appropriate.

The report is available through the Department's website on the Review page –

<https://www.awe.gov.au/about/reporting/obligations/government-responses/sydney-harbour-federation-trust-review-recommendations>

### Linda Bergin OAM

**What is the status of negotiations to renew the North Head Deed of Agreement and where is the “community input” to this?**

- Is the “unified future vision” the same as the Draft Concept Vision?
- Is there a rehabilitation plan?
- Will NSW be a financial contributor
- Will NSW be part of the governance?

### Answer

Negotiations on the North Head Deed of Agreement are being led by the Department as it will be an agreement between the Commonwealth and NSW governments.

## COMMONWEALTH / NSW GOVT / HARBOUR TRUST MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

*Jill L'Estrange, President Headland Preservation Group*

The Independent Review of the Sydney Harbour Federation Trust recommended that the Commonwealth Government should establish a formal taskforce or partnership with the New South Wales Government that fosters collaboration and joint planning, supported by a Memorandum of Understanding.

- What is the current status of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)?
- Who are the parties to the MOU?
- Who is representing the Trust, Commonwealth Government, and NSW Government at the table?
- Will there be community representation at the table?
- What objects and powers have been attributed to each participant to the MOU?
- Who will be the ultimate planner, decision maker and manager of Trust lands?
- When will details of the MOU be made available to the public?

### Linda Bergin OAM

- What is the status of the MOU with NSW?
- Does the MOU include joint governance with NSW?
- Are “specific projects being considered”?
- Who are the parties to the MOU?

The Review Report recommends a formal partnership between the Commonwealth, Trust and NSW via a MOU, or similar.

- What is the scope of this partnership?
- How will the Trust's decision-making be influenced by the NSW's Harbour Vision?

- **What will be the financial contributions from NSW?**
- **Will the Trust continue to be the sole decision-maker for Trust lands?**

Answer

The Commonwealth, NSW Government and the Harbour Trust will be parties to any proposed MOU. The Harbour Trust is not in a position to provide information pertaining to any MOU at this stage, although we can confirm the Harbour Trust does participate in regular discussions with NSW and Commonwealth officials about the future of Cockatoo Island and North Head Sanctuary.

Linda Bergin OAM

**What is meant by “state government commitments pursuant to an MOU”?**

Answer

This means working with the NSW Government where there are common interests – for example, working to improve public transport access to Cockatoo Island and North Head Sanctuary.

Linda Bergin OAM

**What is meant by “leverage existing relationships and develop new ones”?**

Answer

This means to work better with NSW Government agencies that the Harbour Trust already has an existing relationship with – for example, NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service – while exploring what other partnership opportunities exist with other agencies to improve the visitor experience to Harbour Trust sites.

## QUESTIONS ABOUT THE INDEPENDENT REVIEW REPORT

Linda Bergin OAM

**The Review Report recommends a formal partnership between the Commonwealth, Trust and NSW via a MOU, or similar.**

- **What is the scope of this partnership?**
- **How will the Trust’s decision-making be influenced by the NSW’s Harbour Vision?**
- **What will be the financial contributions from NSW?**
- **Will the Trust continue to be the sole decision-maker for Trust lands?**

Answer

The Commonwealth, NSW Government and the Harbour Trust will be parties to any MOU. As the development of the MOU is being led by the Department, the Harbour Trust is unable to comment on the specific arrangements at this time. The Harbour Trust will remain responsible for the decision-making and management of our sites.

## MIDDLE HEAD OVAL

Annabella Fletcher

- **What agreements does the Trust have with Mosman Council in respect of Middle Head Oval and Georges Heights Oval?**
- **What is the term of any such agreements?**
- **Will any concluded agreements be made available to me and to the general public? (e.g. by electronic format, PDF)**

### Answer

A draft licence has been prepared for Georges Heights and Middle Head Ovals, which we are aiming to finalise in 2021. The licence will require Council to ensure that the ovals are available for passive recreational use by the public when the playing fields are not being used for sporting and related community use.

The draft licence term is for five years from the commencement date, with two further five-year options (i.e. 15 years in total).

The Harbour Trust will make the final signed licence and final Operations Plan publicly available.

## SUB BASE PLATYPUS

Loretta Moy

- **Mr Carrozzi, The Howard Smith Wharves in Brisbane are a very similar site to Platypus, long wharf, heritage, near the CBD, located in high population density with high cliffs behind. It is a huge cultural and entertainment precinct. How do you see Platypus being similar and when.**
- **The name 'Sub Base Platypus' is confusing to the site. It was for a small part of its long Aboriginal, colonial, industrial, and naval history. What consideration has been given to a name change?**
- **Right across the North Shore, Sub Base Platypus is very little known as there is nothing of interest or attraction for the average person to go there or indeed talk about. When is the Trust going to put something there for the public to talk about? When can we expect to see art galleries and cafe there? A pontoon for boats? Micro Brewing, Informal games?**
- **For Platypus' original plan was to sell it off to developers to build apartments, but it was saved! The Trust became the developers, who are still trying to lease it off to commercial businesses where it lies more empty than occupied. Do you think the Trust, would have being better in hindsight repurposing these factories, if indeed they had to be kept, into new homes for the hipsters and the creatives? Is there time yet to adjust the sails?**
- **With the increase in population density, advancements in AI, climate change focus on sustainability plus the response to COVID, the world trend is for cycleways and pedestrian pathways and public green space, but the Trust at Sub Base Platypus are essentially building a \$11.4 M carpark. Do you think the Trust is in touch with the times and community needs?**
- **The Trust did not with its \$23M spend in 2016, incorporate any solar panels, water catchment for recycling nor did much to reduce the hard surface at Platypus. Now with its new \$11.4M carpark development is incorporating this. Would it be far cheaper to retro-fit the existing 2 factories surely and demo the hulk for green space and the missed Indigenous recognition?**
- **What is the justification for more car parking at Platypus on this narrow peninsula as North Sydney Council sees there is no justification.**

- **It seems a no-brainer to install a low pontoon to the high wharf at Platypus to allow any boat or kayak to land. Will the Trust commit to installing one as soon as when funds become available from State, Council and the community.**

Answer

The Harbour Trust has created a Management Plan for the site that is based on its unique heritage, and community values and aspirations for the site. Our vision will continue to be in line with the Management Plan.

To date, renewal works have included:

- significant remediation of contamination
- demolition of some buildings to create parkland and courtyards
- adaptive reuse of buildings
- heritage interpretation
- Improved public access including a new foreshore walkway that forms part of the Bondi to Manly walk.

The Harbour Trust is now focused on delivering the next stage of the site's renewal. This final stage of renewal works will deliver a new park on the harbour foreshore with part of the Torpedo Factory demolished. It will also include public access improvements, a welcoming entry and new public spaces re-imagined and activated. Car parking will be retained within the Torpedo Factory – this is an important element to support visitor access to the site. Solar panels are being added as part of the Torpedo Factory Renewal project as this is the most appropriate location on site for PV cells.

The Harbour Trust has activated the site through tours, food pop ups, community days, and art exhibitions - the most recent being the Australian National Maritime Museum's exhibition, *Remarkable: Stories of Australian and Their Boats*, which was exhibited in the Retort House in May 2021.

We hope to see a café at Sub Base Platypus as the site becomes more established.

The Harbour Trust supports improved access for boats and kayaks at Sub Base Platypus, which is identified as a desired outcome in the site's Management Plan. The construction of a floating pontoon with kayak landing facilities was included in the planning approval for the Stage 1 Renewal Project, to enable the Harbour Trust to undertake these works is subject to future funding. The reactivation of the site is ongoing, and we recognise that improved land-water access would make a positive contribution towards that.

## ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

Linda Bergin OAM

- **Is the Greater Sydney Parklands or its CEO a member of any formal or informal group or committee in relation to the future of Harbour Trust lands? If not, has the Trust consulted with the Greater Sydney Parklands and what were the topics of that discussion?**
- **Does Trust Member and Greater Sydney Parklands Chair Michael Rose have a potential conflict of interest?**

Answer

As with any board role, Trust Members have fiduciary responsibilities to the Trust. There are formal declarations of interest undertaken regularly through the year. If there are any matters of conflict, then conflicted Members abstain from any decisions and the conflict is noted in the minutes.

The Harbour Trust legislation requires two members to be appointed on the recommendation of the NSW Government. Michael Rose holds one of these positions.

Linda Bergin OAM

- **Can the Trust publish draft Board Minutes within 2 weeks?**

Answer

Trust Meeting minutes are published as soon as practical after a meeting. There are a number of factors that impact on the timing.

---