



SENATOR THE HON MURRAY WATT MINISTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT AND WATER

Ministerial Statement of Expectations to the Sydney Harbour Federation Trust Environment and Water Portfolio

Issued by Senator The Hon Murray Watt on 25 March 2026

Ministerial Statement of Expectations

This Statement outlines my expectations, as the Minister for the Environment and Water, of the Sydney Harbour Federation Trust (the 'Harbour Trust') when carrying out its role and responsibilities, including regulation. It forms part of the Government's commitment to the good governance of statutory authorities.

Introduction

The Harbour Trust was established under section 5 of the Sydney Harbour Federation Trust Act 2001 ('Act'), to protect, manage and care for approximately 145 hectares of former Defence and other Commonwealth lands located around Sydney Harbour. The lands hold nationally and internationally significant cultural, natural, industrial and heritage value. The Harbour Trust ensures these lands remain public spaces open and accessible to all Australians, and its rich history preserved and shared for the benefit of everyone.

As the Government works to address cost of living issues across Australia, the Harbour Trust lands serve a complementary role by providing accessible public spaces in Australia's largest city, supporting communities in higher-density urban environments.

The lands are important for biodiversity and for providing green spaces within an urban environment. The Harbour Trust has a responsibility to comply and deliver on the legislative responsibilities for biodiversity and heritage conservation through the Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EBPC Act).

This statement is addressed to all Members of the Harbour Trust. The Members, collectively, constitute the "Accountable Authority" under the Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013 (PGPA Act). As such, Members are collectively responsible for the governance and performance of the Harbour Trust.

Ministerial direction

The history of the Sydney Harbour region spans 20,000 years, telling the story of Australia's First Nations connection and culture. It also marks the onset of colonial history along its shores, the strategic establishment of military bases for its defence, and the pivotal arrival point for new Australians.

I expect the Harbour Trust to share the Government's vision to protect, repair and manage nature and heritage better for the future. This should be achieved through the protection

and preservation of what makes the Harbour Trust lands so special to locals, to all Australians and to the world.

Protection and preservation

The Harbour Trust is responsible for protecting, conserving and interpreting the environmental and heritage values of nine iconic sites around the Harbour.

I expect the Harbour Trust to:

- Protect and preserve heritage assets and within the Harbour for future generations.
- Explore innovative opportunities to interpret and activate heritage assets across all sites, including through storytelling, signage and media.

Climate impacts on environmental sustainability

The Harbour Trust should plan for long-term environmental sustainability and environmental resilience.

I expect the Harbour Trust to be carbon neutral by 2030, through year-on-year reductions and offsetting in energy, water, fuel, waste management and green gas emissions and to integrate climate considerations into its planning.

Protect biodiversity and ecological habitats

I expect the Harbour Trust to protect the biodiversity of its sites by continuing to develop their ecological programs, protect their habitats and support community action to:

- Manage and preserve bushland and walking tracks.
- Preserve and regenerate threatened flora and fauna communities and species.
- Provide education and training opportunities.

These measures should contribute to the protection of the nationally significant threatened species and ecosystems and build their resilience.

On cojoined land the Harbour Trust are to engage with NSW Parks and Wildlife with the aim of building a shared vision and pathway to protect, manage and restore Australia's threatened species.

Biodiversity enhancements are to remain a key focus in Harbour Trust planning, in particular to the implementation of the master plan for North Head Sanctuary, a site of high ecological value, and home to the endangered Eastern Suburb Banksia Scrub and endangered Long nosed Bandicoots.

Financial sustainability

As part of the whole-of-government policy objective for Commonwealth regulators to better balance risk mitigation with efficiency, growth and dynamism, I expect the Harbour Trust to strike an appropriate balance between its regulatory and business activities and the expected benefit for the broader community.

In delivering its regulatory functions, I expect the Harbour Trust to consider appropriate performance and service standards measurement for their regulatory activities to align with the Regulator Performance Resource Management Guide (RMG 128).

The foundational master plans for Cockatoo Island/Wareamah, North Head Sanctuary and Middle Head/Gubbuh Gubbuh, detail the vision and ambition for each site. The business case outlines how these plans can be delivered through staged investment, becoming more accessible and attractive to national and international tourists, and encouraging more visitors to Harbour Trust sites.

To achieve long-term financial sustainability, the Sydney Harbour Federation Trust should continue to seek revenue generation opportunities through adaptive use of its spaces, commercial partnerships and philanthropy.

Collaboration

The Harbour Trust should continue to:

- Engage and collaborate with First Nations communities, particularly groups who live and work across the Harbour Trust sites.
- Build partnerships with expert organisations, and actively pursue ways to connect with business, community and environmental organisations.
- Look for collaborative opportunities with Commonwealth and State departments, particularly those with a history of association with the Harbour Trust sites.
- Work with members of the community to ensure community perspectives and context are provided, to help shape Harbour Trust programs, policies and services.
- Apply appropriate governance frameworks, data collation and reporting processes, to ensure transparency and integrity while reporting progress against the Harbour Trust goals.

I expect the Harbour Trust to work closely in partnership with the NSW Government, its agencies, and local governments to foster a whole of harbour approach to the sustainable management of Sydney Harbour for community benefit.

Conclusion

The Harbour Trust should carry out its functions in a way that ensures it maintains an effective balance between the requirement to protect and conserve the environmental and heritage values of the land with sensitive adaptive reuse that contributes to maximising public access to Trust land.

I expect the Harbour Trust to respond to my expectations with a Statement of Intent, which clearly articulates how the Harbour Trust will strive to adopt the principles of best practice for Commonwealth agencies and demonstrate delivery against this Statement of Expectations. I expect that the Harbour Trust will integrate this Statement of Expectations and responding Statement of Intent into its performance reporting processes as required under the PGPA Act and as part of its Corporate Plan and Annual Report.