



NEWS RELEASE
The Hon. Kristina Keneally MP
Member for Heffron
Minister for Planning
Minister for Redfern Waterloo

Wednesday 29 April, 2009

WORK ON TRACK FOR \$25 MILLION HERITAGE URBAN DEVELOPMENT

The NSW Planning Minister, Kristina Keneally, today visited the site of Australia's largest archaeological urban development at The Rocks to inspect the progress on the \$25 million project.

Construction of the Sydney Harbour Youth Hostels Association and The Big Dig Archaeology Education Centre, located on Cumberland Street, commenced in August 2008 and is on track for completion in early 2010.

Ms Keneally said she was excited to see how the development was progressing and was happy that after more than 100 years an historic part of Sydney would soon be re-opened to the public.

"The \$25 million Youth Hostels Association (YHA) project is a great example of how heritage and urban development can co-exist to the benefit of history and the community," Ms Keneally said.

"I am a firm believer that heritage should not gather dust in museums, rather it should be incorporated into everyday life for people to experience.

"The majority of the new buildings are raised on pillars, allowing visitors to see more than 80 per cent of the excavated site preserving what lies beneath.

"The Cumberland Street site dates back to the convict settlement of the 1790s and has remnants of more than 30 colonial dwellings including foundations of a house built by a member of the First Fleet."

Construction of the Sydney Harbour YHA has created around 400 jobs and once complete will generate more than 25 full-time jobs in tourism and education.

Ms Keneally said the NSW Government was looking for a way to conserve these valuable historic footprints while restoring public access to this site.

"YHA's proposal was chosen from a range of submissions from designers, conservationists and archaeologists because of its imaginative approach to heritage conservation," Ms Keneally said.

"Sydney Harbour YHA will give visitors an opportunity to stay in Sydney's historic heart and interact with its heritage, all within walking distance many of Sydney's major attractions.

"Visitors will also be able to see some of the more than one million artefacts found on the site in The Big Dig Archaeology Education Centre, including decorative jewellery, children's toys and Chinese ceramics."

Julian Ledger, Chief Executive Officer, YHA NSW said the YHA has long sought a suitable site close to the harbour on which to expand its facilities.



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“With more than 13 million visitors to The Rocks each year, Cumberland Street is an ideal location,” Mr Ledger said.

“The development will offer much needed budget accommodation in Sydney’s premier tourist precinct and allows YHA to work with the NSW Government to preserve and promote Australia’s heritage.

“Sydney Harbour YHA will also be Australia’s first purpose built environmentally sustainable YHA in a central city location and will set a new environmental benchmark for the budget tourism industry.

“Features will include solar hot water, 80,000 litre rain water tanks and a gas generator to supply up to 70 per cent of the hostel’s peak energy needs,” he said.

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