

# The Sydney Morning Herald

SE News  
HD Sydney 'for sale'  
BY Deborah Snow, Nicole Hasham  
WC 619 words  
PD 22 March 2014  
SN The Sydney Morning Herald  
SC SMHH  
ED First  
PG 1  
LA English  
CY © 2014 Copyright John Fairfax Holdings Limited.  
LP

Exclusive

The Sydney Harbour Federation Trust has earmarked three prime sites on the northern side of Sydney Harbour for long-term lease and development, including to overseas-based Chinese investors.

TD

The three sites, two of which are prominently on the ridgeline with sweeping water views, are presently advertised as being "unique Sydney Harbour tourism opportunities" on a Chinese website which links to the NSW Trade and Investment branch office in Shanghai.

Two of the sites are within the Headland Park at Mosman owned by the Sydney Harbour Federation Trust, and one is at North Head. They include the old North Head Officers Barracks, a 3500-square-metre parcel of land containing five former Defence cottages, and a 6000-square-metre lot which includes three former fuel tanks from the 1940s.

The move comes amid rising concern over the commercialisation of Sydney's parks and public spaces.

In the version of the document that is live on a Chinese website, one of the sites is listed as available for "purchase".

However the head of the Trust, Geoff Bailey, said on Friday the reference to purchasing had been in an "erroneous" draft sent by the NSW government to his office and corrected last September. He said the corrected version should have made clear that the sites were available for lease only, and that expressions of interest, not firm proposals, were being called for at that stage.

He said subsequently the plan to call for expressions of interest on the three sites was withdrawn in December because "frankly we had enough on our plate already, and we decided we didn't have the resources to proceed with it at this stage".

But Mr Bailey said the plan to make the sites available for lease and "adaptive re-use" was "still in prospect".

Mr Bailey said NSW Trade and Investment had approached his office in June 2013 inquiring whether "any Harbour Trust leasing opportunities would be suitable to include in an Australian tourism investment guide".

He understood the request was made to boost a suite of offerings which Premier Barry O'Farrell took with him on a trade mission to China towards the end of last year.

The Trust had suggested those three sites at the time, he added, because "we were coming to the end of our [other] available buildings for lease".

The Trust manages about 400 former Defence buildings on prime land around Sydney, including at Cockatoo **Island**, and more than 100 in Mosman.

The draft brochure describes the fuel tanks as "a unique development opportunity for the creative investor ... [with] generous scope to reimagine these structures to capture extensive water views and the surrounding bushland environment".

It suggested that the **site** of five cottages with "unsurpassable views to the headlands" could provide an ideal opportunity for a "boutique accommodation offering".

The president of the Headland Preservation **Group**, Linda Bergin, said the Sydney Harbour Federation Trust had a duty to preserve heritage and open space, adding "it is wrong to consider proposals which would alienate the public by long-term leases for private purposes".

Ms Bergin has been spearheading objections to another controversial proposal for an aged-care home on Middle Head.

A spokesman for the Department of Trade and Investment said the original brochure "unfortunately carries an editing oversight" by using the word **purchase** rather than lease.

"However in the same [document] ... it clearly states that 'leasing' of this **site** will be subject to a public tender process," he said.

The spokesman added that "while the brochure generated interest in many of the buildings and sites featured, no inquiries were received for the Sydney Harbour Federation Trust sites".

**NS** npag : Page-One Stories | ncat : Content Types

**RE** austr : Australia | china : China | nswals : New South Wales | sydney : Sydney | apacz : Asia Pacific | asiaz : Asia | ausnz : Australia/Oceania | bric : BRIC Countries | chinaz : Greater China | devgcoz : Emerging Market Countries | dvpcos : Developing Economies | easiaz : Eastern Asia

**PUB** Fairfax Media Management Pty Limited

**AN** Document SMHH000020140321ea3m00033