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9February 2011

## **Capital works begin at the Sydney Opera House**

NSW Minister for the Arts, Virginia Judge, today announced the \$152 million capital works program to enhance tourist and visitor safety at the Sydney Opera House has now commenced.

“The NSW Government has recognised the importance of the Sydney Opera House by providing \$152 million for capital works to improve its functionality, structural integrity and enhance safety,” Ms Judge said.

“The Vehicle Access and Pedestrian Safety Project (VAPS) is the largest single capital works program undertaken at the Sydney Opera House since its opening in 1973.”

Sydney Opera House CEO Richard Evans confirmed the site is one of the busiest cultural and tourist precincts in the world.

“In excess of seven million visitors set foot on the World Heritage-listed Sydney Opera House site each year,” Mr Evans said.

“The VAPS project will improve safety for visitors and locals by diverting heavy vehicles from the Forecourt to a new underground roadway and loading dock. “

The project involves:

- the diversion of the Bennelong Drain, a stormwater drain servicing parts of the Sydney CBD that runs across the Sydney Opera House site;
- the excavation of a new access road and loading dock under the Forecourt; and
- remediation of the existing road to remove the curbs that can trip and injure visitors.

Ms Judge confirmed the Sydney Opera House will remain fully operational throughout the project, with theatres, restaurants and guided tours open for business.

“The Sydney Opera House contributes \$1.1 billion to the Australian economy in annual direct and indirect value and more than 12,000 direct and indirect jobs,” Ms Judge said.

The Forecourt is now closed and is expected to re-open to the public in mid 2013.

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