



## MEDIA RELEASE

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# Capital works begin at the Sydney Opera House

The State funded capital works program to enhance tourist and visitor safety at the Sydney Opera House has now commenced as planned and on schedule. The \$152m 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. The VAPS Development Application was rigorously assessed by the NSW Department of Planning and was formally approved late last year.

The first stage of the project is to divert the Bennelong Drain, a major stormwater drain serving the CBD, which runs across the Forecourt. Phase one has been contracted to the highly regarded construction company Seymour Whyte. Excavation work will begin near the Queen Elizabeth Gate entrance to the Royal Botanic Gardens at the south-eastern tip of Bennelong Point.

Work has commenced to secure the Forecourt site, with a hoarding around the site built by the end of February. Services diversions and further work on the drain will then move to the Forecourt area. The Forecourt will now remain closed to the public until mid-2013.

Sydney Opera House Richard Evans said, "Sydney Opera House is one of the busiest cultural and tourist precincts in the world with more than seven million visitors setting foot on site each year. It contributes \$1.1 billion to the Australian economy in annual direct and indirect value and more than 12,000 direct and indirect jobs."

He added, "The NSW State Government recognises the importance of Sydney Opera House to the city, the state and the country, and is funding these important capital works needed to maintain its World Heritage Listed integrity."

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

The VAPS 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 regularly trip and injure visitors.

**Sydney Opera House will remain fully operational throughout the project, with theatres, restaurants and guided tours open for business. The Forecourt will close to the public from today and is expected to re-open to the public in mid 2013.**