

NEOLIBERALISM AND THE ROLE OF THE STATE IN SURPLUS PUBLIC LAND MANAGEMENT: PROTECTING SYDNEY HARBOUR'S OPEN SPACE LEGACY

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ABSTRACT

This paper compares and contrasts the activities of Commonwealth and State government agencies in relation to the management of public land. Context for this study is provided by the growing impact of neoliberalism on governments. Two conceptual manifestations of this ideology on the planning, use and management of public land are considered. First, the neocorporatist state, a recent theory of the state, provides an ideological framework to explain the politics of the approach of the state in terms of the commodification and privatisation of public land. Second, the paper is set in the context of the growing impact of neoliberalism on urban governance in the form of corporate liberalism. Both concepts – one of state power and politics, and the other of urban governance – are seen as linked through the ideology of neoliberalism. However, through a comparison of the management of 'surplus' public land by the Commonwealth government and the New South Wales State government, differences in ideology and governance within the neoliberal construct are apparent. Evidence for this hypothesis is provided by a comparative analysis of four case studies relating to surplus public land around Sydney Harbour. The case studies comprise two Commonwealth government examples – the former HMAS Platypus site and a broader examination of the role and sites managed by the Sydney Harbour Federation Trust, and two State government case studies – the former Quarantine Station and Barangaroo. Contrasts in the land use, planning and management philosophies of these sites are highlighted, and an explanation sought by reference to the pertinent conceptual framework of neoliberalism.

INTRODUCTION

The impacts of neoliberalism are felt across government activities in Australia. Government departments responsible for the management of public land have not escaped the enormous influence that neoliberalism has had on government activities and policy frameworks (Wiseman, 1998; Gleeson and Low 2000a). The combination of neoliberalist ideals and a lack of funds allocated to the management of public lands have resulted in the progressive 'privatisation' of public lands. This paper firstly positions the privatisation of public land within the context of the neoliberal construct of the neocorporatist state and corporate liberalism. A brief background to the respective roles of State and Commonwealth Government in relation to public land sites around Sydney Harbour is provided. Four cases studies are then presented of public land in and around Sydney, which are generally considered to be 'surplus' to their previous public uses and/or that have experienced difficulties in terms of continuing public funding for ongoing management purposes. The case studies comprise two Commonwealth government examples – the former HMAS Platypus site and a broader examination of the role and sites managed by the Sydney Harbour Federation Trust. Two State government case studies consisting of the former Quarantine Station and Barangaroo are also considered. Finally, comparison and contrasts in the land use, planning and management approaches in relation to these sites are highlighted, and an explanation sought by reference to the pertinent conceptual framework of neoliberalism.

NEOLIBERALISM AND PUBLIC LAND

Neoliberalism is a term much in vogue to describe the driving philosophy, and hence the role, nature and actions of the contemporary state. This political ideology advocates a program of deregulation and privatisation to reduce the influence of government and promotes the pre-eminence of the market as the best mechanism for economic and social organisation (Gleeson and Low 2000b: 39). Neoliberalism may simply be defined as a philosophy of smaller government and an enhanced role of the private sector in governance, particularly in the provision of services and facilities traditionally provided by the state or public sector. Paradoxically however, more strategic, targeted (indeed clinical), policy and legislative intervention by government is often required to promote private sector – and state – interests. Here lies

the 'anti-planning' assault of neoliberalism, for its raison d'être is not the public interest. Rather at its heart lies the promotion of private interests and specific interests of the state, for example maintenance of economic growth in the face of structural change caused by globalisation.

Two conceptual manifestations of the growing impact of neoliberalism are relevant to an understanding of government policy in relation to the planning, use and management of public land. First, the neocorporatist state, a recent theory of the state, provides an ideological framework to explain the politics of the approach of the state in terms of the commodification and privatisation of public land. Second, corporate liberalism, a contemporary form of urban governance, emphasises promotion of the interests of the state and sees these interests as being intertwined with those of the private sector. Both concepts – one of state power and politics, and the other of urban governance – are seen as linked through the ideology of neoliberalism, which has as its common denominator the promotion of the interests of capital on the basis that this is as perceived and being in the interests of the state.

The impact of corporate liberalism on urban governance in terms of the "steady increase in liberalisation within the public sector during the 1990s" has continued and intensified in the new millennium (Gleeson and Low 2000b: 92). This transformation in governance has included the phenomenon of "corporate business influence" (Healey, 2007: 35) on the functioning of Government departments. Central also to corporate liberalism is the broader "assumption that the state must submit to the demands of global business to create the conditions that will attract investment" (Gleeson and Low 2000b: 73). Implicit in this mode of urban governance is a contemporary manifestation of a corporatist approach by the state – as encapsulated in the theory of the neocorporatist state. In part, this theory of the state sees landed capital as often requiring heavy support from "the state in order to elaborate and build projects that require adequate and continuous use over a considerable period of time if they are not to be devalued" (Harvey 2006: 102).

Public land management is one area of traditional government infrastructure responsibility that has been susceptible to the growing impact of neoliberalism. To a large degree this susceptibility has been framed by the cost of maintaining public land – a cost that is seen as draining on a public purse which is increasingly squeezed to meet expenditure demands – and for a public benefit that is not perceived as essential (when compared with services such as health, transport, education etc). In such circumstances the relief provided by a 'neoliberal solution' is obvious – (a) the state is relieved of financial responsibility (smaller government); (b) the private sector is offered the opportunity to assume the risk to manage, and so earn profit, from a public asset (state support for a larger private sector role); and (c) public land is commodified and effectively privatised (the privatisation of formerly public infrastructure).

The impacts of neoliberalism have had a direct impact on the way that public land is managed and has raised a number of issues in relation to the current practices of both Commonwealth and State land management agencies. While the dedication or classification of land as public land still remains an issue in Sydney, it is the lack of funds allocated to this sector that is of most concern. The future preservation of Sydney's iconic foreshore sites cannot continue in public hands, unless new streams of funding are found to assist in the management of this land. A lack of funding has meant that government agencies have had to find new streams of revenue to provide income to assist in the cost of maintaining areas of public land. Compromises between the use and public access available to a site must be made to ensure that buildings or specific sites within public land areas are attractive to private tenants. A question related to what really constitutes 'public access' is raised, as leases provide a quasi-privatisation within public land.

Through a comparison of the management of 'surplus' public land by the Commonwealth government and the New South Wales State government, differences in ideology and governance within the neoliberal construct are apparent. Evidence for this hypothesis is provided by a comparative analysis of four case studies relating to surplus public land around Sydney Harbour, discussed below.

MANAGEMENT OF SURPLUS GOVERNMENT LAND

Australia's federal system of government has effectively resulted in a tripartite hierarchy of political power consisting of Commonwealth, state and territory, and local government. The structure of urban governance in Australia today is closely related to the division of legislative power among the tiers of

government, as enshrined in section 51 of the Constitution. This means that the areas of open space around Sydney are not managed by one government body. Instead, all three levels of government have responsibility for the provision of public land and open space. The States are generally responsible for most of the land use planning decisions as they hold the residual power to make decisions about the environment (Farrier et al, 2006). Though the Commonwealth Government is often seen to play a minor role in land use planning, it is responsible for the planning and management of many areas of Commonwealth land, as stipulated in section 52 of the Constitution. Unlike the State Government, the Commonwealth Government has only become involved in the management of harbour land that is open to the public in more recent times. In the past, much of the Commonwealth land around the harbour was restricted to use by the military for the strategic defence of Sydney. As the nature of war changed, a number of these military sites were deactivated and during the early 1990s a number of ex-military sites around the harbour were determined to be surplus Commonwealth land. Public debate surrounding appropriate uses for these sites began and there was a strong public view that the land should not be sold for private development.

Neoliberalism has had various impacts on the approaches taken by the State and Commonwealth Governments to manage 'surplus' public land. Four case studies have been selected to highlight some the contrasts in the land use, planning and management philosophies of State and Commonwealth agencies responsible for the management of public land. The first case study, the proposed redevelopment of the HMAS Platypus site, was a key juncture in the development of the planning framework for key sites – both in public and private ownership – around Sydney harbour. A proposal by the Commonwealth Government to redevelop for residential purposes HMAS Platypus, the Royal Australian Navy's former submarine establishment located on the foreshore of Neutral Bay and subsequent court case raised the privatisation of surplus public land as a political issue. The second case study, the establishment of the Sydney Harbour Federation Trust, was the response of the Commonwealth Government to the issues of managing former defence sites around the harbour. The third and fourth case studies are two examples of State government-managed sites in Sydney Harbour, which have attracted significant political and public interest – the former Quarantine Station and Barangaroo.

HMAS PLATYPUS

In 1997 the Department of Defence lodged an application with North Sydney Council for the development of 95 dwellings on the former HMAS Platypus site. The application was refused consent by North Sydney Council and subsequently ended as an appeal to the NSW Land and Environment Court. In its ensuing judgment (*Commonwealth of Australia v North Sydney Council* [1998] NSWLEC 252 (14 October 1998)), the Court granted deferred commencement consent to the development. The HMAS Platypus proposal was significant for several reasons. First, the NSW Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning, although not one of the litigants, intervened in the Court proceedings (as permitted by the *Land and Environment Court Act 1979*, s 64(2)), with the main issue of concern related to the nature, adequacy and utility of the open space provided for in the proposal. Second, as the site was on the foreshores of Sydney Harbour, it had been of considerable interest to the State Government. That interest was manifested in public statements and intergovernmental negotiations over the years and underpinned *State Environmental Planning Policy No.56 – Sydney Harbour Foreshores and Tributaries ('SEPP 56')*, which was made under the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* (NSW) ('EP&A Act') on 21 August 1998, while the Court proceedings were in progress. SEPP 56 identified the HMAS Platypus site (and several other sites such as North Head, Cockatoo Island, Taronga Zoological Gardens and Luna Park) as a 'state significant site', for which the Minister for Planning was to be the consent authority. Third, the Court noted that the proposal sought to provide significant public open space, and "that some of the most valuable parts of this site involving the waterfront area are proposed to be dedicated to the public" (at 135). Fourth, however, the proposal reflected "what might be described as commercial realities in the redevelopment of valuable land, long used for public purposes" (at 135). Significantly, the Court did "not subscribe to the notion that publicly owned land should simply be provided to the local or regional public without financial adjustment" (at 139). In conclusion therefore, the Court found that it had to approach the question of the amount of 'public' space to be provided "against the commercial realities which both Commonwealth and State Governments have recognised in approaching the future of such significant Commonwealth sites, rather

than any fundamental principle which flows from the Commonwealth's long-time exclusive use of such a prime site near other public parks" (at 44).

This notion of "commercial realities" identified by the Court has coloured the management philosophies of Commonwealth and State agencies and much of their dealings over future use and maintenance of public lands. Protests over new development on foreshores sites continued, with public outcry about the plans to "sell these sites to the rapacious market for harbour views" (Spearritt, 2006: 212) and in 1998 the Federal Government announced that the Sydney Harbour Federation Trust (the Trust) would be established to manage ex-defence land on the harbour, including the former HMAS Platypus site.

SYDNEY HARBOUR FEDERATION TRUST

An interim Trust was established in 1999 to begin the planning process for the ex-defence harbour sites that were to be vested in the new agency. The *Sydney Harbour Federation Trust Act 2001* formally established the Trust for a period of ten years, giving it the responsibility to manage parts of North Head, Middle Head and Georges Heights (now Headland Park), Woolwich Dock and Parklands, Cockatoo Island and Snapper Island. The Trust's sites now include Macquarie Lightstation, the former Marine Biological Station and the HMAS Platypus site. The funding for the Trust came from the Commonwealth Government's Federation Fund with the vision to "return Sydney Harbour foreshore defence sites to the people of Australia" (Coalition Environmental Policy, 1998). The Trust was allocated an initial sum of money to fund the remediation works on a number of its sites but it was always intended that the agency would eventually be self funding. The sale of a small group of ex-defence residential properties provided additional funding for the Trust but this was not without some public disapproval. Remediation and infrastructure upgrades were more costly than the initial estimates predicted, causing the Trust's funds to deplete faster than expected. The Trust approached the Commonwealth Government for additional funds, which were not granted, thus propelling the Trust into its 'self-financing' stage earlier than expected. In 2007 the Trust's life was extended from 2011 until 2032, placing more pressure on the agency to find long term funding solutions.

The Trust initially began a program of remediation and capital works, to prepare its eight sites to be opened to the public. Following this, refurbished buildings were then advertised for commercial leasing to provide additional income for the agency to fund the maintenance of the sites and future projects. Questions were raised as to whether the buildings on the sites should be leased for commercial uses or their use restricted to community purposes. The Trust argued that uses for each site should be the "best fit to heritage values, the location, the setting, the character of the place, the local planning context" (Bailey, 2005: 3) which might include commercial uses. Commercial uses such as cafes and restaurants activated the once vacant land and attracted visitors to the Trust's sites. In addition, the leasing of buildings for commercial uses helped to ensure that adequate funds could be raised to fund the agency's growing maintenance program and new capital works projects. However, as there is now increased pressure on the organisation to self-fund projects, the Trust may need to lease buildings only for commercial uses, as they attract a higher rental return than community uses.

The Trust plays a number of roles on its sites: land owner, rent collector and development approval authority. At times the Trust has found this position to be advantageous, giving the agency "greater control and flexibility" (Bailey, 2005: 4) when implementing plans for each site. However, this position also means that the Trust may be faced with a number of conflicts of interest when trying to balance the need to lease a building to generate income with the conditions of a development approval or a licence for a new use. This problem is further aggravated by the issues that the Trust has encountered in relation to linking in to a legal framework that does not support certain types of uses that are now appearing on Trust sites, such as restaurants and childcare centres. Longer leases that ensure greater rental security for both the Trust and the tenant may become more common. While the land has not been sold, the length of leases and types of uses that are allowed on the sites means that there is a form of privatisation on the sites that prevents complete public access to the sites.

In 2006 the Trust was described by Parliamentary Secretary Grant Hunt as "best historic buildings manager in Australia" (Huxley, 2006). However, despite this praise the Trust has not been successful in obtaining additional funds from the Commonwealth Government to continue its work. The Trust has

begun to apply for grants from both the Commonwealth and State Government and has been awarded grants for the conservation of Biloela House on Cockatoo Island (National Historic Sites Program – Commonwealth Government) and the George Raper Memorial Walk (Sharing Sydney Harbour Access Program – State Government). In addition, the Sydney Harbour Conservancy was established in 2010 to allow members of the public to donate money towards the Trust's projects (SHFT, 2011). The recent application for grants and the establishment of the Conservancy by the Trust indicates that the funding situation has reached a desperate low. The "well managed process for returning land designed and used for defence purposes" (Freestone, 2010: 258) that has been demonstrated by the Trust cannot continue without adequate funding.

NORTH HEAD QUARANTINE STATION

The North Head area of Sydney Harbour was used for quarantine of travellers by sea and then air, for over 150 years from 1828 to 1984. Originally under colonial and then state ownership, in 1911 the North Head Quarantine Station was transferred to Commonwealth control under the *Quarantine Act 1908 (Cth)*. No longer required for this purpose, the Quarantine Station closed in 1984 and was transferred back from the Commonwealth to the State, and became part of the Sydney Harbour National Park in the same year (OEH, 2011).

Pursuant to its management role, the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) used part of the site for 'low key' conference, function and accommodation purposes in conjunction with a publicly available interpretative guided tour program. However, the combined income from these uses and other funding sources was insufficient to adequately maintain and conserve the Quarantine Station, which was estimated to require an immediate conservation and maintenance expenditure of \$6 million. Having regard to these financial circumstances, the NPWS in 1987 gave consideration to alternative means of managing and financing conservation and adaptive re-use of the Quarantine Station and called for expressions of interest to lease the site.

Following consideration of various management options and in the absence of sufficient funding, the NPWS resolved to award a head lease to one business. The decision to lease the site effectively as a public/private sector partnership accorded with NSW State Government policy and a statement of planning policy detailed by the Premier of NSW, the Hon Bob Carr in August 1997 concerning the Sydney Harbour Foreshore. Therein it was advised that the Quarantine Station had been "offered for lease by way of a selected public tender process". "The purpose is to secure private sector involvement and funding support for the protection and operation of the Quarantine Station as a unique tourist/visitor attraction." (Commission of Inquiry, 2002).

Following certain failed leasing negotiations with other interested parties over a 15-year period and the need to prepare detailed conservation plans, in January 2000, the NPWS entered into a 'Conditional Agreement to Lease' with Mawland Hotel Management Pty Ltd. The agreed tenure period was 45 years with the lease being reviewable at the 20 year period. The 'Conditional Agreement to Lease' required completion of certain pre-requisites including successful determination of a statutory required Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), as the subject adaptive re-use proposal required assessment and approval by the Minister for Planning under Part 5 of the EP&A Act. As part of this process, a public inquiry in the form of a Commission of Inquiry under the EP&A Act was appointed by the Minister in 2001.

While the consideration of funding options and leasing negotiations were in progress, in conformity with the policy of the NPWS, a Conservation Management Plan was prepared to guide the conservation and management of the Quarantine Station. Released in 2000, the Conservation Management Plan identified the entire Quarantine Station as being a place of national significance, reflected in the heritage listing of the North Head Quarantine Station and Reserve on the State Heritage Register (2 April 1999) and the National Heritage List (12 May 2006). Pertinently, the Conservation Management Plan recommended that:

The Quarantine Station should be conserved and managed by NPWS in accordance with its outstanding significance as a place that retains and evokes powerful cultural meanings for a large number of indigenous, resident and newly-arrived Australians. Its natural features, cultural

features and ambience should remain accessible to the local, state, national and international community.

The Quarantine Station is a place of outstanding significance in public ownership, and its management carries with it the expectation of public access and presentation. NPWS, as manager, should be primarily focussed on the conservation and public presentation of the place, and ensure that the requisite skills for this task are available

(Peter Freeman, 2000: 19-20).

However, the Conservation Management Plan found the buildings and sites comprising the Quarantine Station ranged from good to poor condition, and that there was a maintenance backlog on many buildings that led to a deteriorating condition. There was an urgent need to undertake an immediate maintenance program, pending funding availability (Peter Freeman, 2000). Here lay the essence of the problem – NPWS did not have sufficient funds to return the Quarantine Station to a fit condition that ensured that its cultural significance was maintained.

The Commission of Inquiry also found that in the 15-year period that consideration of avenues to carry out and fund required conservation had been in progress, the Station had suffered considerable damage due to a lack of funding to enable sufficient maintenance work to be undertaken. The Inquiry recommended that further lengthy delays in respect of action to conserve the Station must be avoided in the interest of its continued well being in regard to both maintenance and security. The Inquiry found that:

Private sector lease involvement enables, in terms of public access and public interest, an immediate economic and environmentally sustainable approach to conservation of the Quarantine Station. It provides for a major capital investment which will prevent further deterioration of the site and establish a basis for the restoration, conservation and maintenance of the Station for future generations. Benefits will include enhanced visibility, accessibility, understanding and interpretation of the heritage, historic, cultural and environmental values of the Station.

(Commission of Inquiry, 2002, Summary)

However, as the proposed 45-year lease period was tantamount to 'ownership of public land', the Inquiry recommended that only a 21-year tenure be granted. Subsequently, the Quarantine Station was leased to Mawland Quarantine Station Pty Ltd for adaptive reuse and conservation works in October 2006. The lease is for a period of 21 years, with options to extend for 15 and 9 years (OEH, 2011). Mawland now operate the Quarantine Station as a cultural tourism-based facility with a range of visitor facilities and services, including accommodation, a restaurant, visitor centre and museum, and site tours.

BARANGAROO

In 2003, the NSW Government announced the stevedoring wharves at East Darling Harbour would be transformed into a new urban precinct. Named 'Barangaroo' (after a significant Indigenous woman in Sydney at the time of first European Settlement) in 2006, it is a 22-hectare parcel encompassing 1.4 kilometres of Sydney harbour foreshore and is the last harbourside location in the Sydney CBD able to be redeveloped. Approximately half the Barangaroo site will be dedicated to open space and public domain, with a new Headland Park at the northern end of the site.

Investment in Barangaroo is expected to exceed \$3 billion. It is planned to become a key commercial, residential and recreation precinct with over 22,000 workers and residents, and 33,000 visitors a day – a total of 12 million visitors a year. Barangaroo is planned to deliver a maximum of 508,300sqm of commercial, residential, tourism, retail and community space in the development zone, and 11,500sqm in the public domain (Barangaroo, 2011). Construction is expected to commence late 2011.

Towards the end of 2009 a NSW government agency, the Barangaroo Delivery Authority, was established under the *Barangaroo Delivery Authority Act 2009* to manage this city waterfront development. The function of the Authority was succinctly stated by the Minister when announcing its establishment: "Barangaroo will set Sydney up to be the financial services capital of the Asia Pacific,

underpinning our economic growth for years to come. The new Barangaroo Delivery Authority will work across Government and with the private sector to deliver this important project” (Keneally, 2008).

In addition to the creation of a specialised government agency, the significance that the NSW Government attached to the commercial redevelopment of the site is evident from the extent of direct Ministerial intervention during its planning phase. A concept plan – a statutory master planning document to guide urban design and policy matters for the redevelopment of Barangaroo - was approved by the NSW Minister for Planning in 2007. In February 2009, the NSW Government announced that 120,000 square metres of additional commercial floor space would be built at Barangaroo to help ensure Sydney remains a global headquarters in the Asia Pacific. In December 2010, the Minister for Planning approved a further amendment to the Concept Plan, allowing additional floor space, additional height and a landmark hotel on a public pier. In early 2011 the Minister changed planning laws applying to the site, to exempt part of the development from the operation of the state’s contaminated land remediation laws, in response to a challenge then before the NSW Land and Environment Court, an action with drew impotent ire of the Court. The newly appointed Minister for Planning announced in May 2011 a review of the State Government decisions in relation to the site. This review, released in August 2011, while finding no significant impropriety in relation to decisions made in respect to Barangaroo, made special comment on perceived conflicts of interest within the State Government over the site. A specific recommendation was that the “Government may wish to consider a separation of the role of Minister for Planning and Minister responsible for Barangaroo” (Sussex and Penn 2011:9).

COMPARATIVE OF COMMONWEALTH AND STATE PUBLIC LAND MANAGEMENT APPROACHES

Both State and Commonwealth Government agencies that manage public lands are struggling to maintain their sites due to a lack of funding. A number of State Programs do provide financial assistance in the management of public land around Sydney’s foreshore. These include Coastal Lands Protection Scheme, Sharing Sydney Harbour Access Plan and the Metropolitan Greenspace Program. However, these State programs provide only limited levels of funding for small, discrete projects, such as walkways and bike paths. These funding programs are strategically directed to the acquisition or ongoing management of public lands under the management of the Commonwealth, State, Local Government agencies and local community groups. The Commonwealth Government does not provide similar programs to assist Commonwealth agencies that manage foreshore public land.

However, a problem which has not been satisfactorily resolved is funding for on-going maintenance of the more resource intensive sites, such as the former Quarantine Station at North Head. For these larger foreshore sites that require large sums of money to cover the cost of maintenance, the private sector is seen as the only solution. Hence, the focus of public agency endeavours on these sites has been largely directed to facilitating a transfer of management responsibilities to the private sectors. This has resulted in various degrees of privatisation of public land. As a consequence, the role of the private sector in the governance of these special and iconic public spaces in Sydney has become a defining trait of counterparty planning and land management.

The Commonwealth Government delivered its largest commitment to foreshore preservation in 1998 with the announcement that the Sydney Harbour Federation Trust would be established to manage ex-defence lands around the harbour. Since the allocation of that funding more than ten years ago, the Commonwealth Government has done little to support public land management and did not provide additional funds to the Trust when its initial allocation of funds was determined to be inadequate, even though the agency’s work has been so well received. It is ironic that the Trust, a Commonwealth agency, is now applying for grants to fund some of its projects, including funds from the Sharing Sydney Harbour Access Program, which is a State Government program. Short of granting generous concessions on leases to private lessees the Trust appears to have very little choice in the face of ongoing budgetary restrictions to fund its future land management operations.

For some harbour foreshore sites such as Barangaroo, the attraction of significant financial return to be gained from its redevelopment was, in the mind of the previous NSW State Government, clearly too good an opportunity to miss. However, in May 2011 the incoming NSW State Government announced a review of the Barangaroo site, the findings of which were released in August 2011. This review recommended

that planning and management responsibility of Barangaroo be separated to prevent any perceptions of decisions favourable to developers on public land being approved through the planning Minister. This rather special case of seeking to benefit from the availability for redevelopment of foreshore land adjoining the Sydney CBD is, arguably, no more than an obvious manifestation of the notion of “commercial reality” confronting State and Commonwealth agencies referred to in the HMAS Platypus case. More contentious however, is the extent and scale of the development proposed on the Barangaroo site and findings by the review of perceived conflicts of interest.

CONCLUSION

More through historical circumstance and good fortune, rather than planning foresight and good management, Sydney harbour has been the beneficiary of some outstandingly attractive public open space. This legacy should not be squandered. Protection of this asset requires a commitment by government to ensure that this land remains in public use and access. Fundamental to the realisation of this goal is the necessity of sympathetic management and adequate funding, particularly of the larger iconic sites in and around Sydney harbour.

This paper has highlighted the lack of funding available for public land management, particularly in Sydney. This issue needs to be placed on the agenda of Commonwealth and State governments to ensure that these significant sites are preserved. The work of individuals, community groups and government to have culturally or environmentally significant lands acquired or dedicated as public land in order to protect such sites, or to ensure public access to foreshore and scenic locations, is only half the task. Funding for ongoing maintenance must be allocated to these lands to ensure that privatisation is not the only management solution. New streams of funding need to be established, particularly as public land in urban areas such as Sydney are subject to increasing levels of use. Without adequate funding, growing pressure on a diminishing stock of publicly accessible open space will undermine the civic benefits of the network of green infrastructure that Sydney has been fortuitous to inherit. Inescapably the solution to this problem will be found in greater private management and control of commercially desirable open space around Sydney Harbour.

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