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Sydney to get a new Convention Center

Sydney will be home to a 12 hectare convention, exhibition and entertainment precinct in 2016 following the release of a NSW Government tender calling for Expressions of Interest from the private sector to build and operate the facilities at Darling Harbour.

NSW Premier Barry O'Farrell said Sydney was reclaiming its position on centre stage for hosting world-class events with the creation of the Sydney International Convention, Exhibition and Entertainment precinct.

“Developing these facilities so they match the best at home and abroad is part of the NSW Government's single-minded determination to make NSW number one again,” Mr O'Farrell said.

The project involves expanding and enhancing the international convention, exhibition and entertainment complex, including developing new facilities and refurbishing existing facilities across the Darling Harbour precinct. Mr O'Farrell said issuing the Expressions of Interest (EOI) was a major step towards Sydney successfully hosting the widest range of local, national and international events.

“We have one of the most vibrant and beautiful cities in the world, yet Sydney has been slowly losing its appeal as a city that is a premier destination for national and international conventions, entertainment and business events and exhibitions. I want Sydney to be a global city that is the undisputed gateway to Australia” to reclaim that position with an entertainment precinct that we are proud of and is worthy of the world stage.

Earlier draft plans for the site included the construction of a dedicated conference and entertainment auditorium and multi-purpose hall on the site of the Sydney Entertainment Centre and Entertainment car park, adjacent to the existing Sydney Convention and Exhibition Centre at the southern end of Darling Harbour.

Mr O'Farrell said the recent three-month period of industry consultation had focused on ensuring that the project meets the needs of international conferences and exhibitions and the Government was taking a broader view regarding the development of the site, including the existing facilities.

“There was feedback from some sectors that we needed to significantly expand the project as part of attracting international conventions and exhibitions and, as a result, we are now looking at the larger precinct covering about 12 hectares,” he said. “This will provide the private sector with more flexibility to choose the best options between new construction and re-use of existing facilities. The private sector wants to be innovative in how they might deliver this project and we want to encourage that to get the best possible outcome.”

The Sydney International Convention, Exhibition and Entertainment Precinct project will include:

- Exhibition space of at least 40,000 square metres
- Flexible plenary spaces with a combined capacity of at least 10,000 delegates
- Capacity to host a variety of sporting, musical and theatrical events for an anticipated minimum of

12,000 people

- Upmarket banqueting facilities for a minimum of 4,000 people
- The enhancement of the public domain to provide an active and vibrant space for passive recreation, pre or post function meetings and other events; and
- Improved connectivity and linkages to surrounding areas to include enhanced connections through Darling Harbour.

A new high quality hotel and public retail, food and beverage outlets are also expected to be provided.

The Government Tender will run for a six-week period until Friday 11 November and will be followed by a Request for Proposals. It is intended that a successful proponent will be appointed later in 2012 with construction completed by late 2016.

Further details about the government tender project and Expression of Interest are available at www.newsydneymconventioncentre.com

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