

Confidence in budget tourism, as YHA invests \$50 million

Australia's network of youth hostels is growing. YHA is on track to open three new properties, one in Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane during 2009, an investment of over \$50 million, as the demand for high quality budget accommodation from both domestic and international travellers remains strong.

With very few new hotels currently under construction in Australia's capital cities YHA's confidence demonstrates a resilience of the youth and budget travel sectors, according to Chief Executive Officer of YHA NSW, Julian Ledger.

"Tourism forecasts are for a reduction in the number of travellers coming due to the global economic crisis, however we expect demand for quality budget accommodation to remain steady. Applications for Australian working holiday maker visas have increased from the UK and traditionally, the backpacker segment is less adversely affected by economic downturns. As an organisation that is in 2009 celebrating its 100th anniversary we are also able to take a longer term view," Mr Ledger said.

In April 2009 the new Melbourne Central YHA is scheduled to open on Flinders St representing a \$14 million dollar investment in the revitalisation of this Melbourne precinct. This will be followed by Brisbane City YHA, to open on Upper Roma Street at a cost of \$16 million in June.

The most unusual of YHA's three new properties is the \$25 million Sydney Harbour YHA and The Big Dig Archaeology Education Centre under construction on the site of the Cumberland St Dig Site in The Rocks. YHA won a strongly contested open tender process to develop the historic site, owned by the Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority (SHFA) in 2006.

This 106 bedroom property will be the first budget accommodation to offer Opera House views from its rooms and panoramic Sydney Harbour views from its roof terrace, to rival the five star properties in the precinct. The Big Dig Archaeology Education Centre will offer groups experiential learning through hands-on activities, which will include a simulated dig

"Of all young international visitors to Australia, 75% visit Sydney. YHA has long sought a suitable site within easy walking distance of Sydney Harbour on which to expand its facilities. This site provides a unique opportunity to offer much needed budget accommodation close to the Harbour while enabling us to work with SHFA to preserve and promote Sydney's heritage," said Mr Ledger.

Each new YHA property will include state-of-the art technology and a range of features that demonstrate the organisation's commitment to environmental sustainability.

"These new properties will cement YHA's position as Australia's leading network of budget tourism accommodation well into the future," Mr Ledger said.

YHA is part of the world's largest budget accommodation network, Hostelling International, which provides more than 4,000 YHA/Hi hostels in more than 60 countries. Renowned for its unique properties, YHA hostels include heritage castles, log cabins and beach houses. A membership based organisation, YHA provides travellers with quality accommodation and the opportunity for personal growth through travel, fostering cross cultural understanding and environmental responsibility. YHA is a not for profit organisation, with profits invested in the accommodation network and the experience it provides.

Media note: To arrange an interview with Julian Ledger or to request images please contact Kate Bromley, Indigo Ink PR on (02) 9489 9783 or 0408 407 847.

