

## Impressive education centre to open in The Rocks, Sydney

Telling the stories of Australia's colonial history will soon enter a new age, when a state-of-the-art education centre opens in Sydney's historic heart, The Rocks later in 2009.

The Big Dig Archaeology Education Centre and Sydney Harbour YHA is a \$25 million development on the Cumberland Street Dig Site in The Rocks, Sydney. It will combine an inspiring education programme that complements the syllabus of primary school, high school, TAFE and university courses, with purpose built accommodation.

A major archaeological dig on the site in 1994 and further excavations in 2007, resulted in the discovery of Australia's only visible remains of a house belonging to a member of the first fleet as well as thousands of remnants of daily life of the approximately 300 people who lived on the site.

The Youth Hostel Association of NSW (YHA NSW) is developing the site, owned by the Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority (SHFA).

"Together with a team of specialist heritage consultants and educators YHA has created a truly engaging heritage experience, in a stunning harbour side location," said Ross Lardner, Manager, The Big Dig and Sydney Harbour YHA.

"Groups frequently visit The Rocks as part of an excursion to Sydney however their visit is often too short and therefore lacking in a depth of experience. The Big Dig and Sydney Harbour YHA will provide the opportunity for groups to stay amidst the historic laneways of this heritage precinct enabling The Rocks to become the focus of a Sydney study trip," Mr Lardner said.

The education programme will be delivered by SHFA's education unit, Sydney Learning Adventures and the Historic Houses Trust. The focus will be on experiential learning through hands-on activities such as artefact handling as well as a simulated dig on site available for the use of groups.

The Big Dig will partner with nearby heritage attractions including Susannah Place Museum and The Rocks Discovery Centre to tailor make packages to suit the needs of all groups. A variety of guided walking tours is available, including The Rocks Ghost Tour which provide an engaging after dark heritage experience.

Located 400 metres from Circular Quay, Sydney Harbour YHA will comprise of 106 rooms including private double and twin rooms and multi-share four to six bed rooms all featuring en suite bathroom. It will also feature a communal kitchen, Internet facilities and roof terrace with Sydney Harbour views. Groups will have a designated wing with catering and dining/meeting rooms available.

**For more information on the education programmes offered at The Big Dig and Sydney Harbour YHA, please contact The Sydney Harbour YHA/Big Dig Education Officer on (02) 9261 1111.**

*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 surpluses invested in the accommodation network and the experience it provides.*

**Media note: For further information or images please contact Kate Bromley, Indigo Ink PR on (02) 9489 9783 or 0408 407 847.**

