



The Hon.
Joe Hockey MP
Member for North Sydney
Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations



PRESERVING OUR ANZAC HERITAGE – AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT TO ACT TO SAVE GRAYTHWAITE

Member for North Sydney, Joe Hockey MP, announced today that the Australian government will seek to save the historic Graythwaite estate in North Sydney from sale and redevelopment by the NSW Labor government.

"Mr Hockey said that the Howard government will put to the NSW Supreme Court, which will determine the future of this site, a scheme to retain Graythwaite in public ownership and to ensure that the spirit of the Graythwaite Trust is maintained through a special grant to the NSW RSL. A re-elected Coalition government will commit \$25 million to the scheme."

"Graythwaite was gifted by Sir Thomas Dibbs to the NSW government in 1915 to provide a convalescent home for Anzacs returning from Gallipoli and the Western Front. It is a magnificent property in the heart of North Sydney and includes the historic Graythwaite mansion and six acres of parkland," Mr Hockey said.

"The NSW Labor government is seeking the approval of the Supreme Court to sell the property, which is required under Trust law. Sale of the property to the highest bidder would mean the alienation of the estate and its possible redevelopment for medium-density housing.

"This would be an appalling outcome for what was an extraordinary gift to our diggers by Sir Thomas Dibbs. Residents, through the Friends of Graythwaite and North Sydney Council, have been leading a vigorous campaign to save Graythwaite but sadly their pleas have fallen on deaf ears within the NSW Labor government.

"I have strongly supported the residents' campaign and have been working with the Friends of Graythwaite to see whether the Australian government could intervene.

"I am thrilled to be able to announce that the Australian government will put to the Supreme Court when it next hears this matter on 12 November, 2007 an alternate scheme to the sale of the property proposed by Labor.

"We will ask the Court to transfer ownership of the Graythwaite estate to the Commonwealth and it would be our intention to vest the property in the Sydney Harbour Federation Trust, the Australian government agency that manages several significant heritage sites around our Harbour.

"In return the Australian government will seek to ensure that the original intent of the Trust is fulfilled by providing \$20 million to the NSW RSL for capital works projects at several veterans aged care centres. We will also be proposing that the Graythwaite building be offered to the NSW RSL for use as headquarters for its Lifecare services.

"The NSW Labor government has allowed Graythwaite to fall into a shocking state of disrepair. We will also indicate to the Supreme Court that the Australian government will provide \$5 million towards the cost of the home's restoration.

"An important part of the Australian government's proposal is that the Sydney Harbour Federation Trust will be required to provide a peppercorn lease for the gardens and parkland of Graythwaite to North Sydney Council on the basis that Council will manage the grounds as public parkland.

"The Department of Veterans' Affairs will work closely with the NSW RSL and North Sydney Council in finalising the scheme for presentation to the Court.

"This scheme presents a magnificent outcome for the North Sydney community. It will add six acres of park in the heart of North Sydney, ensure that this wonderful site is not redeveloped, retain its ownership in public hands and see the spirit of the original gift fulfilled through improved aged care services for veterans."

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