

## **Attention:**

### **Media Release – 19 October 2005** **Friends of Graythwaite formed**

North Sydney residents have formed Friends of Graythwaite in a bid to ensure that the magnificent Graythwaite estate not only remains in public hands, but is restored to its full glory.

The historic mansion, which is set in almost three-hectares of heritage gardens with sweeping views across the harbour from Botany Bay to the Blue Mountains, is the hidden gem of North Sydney. It is hard to believe that such a large estate, with its sweeping lawns and towering figs and incredibly rich heritage spanning back to the very first settlement of North Sydney, still exists in this day and age, let alone being just 500 metres from the heart of the CBD.

The estate was gifted to the State in 1915 as a convalescent home for wounded soldiers amidst the horror and patriotic fervour that accompanied the news of Gallipoli. Ever since, Graythwaite has been held in trust by the State Government.

A convalescent home until 1980, in recent years Graythwaite has been used as a nursing home, but with maintenance of the mansion and its grounds being sadly neglected. In fact, for the past five years maintenance of the grounds has fallen on local residents who have worked every Sunday to remove acres of weeds and whose work is gradually revealing the original form of the garden.

The buildings no longer meet federal government regulations and the nursing home will not operate beyond 2008.

Tim Hughes, chair of Friends of Graythwaite, said the formation of the group was a clear statement of the residents' intention to fight for continued public ownership and proper care of the property.

“Graythwaite has such national, state and local heritage value that it has been nominated for the new national Heritage List. Despite this, there is a real risk of it being sold to developers or others and being alienated from public ownership,” Mr Hughes said. “We do not want this option to even be considered for Graythwaite.

“The community has rallied around Graythwaite several times in the past, but now is the time for a concerted campaign to secure its future once and for all.

“The North Sydney Council has made an offer to the State Government to buy the property. Given the Government's past disinterest in the property this is the only way it can both be kept in public ownership and be properly managed. We are going to do everything humanly possible to make sure the Government accepts the offer.

