



MEDIA RELEASE

David Borger
Minister for Housing
Minister for Western Sydney

First round of Millers Point properties up for auction

October 2, 2008

Minister for Housing David Borger today announced that the first lot of heritage properties in Millers Point up for lease will be auctioned on Wednesday 19 November.

Mr Borger said 99-year leases for numbers 33 and 59 Lower Fort Street would be auctioned to private residential buyers to fund more homes for public housing tenants in the Inner West.

“Housing NSW inherited these grand old homes in the 1980’s but many need a significant amount of work to make them safe to live in and frankly are too expensive for the Government to continue to maintain,” Mr Borger said.

“We want to find owners who can afford to bring them back to life and to use the money raised in the auction to build dozens of new homes in the Inner West for the elderly, for families in need and for the disabled.

“The auction will give people the chance to own a part of history - this area is the largest maritime precinct in the world and some of these homes are the oldest in Sydney.”

Mr Borger said Di Jones Real Estate would handle the marketing and auction of both properties.

“All of the Millers Point buildings are listed on the State Heritage Register for a range of reasons including their historic, social and architectural importance,” Mr Borger said.

“A Conservation Management Plan has been completed for these and the other 14 properties up for lease to ensure their unique heritage features are protected.

“In fact a condition of the lease is that the properties are restored and maintained to appropriate standards and the lessee will need to provide a bank guarantee that says they can afford to do the work within an appropriate time frame.”

Mr Borger said a long term lease was preferred over a direct sale as it allows the NSW Government to maintain ownership and to monitor the restoration of the property.

“Nearly 80 per cent of the properties in Millers Point are owned by Housing NSW. We are sad to be giving these grand old homes up but we know that strong communities need a good mix of both private and public tenants,” Mr Borger said.

“Leasing these properties will bring more private owners to the area and allow us to use the money on new homes for public housing tenants in the Inner West.

“Research shows that 55 per cent of public housing tenants live on their own and we need to build more appropriate sized housing for them. Our research also shows that the Inner West is one of our most in demand areas because it is well serviced by shops, jobs and transport.”

Heritage expert Peter Romey of Godden Mackay Logan said the homes, both more than 150 years old, were some of the oldest homes still standing in the area.

“These homes are a strong link to Sydney’s past and opportunities to take on the restoration of significant homes such as these are very rare,” Mr Romey said.

Mr Borger said the properties had a diverse range of people had lived in the homes over the years.

“Now what they need are people with a passion for heritage to lovingly restore them back to the grand family homes they once were,” Mr Borger said.

THE HISTORY OF THE HOMES

Property number 33 was built between 1833 and 1834 by George Morris, a convict sentenced to life who arrived in the colony in 1817 and became a very successful hotelier before receiving an absolute pardon in 1831.

He built the row of Colonial Regency style terraces from 25 to 33 Lower Fort Street, known as Morris Place. In 1868, the row was sold to John Linsley, also a successful businessman who would later enter NSW Parliament. It was during the 1870s that the terraces came to be known as Linsley Terrace.

Number 33 had various inhabitants over time, from sea captains to surgeons, pianoforte tuners to wool sorters.

Property number 59 was one of a row of three Victorian Regency style townhouses built between 1855 and 1857 by brothers John and Henry Flavelle, who were successful jewellers trading in Australia, England and France.

The elegant townhouses that the Flavelles built were based on the fashionable townhouses of London and Dublin. The home became a boarding house in around 1900.