



Senator the Hon Simon Birmingham
Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for the Environment
Senator for South Australia

MC14-006152

Dr Dennis Jensen MP
Chair
House Standing Committee on Petitions
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600



20 MAR 2014

Dear Dr Jensen

I refer to your letter of 24 February 2014 concerning a petition submitted for the consideration of the Standing Committee on Petitions regarding the proposed development of a residential aged care facility at Middle Head, Sydney, NSW.

A proposal to construct an aged care facility is currently being considered by the Sydney Harbour Federation Trust (the Trust) which owns the site at Middle Head. The Trust placed the proposal on public exhibition between 31 October to 11 December 2013. 196 submissions were received, with most opposed to the proposal. Concerns raised included a belief that the Trust is departing from its core charter.

The development proponents have recently indicated their intention to significantly revise and reduce the scale of the proposal. The revised proposal is expected to be referred to the Minister for the Environment, the Hon Greg Hunt MP, for consideration under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act) by the end of March 2014. Pending the outcome of the referral, the Trust would engage in further community consultation regarding the revised proposal.

The Trust believes that the proposal is consistent with the objects of the *Sydney Harbour Federation Trust Act 2001*. With respect to the three requests that the petition makes:

- a) The proposal is undergoing a formal and rigorous assessment process that will determine whether or not to approve the proposal.
- b) Extensive community consultation has already been undertaken and will continue through the process of EPBC Act referral and subsequent consultation by the Trust.
- c) The Trust has adequate funding to achieve its objectives at Middle Head. With regard to HMAS Platypus, separate discussions are underway regarding future funding.

Thank you for taking the time to write on this matter.

Yours sincerely

Simon Birmingham