



Hon. George Souris M.P
Minister for Tourism, Major Events, Hospitality and Racing
Minister for the Arts

MEDIA RELEASE

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OPERA ON SYDNEY HARBOUR PROMOTION IN HONG KONG

One of the world's greatest outdoor events – Handa Opera on Sydney Harbour – is being sold to wealthy Chinese with a major promotional campaign beginning today.

Destination NSW in partnership with Virgin Atlantic, Opera Australia and Hong Kong shopping mall, Elements, has launched the consumer promotional campaign in Hong Kong to profile the forthcoming Handa Opera on Sydney Harbour event, which opens in Sydney in March 2012.

Minister for Tourism, Major Events and the Arts, George Souris, said the Virgin Atlantic campaign will target high value VIP Hong Kong travellers to Sydney.

"The Destination NSW and Virgin Atlantic partnership to promote Handa Opera on Sydney Harbour to consumers in Hong Kong and mainland China is an excellent initiative as Handa Opera on Sydney Harbour will be one of the greatest outdoor theatrical events the world has seen this century," said Mr Souris.

Mr Souris said the \$300,000 campaign will kick-off with a lively event at Hong Kong's luxury shopping mall, Elements, including a costume display from Opera Australia followed by a consumer promotion and direct communications via Virgin Atlantic's 'Upper Class' passenger database and Element's VIP customer database.

"Through Destination NSW, we are working with partners such as Opera Australia to create epic outdoor events that continue to focus the world's attention on Sydney all year round.

The Handa Opera on Sydney Harbour season opens 24 March, 2012 and runs for three weeks only. Opera Australia will perform *La Traviata* on the shimmering stage, afloat on Sydney Harbour. The monumental production features a forty-piece orchestra, dazzling effects and fireworks, and a nine metre long chandelier suspended above the purpose-built floating stage.

The production will be directed by internationally-acclaimed director Francesca Zambello, and designed by Brian Thomson, (who recently designed *Bliss* and *La Bohème* for Opera Australia).

"This extraordinary production will be an annual fixture on our world class events calendar and will embed itself in Sydney's cultural DNA. We are expecting people to travel from around the globe every year to experience the drama of the world's most beautiful city," said Mr Souris.

Mr Souris pointed out the importance of events like Handa Opera on Sydney Harbour for attracting domestic visitors to Sydney and NSW. Destination NSW is also currently partnering with JTG Qantas Holidays and Opera Australia to promote Handa Opera on Sydney Harbour holiday packages to Australian travellers.

“The NSW Government recognises the role of major events in growing tourism and supporting the New South Wales economy. Promoting arts and cultural experiences across the State is a key aspect of our strategy to double overnight tourism expenditure in NSW by 2020,” said Mr Souris.

Destination NSW CEO, Sandra Chipchase, said the Destination NSW’s partnership with Virgin Atlantic will boost Sydney’s profile as the international gateway to Australia.

“The Chinese visitor market is worth \$1.2 billion to NSW and Hong Kong contributes a further \$265 million. Sydney remains the major Australian gateway for visitors from the majority of Australia’s Asian markets,” said Ms Chipchase.

Visitors from Hong Kong and Mainland China form the largest group of visitors to Sydney, 14 per cent of all international visitors for the year ending June 2011.

Opera Australia CEO Adrian Collette said: “It is wonderful for Opera Australia to have the opportunity to showcase our biggest event ever, with the aid of our valued partners Virgin Atlantic, Elements and Destination NSW.

“We hope that the people of Hong Kong will enjoy the presentation, and then come join us in Sydney next year for the spectacular Handa Opera on Sydney Harbour: *La Traviata*. It will be a once-in-a-lifetime experience and we look forward to welcoming guests from around the world to our shores.”