

MEDIA RELEASE

NEW GANGWAY TO LIFT SYDNEY'S PASSENGER CRUISE INDUSTRY

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A new state-of-the-art gangway being installed at Circular Quay's Overseas Passenger Terminal from today will improve passenger safety and security ahead of another bumper cruise season for Sydney.

The \$3 million gangway was moved into position at the terminal in the early hours of this morning during a special operation, with plans for it to be operational within two weeks - ahead of the arrival of the Rhapsody of the Seas on October 17, kicking off the annual cruising season.

Sydney Ports Corporation Chief Executive Grant Gilfillan said the gangway was part of the organisation's on-going investment in infrastructure to support the cruise industry.

"With Sydney facing another bumper season as one of the world's leading cruise ship destinations, the installation and commissioning of this new gangway could not have come at a better time," Mr Gilfillan said.

"This is purpose-built world class infrastructure that will improve facilities at the Overseas Passenger Terminal, making it easier than ever before for all passengers – including those with disabilities – arriving and leaving from the OPT."

Mr Gilfillan said the new gangway would service an industry that had recorded consistent growth for more than a decade in NSW and worldwide, with a trend towards bigger ships carrying more passengers.

When commissioned later this month the new Self Supporting Gangway will allow for a greater range of heights in disembarking decks at the OPT – critical given the wide range of cruise vessels visiting Sydney. It will also comply with requirements for Disabled access and WorkCover standards.

"Sydney remains Australia's premier cruise hub and is the only port in Australia to have two purpose-built cruise terminals, one located at Circular Quay and the other located at Darling Harbour Wharf 8," Mr Gilfillan said.

"As the gateway for international cruise ships and passengers, the OPT continues to play an important role in defining and complementing the world renowned Sydney Harbour experience.

"That's why it's critical the new gangway is ready for use as soon as possible with the cruise season just weeks away."

Last year's cruise season (08/09) saw a record 120 cruise ships, including 28 ships in 28 days over February, and more than 250,000 cruise passengers visit Sydney. The 2009/10 cruise season is looking just as promising with a number of new vessels set to make their inaugural visits, including the Pacific Jewel, Balmoral and Seabourn Odyssey.

"Sydney has 117 booked visits for 2009/10 which is well above the long term average and a quarter of a million passengers will visit Sydney this year," Mr Gilfillan said.

"All vessels will be accommodated at either OPT or Darling Harbour Wharf 8 this cruise season. The only exception is when Queen Mary 2 arrives at Garden Island on 7th and 8th March 2010.

"Sydney Ports continues to work closely with the cruise industry on their requirements and is looking forward to working with them on another successful season."

Sydney's position as number one was recently re-affirmed with its port facilities receiving two industry accolades.

In April this year, Sydney received an award for "Best Turnaround Port Operations" for 2008 by Dream World Cruise Destinations Magazine, the second time in four years. The Overseas Passenger Terminal was also recently voted 'Best Venue of the Year' at the BT Publishing E-Awards for excellence in events.

The new gangway was assembled and commissioned by local firm Avionics in partnership with FMT Sweden. Today's seven-hour pre-dawn operation delivered the gangway from White Bay where it was assembled.

Mr Gilfillan said installation, testing and commissioning of the gangway would take place over the next two weeks and Sydney Ports would monitor the program to ensure inconvenience was kept at a minimum.

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