Sunday, 25 May 2014

**MIDDLE HEAD’S MILITARY HERITAGE REDISCOVERED**

Forts and tunnels at Middle Head, some of which have been inaccessible for more than 50 years, will open to the public at Middle Head today, following five years of restoration works lead by the National Parks and Wildlife Service.

Minister for the Environment and Heritage Rob Stokes today joined the many volunteers and organisations that have made the re-opening possible at a community day in the Sydney Harbour National Park.

Rob Stokes said Middle Head’s historic fortifications have been slowly unearthed during the last five years by NPWS and volunteers in a mammoth effort to rediscover an important part of Australia’s military history.

“In 1871, the first gun battery was constructed at Middle Head Fort; the complex is linked by underground tunnels, ancillary rooms, and magazines. The area also contains gun pits and notorious ‘tiger cages’ where soldiers were once trained to resist torture,” Rob Stokes said.

“For the first time, the community can explore the newly excavated disappearing gun emplacement and view previously unmapped sections of the fort.

“Middle Head is also significant for its Aboriginal cultural heritage, its stunning landscape of sheer sandstone cliffs and harbour views.”

North Shore MP Jillian Skinner said this day was the result of the hard work and dedication of volunteers who have restored this important part of our military history.

“The reopening of Middle Head’s historic fortifications today marks the successful conclusion of a five-year restoration project involving contributions from more than 4,000 people, amounting to some $270,000 worth of in-kind labour and $300,000 donated from corporate volunteer days,” Mrs Skinner said.

“I’d like to thank everyone who has contributed to this project – the generosity and efforts of those involved are a true reflection of how much the community treasures this heritage site.”

As part of the open day there was guided tours of the recently restored tunnels and fortifications, Aboriginal art displays, cultural performances, children’s entertainment and a live bush band throughout the day. There was also be a cannon firing re-enactment, carried out by the NSW Corps of Marines.

For more information visit <http://www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au/Whats-On/sydney/heritage-festival-open-day>