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MEDIA RELEASE

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SYDNEY HARBOUR COMES ALIVE WITH THE RETURN OF CRUISING

A new chapter in Sydney's proud maritime heritage has opened with the first cruise ship sailing through the heads in more than two years, ready to lead the return of cruising in Australia.

Minister for Transport and Veterans David Elliott said witnessing the Pacific Explorer return to her home port surrounded by a flotilla of boats on Sydney Harbour, and excited onlookers on the foreshore was a symbol of optimism and hope.

"Today our great harbour city reclaimed its title as the gateway to Australian cruising, with Sydneysiders and boaties once again witnessing the miracle of modern shipping. Sydney Harbour has long been the jewel in the crown for pacific cruising," Mr Elliott said.

Minister for Enterprise, Investment and Trade, Minister for Tourism and Sport and Minister for Western Sydney Stuart Ayres said tourism operators and local suppliers can look forward to rebuilding a vital industry that contributed \$2.9 billion to the NSW economy in 2019-20.

"The return of the first cruise ship after a two-year pause is a milestone moment for NSW which will help to turbocharge the recovery of the state's visitor economy. The provisioning of cruise ships with locally sourced produce, and the 9,000 jobs the sector creates will also see long lasting benefits for our community," Mr Ayres said.

P&O Cruises Australia President Marguerite Fitzgerald said it was always going to be an emotional homecoming for Pacific Explorer and her crew, and this morning was a fitting celebration for her return to Sydney.

"Pacific Explorer coming through Sydney Heads after two long years was a magic moment and I am proud to say there was hardly a dry eye among our suppliers, guests and staff," Ms Fitzgerald said.

Port Authority of NSW Chief Executive, Captain Philip Holliday said the return of cruise is an important moment Port Authority has been waiting for.

"Hearing our marine pilot requesting port clearance and our vessel traffic team welcoming the ship's Captain back to Sydney Harbour was one of the sweetest radio calls I've heard for a long while," Captain Holliday said.

“Preparing for the return of cruising has been a long and challenging journey during which we’ve made sure our terminals and procedures are ship-shape to safely welcome cruise passengers and crew back to NSW.”

The NSW Government has led the way in planning for the safe resumption of cruising, in close partnership with officials from the Federal, Victorian and Queensland Governments and cruise industry operators. The priority for all the parties involved with the resumption of cruising is to ensure strong safeguards are in place to mitigate the risk of COVID-19.

Pacific Explorer will remain in Sydney over the coming weeks as it prepares for its first guest cruise to Brisbane departing on 31 May 2022.

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