

Promotion was always going to be good for Sydney

By Peter V'landys 8 October 2018

Let's be clear, Racing NSW never intended for the sails of the Opera House to be used as a billboard. We just wanted what other sports, and cultural events have been afforded, as a way to highlight to the world that Sydney is a seriously great place for events.

The idea was to incorporate a Sydney (and Australian) landmark in a way to showcase The Everest – the richest race in the world on turf – to a world audience, with an outcome that was beneficial to all parties, or so we believed.



Approved: The Racing NSW promotion that will be beamed onto the Opera House from Tuesday.

Unfortunately, the debate on the use of the Opera House sails to promote The Everest internationally has been progressing without the correct facts, which I have detailed below.

Before I go into these facts, I should also stress that Racing NSW sought only to use the Sydney Harbour Bridge. We had a plan to do just that and had been careful to make sure it would not have inconvenienced Sydney drivers.

Accordingly, we had been in talks with at least four government departments for at least 12 months about the use of the Harbour Bridge. Only at the last minute did we learn that approval had not been given.

The Opera House was the alternate venue put forward by the NSW government, which wanted to support the promotion of the event, as it had done for other sporting events.

Racing NSW's whole strategy was that the Harbour Bridge would be used to promote the event in the hope of attracting international visitors to Sydney. Needless to say, that brings money into NSW and provides jobs and economic stimulus. That seems to have been lost in the debate.

Here are the facts:

1. Firstly, we are promoting a unique Sydney event, The Everest, not gambling.
2. There will be a lot of people who attend The Everest who don't gamble. On Saturday, I walked around Royal Randwick and many of the people there were just socialising and having a good time.
3. Racing has been a part of Australia's social fabric since colonisation. It was first conducted to lift the morale of Australia's first workforce. Like it or not, it's in our DNA.
4. The Opera House sails have been used to promote other events. Gambling is also conducted over these events, such as The Ashes and rugby union. The sails have also been used to promote the Mardi Gras and photos have been displayed on the sails for a Samsung phone promotion. It should also be highlighted that the construction of the Opera House was partly funded by the Opera House lottery. The rest was funded by the NSW taxpayer.



Go Wallabies: The Opera House sails were used in a show of support for Australia on the eve of the 2015 Rugby World Cup final.

5. The actual promotion, which is a barrier draw, goes for just 10 minutes. The majority of the time is devoted to a light show, which has nothing to do with the event.

6. The original proposal has been significantly wound back after negotiations: the logo, the name of the horse and the actual race field are now not included. All that is left is the trophy, the colour of the jockey silks and the barrier the horse has drawn.

7. The final product will now be considerably less than what has been displayed to promote other events on the Opera House sails.

Finally, it should be pointed out that the vast majority of the negotiations with the government and the Opera House had occurred way before the Alan Jones interview with Opera House chief executive Louise Herron.

As far as we are concerned, the involvement of Alan Jones had absolutely nothing to do with the final decision.

Call me naive, but I certainly didn't expect there would be such a reaction to us using the Opera House sails for 10 minutes to promote The Everest event internationally so as to procure visitors coming to Sydney.

Peter V'landys is chief executive of Racing NSW.