

# Hunters Hill contamination hits land values

Financial Review 21 Feb 2018

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*Hunters Hill land values have dropped as a result of soil contamination. Supplied*

A 10-year delay to clean up a contaminated site in the exclusive Sydney suburb of Hunters Hill has depressed land values for home owners by more than 20 per cent.

The suburb is home to property developer Lang Walker, former federal treasurer and US ambassador Joe Hockey and [actress Cate Blanchett](#), who is in the process of selling her home, "Bulwarra", for \$20 million. [Mr Hockey recently put his home at Woolwich Road, "Te Roma", up for sale and has bought a new home, "Wybalena House"](#), for \$8 million.

The NSW Environment Protection Authority declared the contaminated block and former home of the Old Radium Hill Refinery at 7-11 Nelson Parade contaminated in 2007 and ordered Property NSW, owner of the land, to remediate the site in 2014, but plans have been held up.

While the value of homes of Mr Walker, Mr Hockey and Ms Blanchett were not affected by the contamination, values of properties nearby have fallen by more than 20 per cent.



*Former treasurer Joe Hockey bought "Wybalena House" in Hunters Hill for \$8 million Supplied*

The land at 17 Nelson Parade was worth \$4.47 million before 2016 but was revalued downwards by 14 per cent to \$3.835 million that year. The value of 13 Nelson Parade fell by 26 per cent and 3 Nelson Parade fell by 13 per cent in the same period, data from the NSW Office of the Valuer General shows.

A valuation obtained by the owners of 17 Nelson Parade shows the deterioration of land values was caused by "the stigma and proximity to the contaminated site".

The fall in values were cushioned by rising house prices and a booming housing market, which resulted in a lift in values for the properties on Nelson Parade in 2017.

As a result, land values for properties along Nelson Parade were mostly flat between 2015 and 2017.

Property NSW said it was committed to the remediation of the site, which had been contaminated by private businesses more than a century ago, but had to follow through the process with the Department of Planning and Environment and the independent Planning Assessment Commission.

"This has been a detailed process that has required extensive consultation and technical input from regulatory authorities and other stakeholders to ensure we deliver the right outcome for the community," a Property NSW spokesman said.

"The government continues to consider a number of disposal options, the details of which remain commercial in confidence. The government has previously committed to not transferring the waste to Kemps Creek."

"In accordance with the revised Management Order, Property NSW is required to meet with the EPA monthly to provide an update on any remediation program."

Property NSW said it also consulted with local residents regularly, many of whom were angered by the delay.

"Over three years have passed and the matter has not moved beyond that point. Meantime the residents of Hunters Hill, in the electorate of Lane Cove are increasingly concerned with the delay and uncertainty caused by the continuing government inaction," Decontaminate Hunters Hill resident group spokesman John Atkin said.

"Nearly 10 years have passed with no action being taken apart from some preparatory work which has made the site less stable. Hunters Hill residents pride themselves on living in Australia's oldest garden suburb."

The NSW government has since issued a press release on Tuesday saying it had committed \$30 million to fund the remediation.

"Having this funding should give the community confidence that we are determined to remediate this site," minister for finance, services and property Victor Dominello said.

"I trust that today's funding announcement is welcome news to those concerned in my community. This issue is more than half a century old and this is the first time government has contributed any funds to cleaning it up," planning minister and local member for Hunters Hill Anthony Roberts added.

The government said it was discussions with the federal government to relocate the waste from the site to the proposed National Radioactive Waste Management Facility in South Australia.

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