

# Hefty fees turn off tourists

**Paul  
Nicolaou**



**I**t's the panoramic view the world comes to see with the Harbour Bridge and the Opera House holding centre stage.

But a hefty price is being put on the world-famous view from Mrs Macquarie's Point, just when we need every international visitor we can get.

Sydney is being priced out of international tourism by increments with punitive parking fees on tour operators wanting to showcase our beautiful city.

The \$9 per hour metered parking fee is already too high, but it's now going through the roof. Tour operators are rebelling against a new permit system of \$75 a day, \$1500 seasonally or \$4500 a year.

Appeals to Botanic Gardens Sydney – the government statutory authority responsible

for Mrs Macquarie's Rd – are being rebuffed.

It's hard to escape the conclusion that the roadway is being treated as "a golden mile".

Premier Chris Minns and Tourism Minister Penny Sharpe should intervene to stop it as a matter of urgency. Many tour operators are unable to absorb the cost of the new system.

The painful reality is that the only alternative is to pass these costs on to visitors to our city.

As a general principle, government agencies must stop viewing tourism as a milch cow to produce easy revenue.

We've already seen the effect of incremental increases in fees and charges on the cruise industry. High port charges led to some international cruise lines to bypass Australia, including Sydney. It is serious enough for

the cruise industry to ask the federal government to adopt a national strategy to reverse the trend.

Sydney values cruise tourism and every source of international visitors.

Business Sydney hopes Botanic Gardens Sydney will realise any short-term gains from onerous parking fees will ultimately dampen tourism.

We all lose from that.

Yes, the view from Mrs Macquarie's Point is a world-beater. The experience should not be rendered inaccessible to locals and visitors alike because of a whopping big fee.

**Paul Nicolaou is executive director of Business Sydney**