

15 April 2002

Macquarie Lighthouse Open to the Public

Special guided tours with breathtaking 360° views will be conducted at Macquarie Lighthouse this Sunday, when it is opened to the public.

The Sydney Harbour Federation Trust is opening the lighthouse on 21st April, from 10:00am to 4:00pm, to enable people to explore this magnificent historic building. Organised groups will run regularly throughout the day. There is no need to book.

“This provides a wonderful opportunity for people to visit Australia’s first and longest operating navigational light,” said Geoff Bailey, Executive Director of the Harbour Trust.

“The lighthouse provides a key focal point along the coastal walk between South Head and Maroubra, and the Harbour Trust is keen to provide greater public access and awareness of the site”.

Macquarie Lighthouse was built in 1883, and it closely resembles the original Greenway-designed lighthouse, which stood only a few metres away. The original lighthouse started to erode only 50 years after it was built and for a short time, the old and new lighthouses stood side-by-side on South Head.

The lighthouse once had a brilliant arc lamp that was powered by two generators driven by two gas engines. Although the objects were donated to the Powerhouse Museum in the 1920s, one of the generators and the switchboard remain in their original position and can still be seen by visitors to the lighthouse. The only remaining lighthouse arc lamp is held at the Museum. Together, these constitute a very rare group of early electric lighthouse equipment. Early generators exist, as do many arc lamps of varying styles, but there are few sets of such equipment.

Today, the lighthouse is still used for its initially intended purpose – as a guiding light for sailors showing the way to the Harbour entrance and will continue to operate as a functional navigational aid. The last lighthouse staff left in 1989 after the light became automated. The Australian Maritime Safety Authority now operates the light and the cottages are privately leased.

Macquarie Lighthouse is one of seven unique lands around Sydney Harbour that are managed by the Harbour Trust. The Trust is currently preparing plans for the future use and management of the lighthouse.

Macquarie Lighthouse is located at Old South Head Road, Vaucluse.

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