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## **New planner brings wealth of experience to Harbour Trust**

The Harbour Trust's new Planning Manager, Ron Mason, has more than 35 years experience in strategic broad-scale planning with particular expertise in balancing the pressures of growth and change with the need to protect natural environments and cultural heritage.

Ron says his job at the Harbour Trust is a chance of a lifetime and he is doing what most professional planners would give their eyeteeth for.

"To be able to work on a project that will see icon sites returned to the community is an opportunity that may never come along again," Ron said.

"The enthusiasm of my fellow staff in the Harbour Trust is infectious, and their imagination, skill and commitment is inspiring."

Before joining the Harbour Trust, Ron was Director for Sydney Region West with the NSW Department of Urban Affairs and Planning. He was responsible for planning the third largest urban area in Australia with a population of 1.7 million people.

Ron recalls the challenges of preparing a Regional Plan for Parramatta City that had to protect the significant Aboriginal and European heritage of the area while accommodating the rapid growth and change that the area is experiencing.

Ron managed the development of Regional Plan for the Hawkesbury-Nepean catchment, a diverse area that encompasses numerous different habitats, from sandstone gorges to floodplains and estuaries, but also an area under immense pressure from growth.

"Western Sydney is home to nearly half of Sydney's population and is where the bulk of our city's growth is occurring," he said.

"The Hawkesbury-Nepean Regional Plan had to protect the ecological and landscape values, heritage, water quality of the river and at the same time deal with massive urban expansion."

Ron has considerable experience in the restoration of heritage sites. He was manager of the NSW Heritage Branch (now the Heritage Office) for 12 months and deputy for four years. A major project of his was the conservation of the 1800s Belgenny Farm, and this won the Royal Australian Institute of Architects Award for Conservation excellence in 1988.

Ron has experience in working with local government, gained through six years as a planner with North Sydney Council.

He says that community consultation will be a major focus of his planning work with the Harbour Trust over the next 12 months.

"Through our community consultation we need to arrive at uses for the sites that pick up on local ideas and needs but that also recognise that Sydney Harbour has national and international significance and reach out for broad input.

"We have to consider that future generations will benefit most from our planning.

“Today we may not consider World War II structures as significant because they were built in our living memory. I believe future generations will hold us accountable if we destroy or impact on this heritage.”

Shortly after Ron’s arrival, the Harbour Trust Members met for the first time and endorsed the concept of a single comprehensive plan being prepared for all the Harbour Trust sites.

“We are now calling for submissions on the scope of the comprehensive plan that is being prepared, including the issues and policies it should consider.”

Ron believes one of the challenges for the Harbour Trust is to establish good communication with all of its stakeholders, including State Government Agencies, councils, professional organisations, community groups and individuals.

“There are people in these organisations that have a wealth of knowledge, experience and understanding of policy development that we can tap into and build on.”

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