

# Macquarie LIGHTSTATION

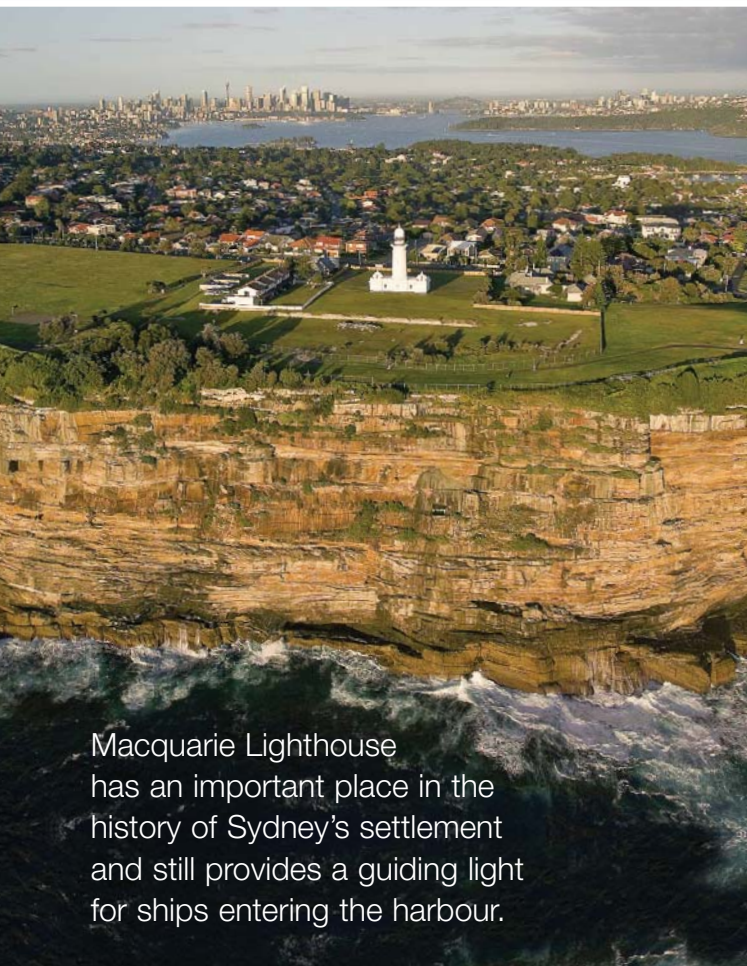


Illustration by Nick Hollo

# Macquarie Lightstation



Australian Government  
Sydney Harbour Federation Trust



Macquarie Lighthouse has an important place in the history of Sydney's settlement and still provides a guiding light for ships entering the harbour.

## A brief history

As early as 1791 a beacon stood on South Head, first fired by wood and later by coal, to guide vessels to the harbour entrance at night.

The original Macquarie Lighthouse, the first to be built in Australia, was completed in 1818. It was designed by convict Francis Greenway, and constructed of sandstone quarried on site. Governor Macquarie was so pleased with the lighthouse that he granted Greenway a pardon for his work.

The original light was powered by a number of oil lamps set in reflectors that revolved using a weight system, similar to a pendulum clock.

The first lighthouse keeper was Robert Watson who had arrived in the Colony with the First Fleet as Quartermaster on HMS *Sirius* and later became harbour master. He died one year after his appointment and nearby Watsons Bay was named in his honour.

The stone used in Macquarie Lighthouse soon began to erode and 60 years later the tower was held together with iron bands.



De Meritens magneto power generators

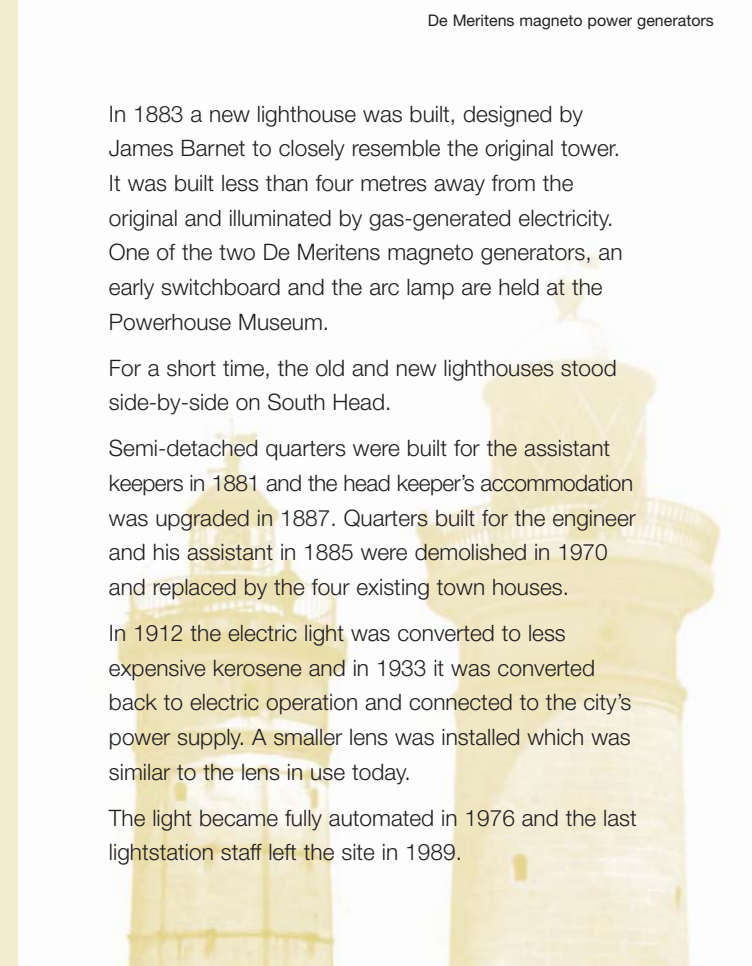
In 1883 a new lighthouse was built, designed by James Barnet to closely resemble the original tower. It was built less than four metres away from the original and illuminated by gas-generated electricity. One of the two De Meritens magneto generators, an early switchboard and the arc lamp are held at the Powerhouse Museum.

For a short time, the old and new lighthouses stood side-by-side on South Head.

Semi-detached quarters were built for the assistant keepers in 1881 and the head keeper's accommodation was upgraded in 1887. Quarters built for the engineer and his assistant in 1885 were demolished in 1970 and replaced by the four existing town houses.

In 1912 the electric light was converted to less expensive kerosene and in 1933 it was converted back to electric operation and connected to the city's power supply. A smaller lens was installed which was similar to the lens in use today.

The light became fully automated in 1976 and the last lightstation staff left the site in 1989.



## MACQUARIE LIGHTSTATION

Tours of the lighthouse operate regularly so people can explore this magnificent historic building. The grounds are publicly accessible year-round.



## Visiting Macquarie Lighthouse

The grounds are open every day of the year.

The lighthouse is open for tours every two months. Check the website at [www.harbourtrust.gov.au](http://www.harbourtrust.gov.au) for information on tours.

Macquarie Lightstation is one of the sites on the popular coast walk that extends from Christison Park immediately south of the site to Gap Park and inner South Head to the north. The walk highlights the rich maritime history of Sydney and provides magnificent views of the harbour, the city and the heads.

Macquarie Lightstation is located on Old South Head Road, Vaucluse.



## What's in store for the future

Macquarie Lighthouse is still used for its original purpose – as a guiding light showing the way to the entrance of Sydney Harbour. The tower is owned and operated by the Australian Maritime Safety Authority.

The Harbour Trust's plans for the future of this site will conserve its heritage, protect the environment and provide public access.

The Trust's planned removal of intrusive buildings and fences will improve public access to the lightstation and measures to improve its visual prominence will highlight its heritage qualities.

Both the head keeper's quarters and the assistant keepers' quarters are privately leased and there is no public access.

Remnants of the colonial 1818 lighthouse, retaining wall and various archeological remains can be found on the site.



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