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## Rare Lighthouse Equipment under Inspection

Conservation experts from the Powerhouse Museum will examine unique relics inside Macquarie Lighthouse on Monday 15<sup>th</sup> April.

Macquarie Lighthouse, Australia's first and longest operating navigational light, 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 1920's, 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," said Debbie Rudder, Engineering Curator, Powerhouse Museum.

The inspection is part of a program of regular conservation inspections, to assess the condition of the objects and, where appropriate, arrange for conservation treatment.

The Sydney Harbour Federation Trust, who is preparing a plan for the future of Macquarie Lighthouse, is keen to ensure this historic equipment is maintained in good condition.

Executive Director of the Harbour Trust, Geoff Bailey, said an Open Day would be held at the lighthouse on Sunday 21 April.

"This provides a wonderful opportunity for people to visit one of Australia's oldest buildings and be shown these historic objects in position," Mr Bailey said.

"The lighthouse provides a key focal point along the coastal walk between South Head and Maroubra, and the Harbour Trust is keen to improve this through interpretive material and the removal of intrusive elements".

"Long-term use of other buildings on the site is also being investigated."

Today, the lighthouse is still used as a guiding light to sailors, showing the way to the Harbour entrance. It will continue to operate as a functioning navigational aid.

The gas-fired lighting system at Macquarie Lighthouse was replaced by an oil lamp in 1911, due to the fear of gas supply problems caused by industrial action, as well as the high cost of running the equipment. It was estimated at the time that this would save 600 pounds per annum. It was also believed that, whereas the arc light was the brightest available, light from the oil lamp was better at piercing thick fog. The power source was replaced again in 1933, this time to mains electricity.

Macquarie Lighthouse is one of seven unique lands that is managed by the Harbour Trust. It 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.

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

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