



# MEDIA RELEASE

**DR DAVID KEMP, MP**

*Minister for the Environment and Heritage*

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**EMBARGOED UNTIL 1.30pm TODAY**

## **Plan to revitalise Sydney Harbour landmarks gets the official tick**

The Minister for the Environment and Heritage, Dr David Kemp, has signed off on a plan that will revitalise seven historic Sydney Harbour landmarks.

Dr Kemp said the plan, backed with a commitment of \$115.5 million from the Howard Government, would progressively transform the Harbour Trust's seven sites into foreshore parks and places for the people of Sydney over the next eight years. These are the former School of Artillery on North Head, former Defence lands at Middle Head-Georges Heights-Chowder Bay in Mosman, Woolwich Dock and Parklands, Cockatoo and Snapper Islands, Macquarie Lightstation and the former Marine Biological Station at Watsons Bay.

"The plan will see the creation of foreshore parks and new venues for recreation and cultural events to maximise public access and enjoyment of the lands. It will focus on reviving the maritime industry on the waterfront and the restoration of historic buildings and facilities for educational, community and commercial uses. Revenue from these activities will be reinvested into heritage conservation and public access works," Dr Kemp said.

"As a result, the people of Sydney and Australia will gain nearly 140 hectares of prime harbour foreshore land through the rehabilitation of the Harbour Trust sites. Restoration of these spectacular harbour landmarks and their integration back into Sydney's cultural life will also deliver social and economic benefits for the city."

The plan has taken two years to prepare and involved extensive consultation between the Sydney Harbour Federation Trust and the Sydney community to reach broad consensus on the future use of these magnificent lands.

"Official approval of the plan and the injection of funds means the Harbour Trust can now proceed with the immense task of rehabilitating and restoring the lands, and opening them up to the public."

A total of 13 precinct management plans will be prepared progressively by February next year. These will provide detailed proposals for many of the hundreds of buildings, hectares of bushland and numerous items of heritage significance on the Harbour Trust lands. Work will start on precincts following public exhibition of the plans and their approval by the Trust's board.

The concept for a sanctuary on North Head will be further developed in the coming year and power will be restored to Cockatoo Island.

A draft of the comprehensive plan for all the Harbour Trust sites went on public exhibition at the end of last year and nearly 3000 submissions were received.

"The overwhelming response to the draft plan signifies the importance Sydney-siders place on their harbour and its foreshores and islands, and the stake we all have in how they should be used," Dr Kemp said.

"The final plan takes into account the submissions received and feedback from the New South Wales Government."

**A summary of the draft plan is attached.**

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# Summary of the Sydney Harbour Federation Trust plan

The Sydney Harbour Federation Trust's plan outlines how the following sites around Sydney Harbour will be used in the future:

- North Head Artillery School
- Middle Head, Georges Heights, Chowder Bay
- Woolwich Dock and Parklands
- Cockatoo Island
- Snapper Island
- Macquarie Lightstation
- Former Marine Biological Station, Watsons Bay

These lands contain historic buildings and areas of pristine natural vegetation, magnificent views of the harbour and a record of our city's Aboriginal, maritime and defence heritage.

The lands will not to be sold and will remain in public ownership forever. The Harbour Trust's plan will conserve their cultural heritage, protect the environment and provide maximum public access.

The plan sets out a vision for the sites and includes a process for the preparation of more detailed management plans for specific precincts, places or buildings. In the 2002-03 financial year, the Harbour Trust began preparing management plans for 13 precincts that will involve extensive consultation with stakeholders and local communities. These will be completed by February next year.

In addition, works will be carried out on the sites to conserve items of high heritage significance, remediate contaminated areas, repair buildings to prevent further deterioration, and regenerate bushland.

Key projects for the coming year include:

- Installing high voltage power cabling to Cockatoo Island
- Decontamination and clean-up of workshop buildings on Cockatoo Island
- Stage one of a headland park in Mosman
- Further developing the concept for a sanctuary on North Head

Following is a summary of the features of each of the sites and the proposals outlined in the Harbour Trust's comprehensive plan.

## ***North Head Artillery School***

North Head contains delicate and precious flora and fauna. Its history is as a place of Aboriginal ceremony, for quarantining ships' passengers and defending Sydney.

North Head is a place of retreat, contemplation and reflection at the entrance to Sydney Harbour. It has the potential to become an ecological sanctuary where native wildlife, habitats and plant communities are managed sustainably by all landholders.

Institutional buildings at the School of Artillery lend themselves to uses for research and education, a health retreat, visitor accommodation or conference/ function centre.

## ***Middle Head, Georges Heights, Chowder Bay***

A string of villages formed by simple halls, barracks and a succession of courtyards make up the Defence lands at Middle Head-Georges Heights.

The creation of a headland park will unify all the elements of the Middle Head peninsula, natural and cultural.

An Aboriginal Cultural Centre will explain the indigenous history of the Sydney region and the long defence history of the peninsula will be preserved and interpreted.

The adaptive re-use of facilities and buildings will provide opportunities for formal and informal education, recreational and community activities.

### ***Woolwich Dock and Parklands***

A maritime village is to be created at the meeting points of the Parramatta and Lane Cove Rivers, *Moocooboola*, with the magnificent Woolwich Dock as its centrepiece.

Small-scale maritime activities will make use of the dock and surrounding facilities. A diversity of attractions, such as a café, function centre, cultural facilities and offices/studios, will create a gathering place for recreation and enjoyment.

The Goat Paddock and Horse Paddock will be spectacular harbourside parks linked to Clarkes Point and Kellys Bush by a network of cycle and pedestrian paths.

### ***Cockatoo Island***

A convict prison and over a century of shipbuilding has left a collection of workshops, sandstone buildings, prison barracks, cranes, slipways, tunnels, houses and two dry docks.

Over time, Cockatoo Island will become a maritime cultural venue at a landmark harbour location.

- Boat building, repair and storage, and possibly an operating dry dock
- Interpretation of the island's history and achievements (tours, self-guided walks)
- Adaptive re-use of workshops and buildings for offices and studios
- A grand event space on the foreshore
- Restoration of the convict precinct
- Storage and display of collections and exhibits
- Accommodation, function centre and meeting facilities.

### ***Snapper Island***

Sydney Harbour's smallest island will be restored and continue to operate maritime activities for cadets, TAFE courses and youth groups.

Additional activities could be developed for the interpretation and appreciation of the island, its buildings, workshops and remarkable collection of Naval memorabilia.

### ***Macquarie Lightstation***

The lighthouse will continue to guide ships entering Sydney Harbour.

Improved landscaping will increase appreciation of this prominent landmark and its history will be interpreted through the remains of the original Greenway lighthouse.

Occasional public access will be provided to the lighthouse and the lighthouse keeper's cottage.

Intrusive buildings will be removed in the long-term.

### ***Former Marine Biological Station, Watsons Bay***

This beautiful house at the southern end of Camp Cove will be restored. It could be used for a writer/scientist/artist in residence, while still being open occasionally for public viewing.

The station's history and association with Nikolai Miklouho Maclay, and with the Department of Defence will be interpreted.

Links to marine biology and clean water would make it an ideal base for occasional scuba diving.