

MEDIA RELEASE

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NORTH HEAD SANCTUARY DRAFT MASTER PLAN OPEN FOR PUBLIC FEEDBACK

The Harbour Trust today announced the release of its North Head Sanctuary Draft Master Plan, which outlines its vision to make the headland a more welcoming walking place, regenerate its natural landscape and strengthen its role as an important sanctuary for endangered species, celebrate its First Nations significance, and restore and activate its rich military heritage.

The draft master plan, which is on public exhibition until the end of October, proposes the creation of an arterial walking and cycling path for visitors to explore North Head, which will run through the reconfigured Gate House entry, and connect all of the headland's main precincts to the Fairfax walk and Burragula and Yiningma lookouts.

The plan outlines the further rehabilitation of the natural environment at North Head, including the revegetation of up to 4,000 sqm of degraded land, the planned restoration and adaptive re-use of the main barracks building, the creation of a precinct that celebrates the site's First Nations cultural significance, and enhanced public access and interpretation of the headland's still largely intact World War Two coastal defences.

The Harbour Trust's Executive Director Janet Carding said: "Our vision for the North Head Sanctuary Draft Master Plan is to create a walking place, where visitors can discover the headland's unique natural environment and explore its military heritage and First Nations significance."

"We aim to create new experiences for visitors through making North Head Sanctuary more accessible and welcoming, while regenerating North Head's unique natural landscape and enhancing its important role in supporting and enhancing biodiversity on the edge of the city."

The draft master plan proposes to create a 'Defence of Nation' interpretation space in collaboration with the Australian War Memorial, envisaged as a partly underground structure emulating the gun emplacements and tunnels that helped protect Sydney during World War Two. The proposed plan will also improve the connections between the memorial walk and former military defences at North Head.

The proposal also includes improved food and beverage and informal recreation areas at North Head, and the adaptive reuse of existing buildings and sheds into an enhanced nursery supporting the sanctuary, research, volunteer, education and ecological work on the site.

The North Head Sanctuary Draft Master Plan is on public exhibition until 5pm (AEDT) Tuesday 31 October 2023, with the public welcome to visit www.harbourtrust.gov.au/north-head-consultation to provide online feedback. The Harbour Trust will review feedback received and publish a consultation outcomes report before finalising the master plan.

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ABOUT NORTH HEAD SANCTUARY

North Head is one of Sydney's great landmarks with a relatively intact and delicate ecosystem. Formed during the last ice age when erosional forces separated the headland from the Hornsby Plateau, North Head is a 'tied island', linked to the mainland by Manly's sandspit.

North Head is thought to be a place of great significance to First Nations peoples. Initial investigation appears to suggest the area as a place of gathering and ritual. Land management of the ecosystem was practiced for thousands of years.

It is home to more than 50 nationally and locally significant flora including 10 rare plant species. It is a refuge for echidnas, reptiles, frogs and more than 100 species of birds. It is one of the few places in Sydney Harbour where the endangered long-nosed bandicoot can be found. But these 74 hectares are home to more than just exquisite native woodland and heathland, they also host a rich history. In 1833, the Quarantine Station was established and construction of the nearby Third Quarantine Cemetery, in 1881, coincided with the smallpox epidemic.

You can see and experience firsthand the extensive military fortifications, tunnels, barracks, military housing and the former School of Artillery. North Head Sanctuary was exclusively used as an active military site in support of the defence of Sydney, from 1936 until 1998.

ABOUT THE HARBOUR TRUST

Located in First Nations Countries at the entrance to Sydney Harbour, the Harbour Trust's visitor destinations are places of natural beauty. They also feature heritage structures and other significant remnants from the nation's colonial, maritime and military narratives.

The Harbour Trust's destinations include Cockatoo Island / Wareamah, North Head Sanctuary in Manly, Sub Base Platypus in North Sydney, and Headland Park in Mosman. They also protect Woolwich Dock and Parklands, Macquarie Lightstation in Vaucluse, and the Former Marine Biological Station at Camp Cove.

Through its management of these places, the Harbour Trust provides residents of – and visitors to – Australia's largest city with access to precious bushland, parks, and open spaces. The Harbour Trust aims to deliver enhanced appreciation and understanding of the natural and cultural values of Sydney Harbour and its contribution to the national story, and world's heritage for all visitors, through the remediation, conservation and adaptive reuse of, and access to, Harbour Trust lands on Sydney Harbour.

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