

Continuing a conversation about the future of Cockatoo Island – Stakeholder Engagement

Client: The Harbour Trust

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Executive Summary

Context for engagement

This report documents the outcomes of stakeholder engagement as part of a continued conversation about the future of Cockatoo Island. It has been prepared for the Harbour Trust by engagement practice Elton Consulting. Engagement with First Nations Peoples has been conducted by specialist Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander engagement consultancy Two Point Co.

The UNESCO World-Heritage listed Cockatoo Island is a unique place with a rich and layered history. As our city grows and changes – it is timely to discuss what is most valued about Cockatoo Island and to explore fresh ideas and opportunities for its ongoing revival. The engagement process involved the community and other stakeholders in a conversation about what is best for the island and its place in Sydney – with the outcome of this conversation potentially helping to inform any future, formal review of the Harbour Trust’s Plans for Cockatoo Island.

Engagement approach: what we did

The engagement process involved wide reaching communications combined with highly targeted engagement activities. It included a letterbox drop to more than 22,000 homes, an online survey, a series of yarning-style interviews with the First Nations community, further interviews and workshops with key stakeholders, walk-shops and an ideas board on Cockatoo Island, pop-ups at Barangaroo and Parramatta, a webpage and social media posts.

Engagement outcomes: key themes

Feedback derived through the engagement process highlighted numerous opportunities to continue to realise the island’s untapped potential. People who are familiar with the Island and those who are new to it view it as an object of desire. Some are even in love with it. Many people were supportive of the way Cockatoo Island is being managed by the Harbour Trust.

The key themes and findings of the engagement process were:

Enhancing and reimagining community benefit

Key finding 1: Feedback indicated that we could be deriving considerably more community benefit from Cockatoo Island, while continuing to preserve its important qualities. Feedback focused on its apartness, its rawness, its multilayered and evolving identity, its natural beauty and silence.

Opportunities exist to reimagine community benefit in a balanced and focused way that considers: the role of the Island in bringing First Nations stories and culture to life; the past, present and future stories the Island wants to tell; a balanced approach to visitation and activation; the right mix of uses and experiences; balancing time and space on the island for contemplation versus kicking up our heels; making physical and digital experiences of the Island more interactive; long term strategic planning. Based on an understanding of these strategic directions – developing a strong brand proposition to bring people to Cockatoo Island. Not being too timid about change.

Appealing to more diverse audiences

Key finding 2: The experience of Cockatoo Island should be extended to a greater diversity of Sydneysiders and visitors to our city. Commonly identified groups were children and young people, families, people from Western Sydney, First Nations peoples, our city’s workforce, short and longer stay visitors to Sydney. While the island’s offer was described as being rich and broad, its reach was thought to be narrow, but with potential to be more expansive.

Offering more diverse experiences

Key finding 3: An opportunity exists to expand existing experiences and audiences through the following factors: recognising and actively telling First Nations stories; enhanced heritage interpretation and experiences; significantly improving transport access to and from the island; diverse education, learning and engagement experiences; improved food and drink options; a seasonal program of exciting events and festivals; everyday drawcards to help create a day to day community on the island; spaces and facilities for recreation and play; more evening/night time activities and events; spaces for production not just consumption; health and wellness activities; and a wider range of accommodation options.

Focusing on what's unique about this place

Key finding 4: Important considerations for this unique place identified by people were focused on: its multilayered and evolving identity; the proximity of Cockatoo Island and its important role as a link between our Harbour City and Parramatta; the importance of a publicly accessible and democratic Cockatoo Island; the need for commercial / income generating activities consistent with the values of this place; opportunities for people to enjoy peace and quiet; but also, opportunities for new experiences and fun; its pedestrian-only nature – making it a perfect place for respite, recreation and play.

Respectfully enhancing this place

Key finding 5: Paramount to its future is the respectful but not precious enhancement of this highly valued gem. People don't want it to be loved to death or to lose its grit – maintain the raw, industrial energy and spirit of this place. People who participated in the engagement process identified a number of other places that they believe offer value in considering the future of Cockatoo Island.

Delving deeper into the history of Cockatoo Island and its significance to First Nation Peoples, Two Point co. carried out a 'deep-dive' engagement process with a range of Aboriginal community and cultural leaders.

The key themes and findings of the First Nations community engagement process were:

Respecting and acknowledging Cockatoo Island as a sacred women's place

Historically associated with ceremony and women's business which many interviewees consider to be critical to the island's future.

The importance of caring for country and identifying Cockatoo Island as a place of cultural connection

To connect with country, to embrace culture and the ancestors, and to revive the physical beauty of the place; to promote health and wellbeing among Aboriginal peoples and their children; and to provide an opportunity for non-Indigenous people to learn about First Nations culture including Sydneysiders and visitors more broadly.

Cockatoo Island as a place that provides opportunities to care for and heal country.

Cockatoo Island as a place that provides access to commercial opportunities for Aboriginal businesses.

From aspirations to principles: key considerations

Community and stakeholder perspectives expressed through the engagement process have been synthesised into a number of recommendations and principles that could be used to guide the future of the island. These are outlined in Section 4 for consideration by the Harbour Trust.

1. Context for engagement



1 Context for engagement

1.1 Engagement process

Since 2001 the Harbour Trust has been working to renew Cockatoo Island as a living part of Sydney's urban fabric, open to the public and with its distinct qualities protected. The Harbour Trust's Plans for the island have broad support, and it is now seeking to continue a conversation with the community about the island's future.

Key objectives

The primary objectives for the engagement process were:

- » To continue a dialogue about how Cockatoo Island is experienced and to seek community and stakeholder feedback
- » To explore opportunities to support sustainable change.

The engagement process also sought:

- » To explore the historical and cultural significance of Cockatoo Island's past and to uncover the values and principles important for its future with the First Nations community
- » To identify existing levels of awareness, understanding and interest in Cockatoo Island
- » To engage with key stakeholders and users of Cockatoo Island
- » To bring new voices into a discussion about Cockatoo Island
- » To understand the range of perspectives around Cockatoo Island
- » To reconnect with previous visitors and ideas
- » To explore the right balance of uses for Cockatoo Island to reflect the numerous and diverse layers of Cockatoo Island as a place
- » To explore the role Cockatoo Island plays in the broader external environment of Sydney and beyond.

Focus of the engagement process

Recommencing a dialogue about the future use of this important and established place involved a series of open discussions. It also provided an opportunity to hear new voices, explore new ideas and build on existing relationships. The engagement program provided multiple channels and mechanisms for discussion to achieve the engagement objectives.

The key questions used to inform the discussions undertaken by the Harbour Trust, Elton Consulting and Two Point Co. were:

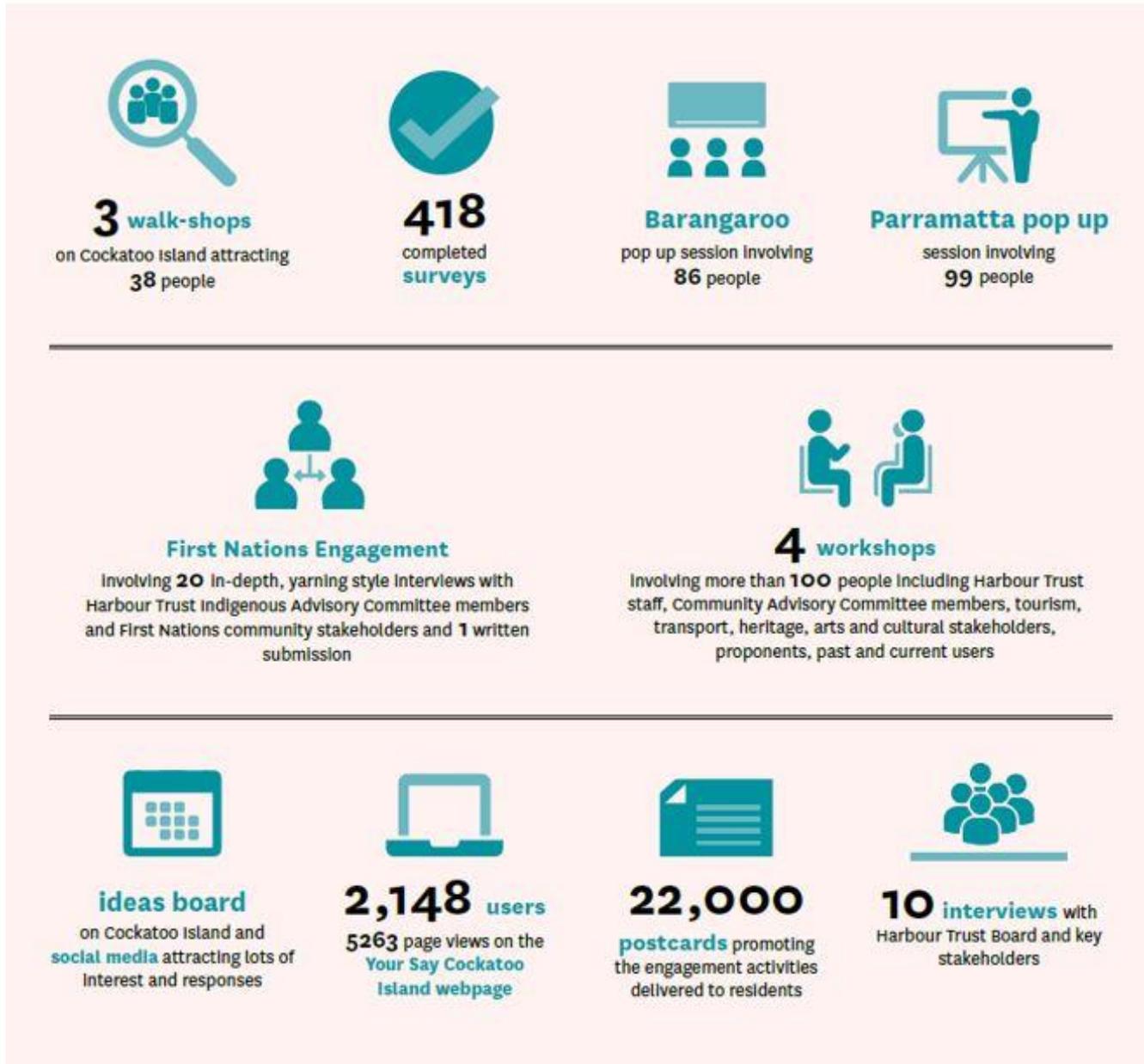
- » **Question 1:** What captures your imagination about Cockatoo Island?
- » **Question 2:** In 2036 Sydney will have over 6 million residents and over 10 million visitors annually. What role do you see Cockatoo Island playing in a growing city with so many varied interests and needs?
- » **Question 3:** What needs to happen to make this imagined future real?

2. Engagement Approach: what we did



2 Engagement approach: what we did

Continuing the conversation about the future of Cockatoo Island – **Stakeholder Engagement**



The engagement process involved diverse audiences and activities as shown here.



2.1 Who did we engage with?

The conversation about the future of Cockatoo Island engaged with members of the community and a wide range of other stakeholders including:

- » Harbour Trust Board members
- » Harbour Trust staff – across all areas of the organisation
- » Harbour Trust Community Advisory Committee members – volunteer members who provide advice and recommendations on the use of Harbour Trust lands
- » Harbour Trust Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Group members
- » Volunteers and guides – who have a high level of knowledge about Cockatoo Island
- » Key stakeholders – including First Nations community stakeholders, representatives of advocacy bodies, arts and cultural producers, tourism and industry stakeholders
- » Government agencies – including representatives of state and federal agencies
- » User groups – including existing partners, festival and event producers
- » Visitors – including people who have visited Cockatoo Island for Biennale of Sydney, the Festival of Dangerous Ideas, music festivals and so forth
- » Non-visitors – including people at Barangaroo and Parramatta (and residents of nearby suburbs)
- » Residents of nearby suburbs – including Balmain, Birchgrove, Rozelle, Waverton, Wollstonecraft, North Sydney, Greenwich, Woolwich, Hunter’s Hill, Drummoyne and Barangaroo.

For a full list of participants see Appendix B.

2.2 How did we engage?

Two Point Co. conducted targeted consultations with the First Nations community to explore the historical and cultural significance of Cockatoo Island’s past and to uncover the values and principles important for its future.

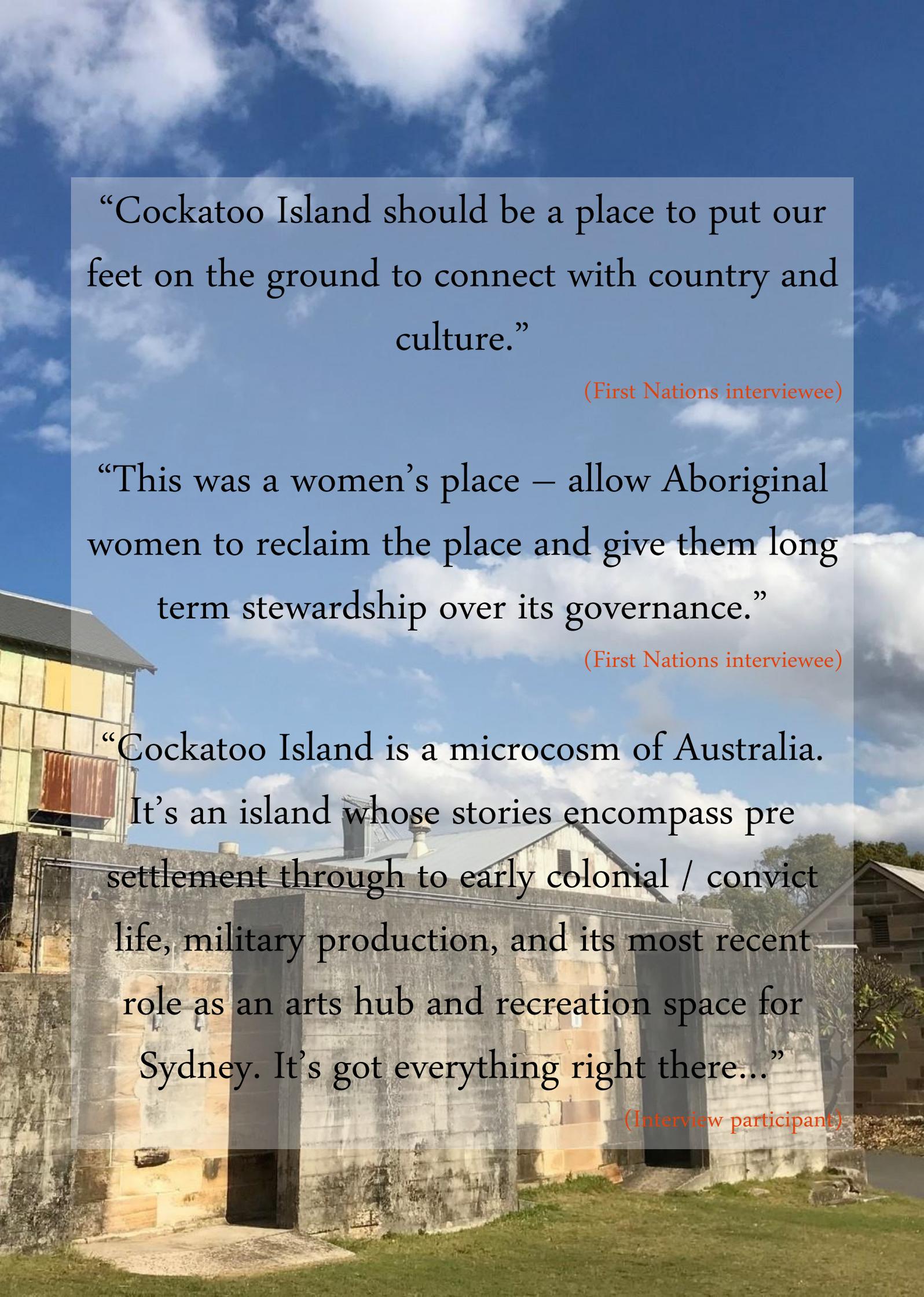
Elton Consulting conducted targeted consultations with the broader community and other key stakeholders. The engagement process involved the following activities:

- » Postcard to 22,000 homes in nearby suburbs – promoting the engagement activities.

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- » Online survey – completed by a total of 418 participants. Just under three quarters of all survey participants were based in Sydney. Another 15% were from wider NSW and 8% live in other parts of Australia. Four percent were based overseas.
 - » Individual in-depth yarning style interviews – with targeted key stakeholders including Harbour Trust Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Group members and First Nations community stakeholders (x20).
 - » Promotion of the First Nations engagement process through Koori Radio, social media, community noticeboards at the National Centre of Indigenous Excellence, Aboriginal Medical Service and Redfern Community Centre and liaison with local Aboriginal Land Councils.
 - » Key stakeholder interviews – with the Harbour Trust Board and key stakeholders (x10).
 - » Key stakeholder workshops – with Harbour Trust staff, Community Advisory Committee members, tourism, transport, heritage, arts and cultural stakeholders, proponents, past and current users (x4).
 - » Walk-shops on Cockatoo Island – with members of the community (x3).
 - » Ideas board on Cockatoo Island – providing an opportunity for visitors to share their ideas.
 - » Pop-ups at Barangaroo and Parramatta – attracting a total of 185 participants.
 - » Your Say Cockatoo Island webpage and social media conversation
 - » Further submissions – attracting interest from four individuals in response to the above communications campaign.

3. Engagement outcomes: key themes





“Cockatoo Island should be a place to put our feet on the ground to connect with country and culture.”

(First Nations interviewee)

“This was a women’s place – allow Aboriginal women to reclaim the place and give them long term stewardship over its governance.”

(First Nations interviewee)

“Cockatoo Island is a microcosm of Australia. It’s an island whose stories encompass pre settlement through to early colonial / convict life, military production, and its most recent role as an arts hub and recreation space for Sydney. It’s got everything right there...”

(Interview participant)

3 Engagement outcomes: key themes

3.1 Realising the island’s untapped potential

People who are familiar with Cockatoo Island and those who are new to the place view it as an object of desire. Some are even in love with it. Many people were supportive of the way Cockatoo Island is being managed by the Harbour Trust.

The engagement process uncovered a high level of appreciation of Cockatoo Island for a wide variety of reasons. People who were very familiar with the island as well as first time visitors emphasised the importance of this place and highlighted its further potential within Sydney.

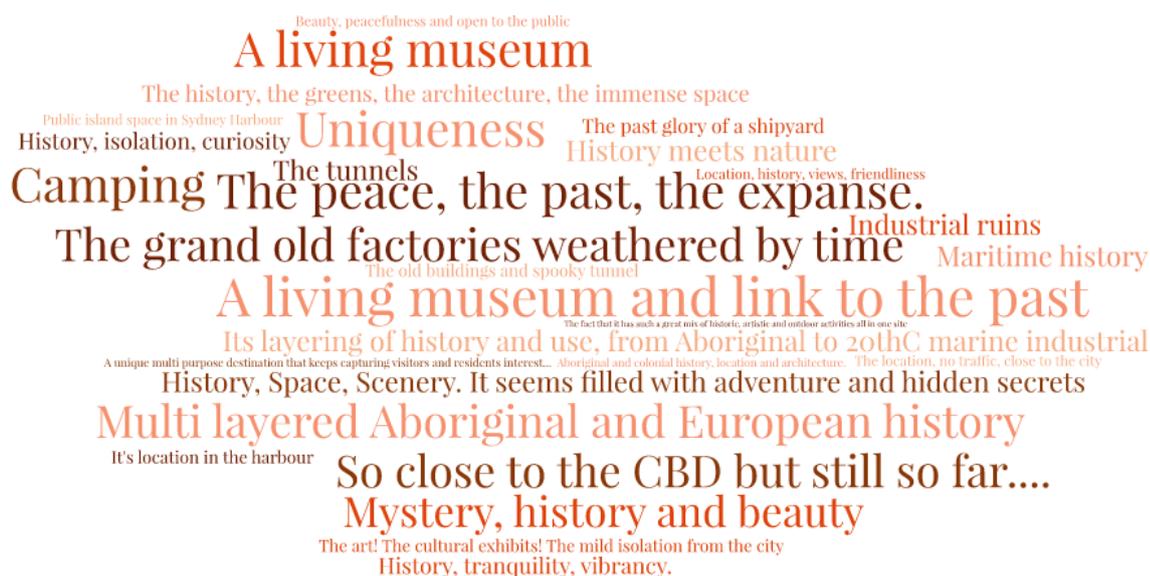
Not surprisingly many people who participated in the consultation process had a long standing relationship or strong sense of connection with Cockatoo Island. This included people who had worked on the island, those who had participated in Biennale and the Festival of Dangerous Ideas, glampers and residents for whom Cockatoo Island had formed the backdrop to their life. Newcomers to Cockatoo Island (including some walk-shop participants) were often moved by and interested in finding out more about this place.

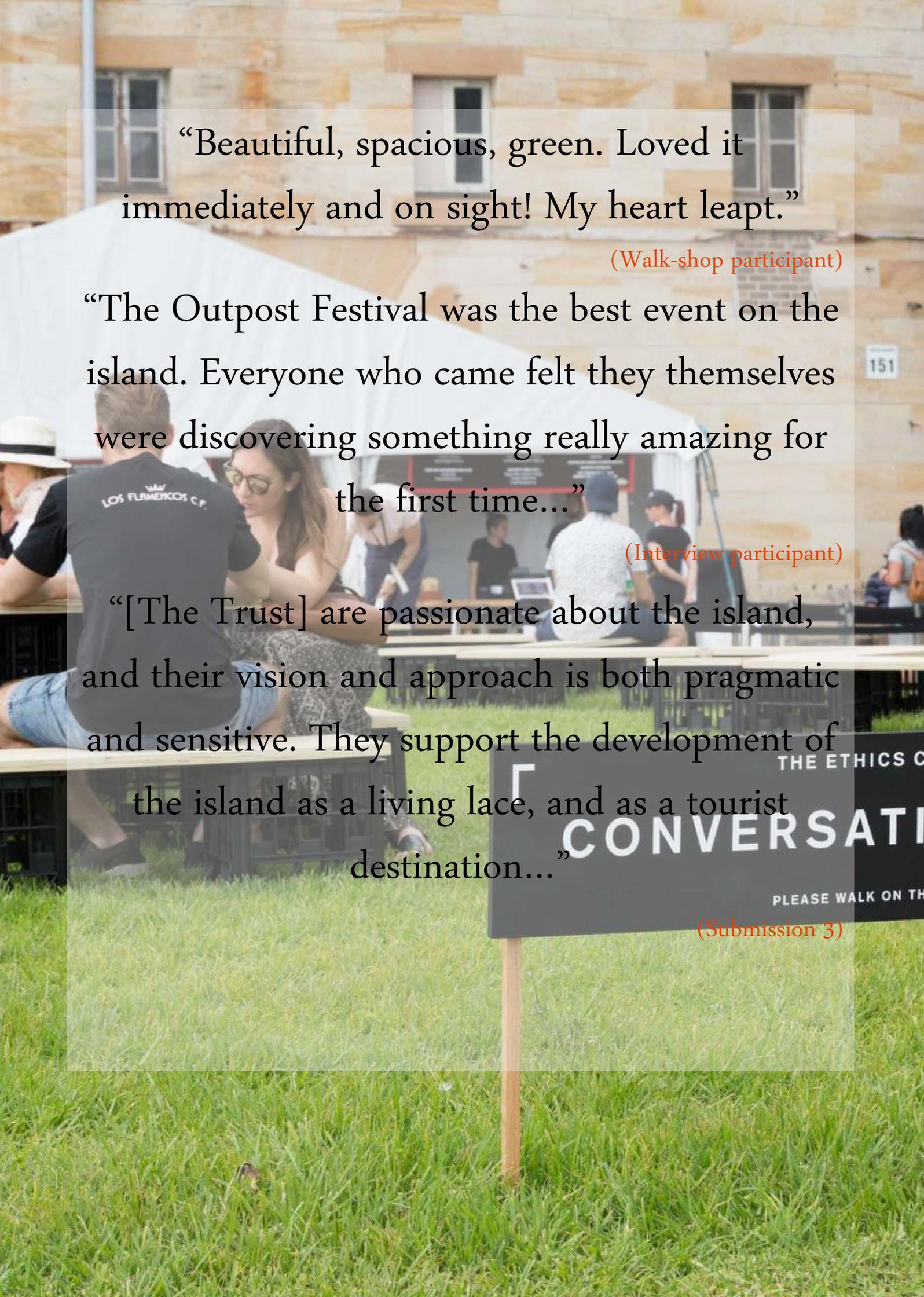
Aspects of Cockatoo Island that strongly resonated with people were its location on Sydney Harbour, its apartness, its rawness, its multilayered and evolving identity, its natural beauty and silence. People want to see these archetypal qualities of the island retained into the future.

Three quarters of survey participants (75%) reported that what captures their imagination about Cockatoo Island is the heritage, history or stores of the place. Its harbour setting and natural beauty was nominated by four out of ten survey respondents (41%). One in eight survey respondents (16%) identified its art and cultural events and activities as central to its identity.

Many people were supportive of the Trust’s approach to management of Cockatoo Island. They commented on the importance of maintaining a respectful and sustainable approach to the future management of Cockatoo Island. Close to a quarter of all survey respondents (23%) expressed a desire for Cockatoo Island to be managed in a way that is consistent with the Harbour Trust’s current approach.

Snapshot of survey responses: Question 1 captures your imagination about Cockatoo Island?





“Beautiful, spacious, green. Loved it immediately and on sight! My heart leapt.”

(Walk-shop participant)

“The Outpost Festival was the best event on the island. Everyone who came felt they themselves were discovering something really amazing for the first time...”

(Interview participant)

“[The Trust] are passionate about the island, and their vision and approach is both pragmatic and sensitive. They support the development of the island as a living lace, and as a tourist destination...”

(Submission 3)

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CONVERSATION
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3.2 Enhancing community benefit

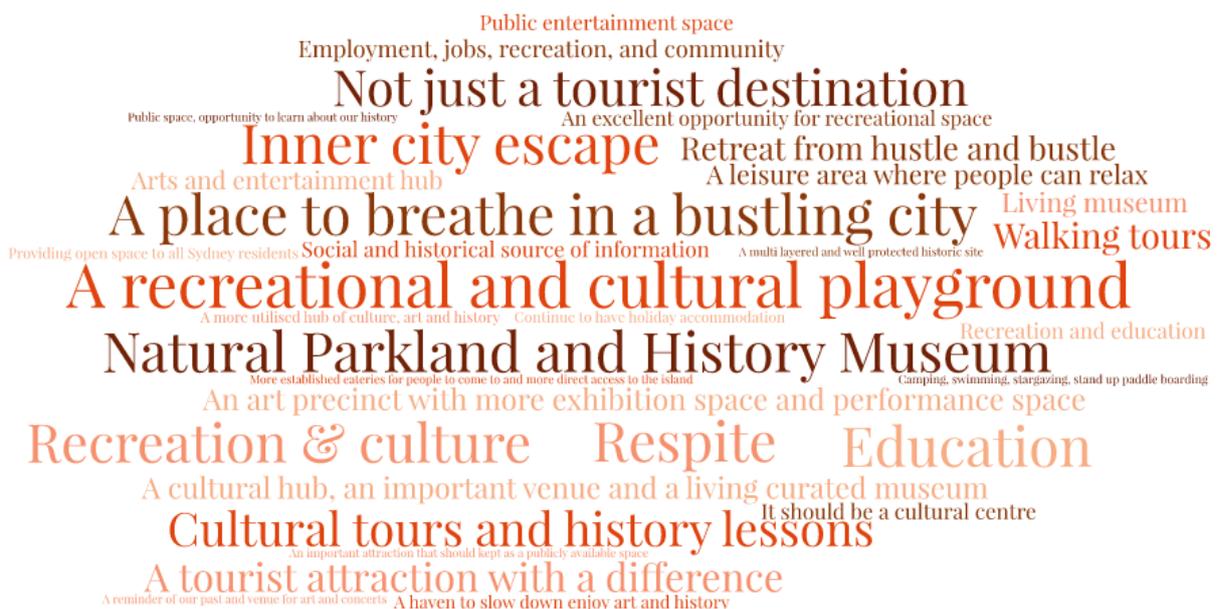
Key finding 1: Feedback indicated that we could be deriving considerably more community benefit from Cockatoo Island, while continuing to preserve its important qualities.

People expressed a strong desire for the untapped potential of Cockatoo Island to be realised, thus offering a greater level of community benefit. Members of the community and other stakeholders commented on the importance of telling the many stories of Cockatoo Island and bringing it back to life. They talked about its multiple and diverse former uses.

Cockatoo Island or Wareamah – translating to ‘Women’s Place’ – is acknowledged by the First Nations community as a unique and significant site in Sydney Harbour, based not only on its pre and post-colonial histories, but also due to its size (the largest island in the harbour) and its position, at the mouth of two rivers and intersecting with multiple Aboriginal Nations.

People talked about the island’s 3,000 strong workforce in the post war period and reminisced about experiences from Nick Cave in concert, to Sydney Biennale and everything in between. However Cockatoo Island was commonly described as being significantly underutilised and a place that could be ‘so much more’. Related to this, people highlighted the low level of community awareness of Cockatoo Island and what it has to offer.

Snapshot of survey responses: Question 2. What role do you see Cockatoo Island playing in a growing city with so many varied interests and needs?



Snapshot of pop-up responses. Question 1: What words come to mind when you think about Cockatoo Island?



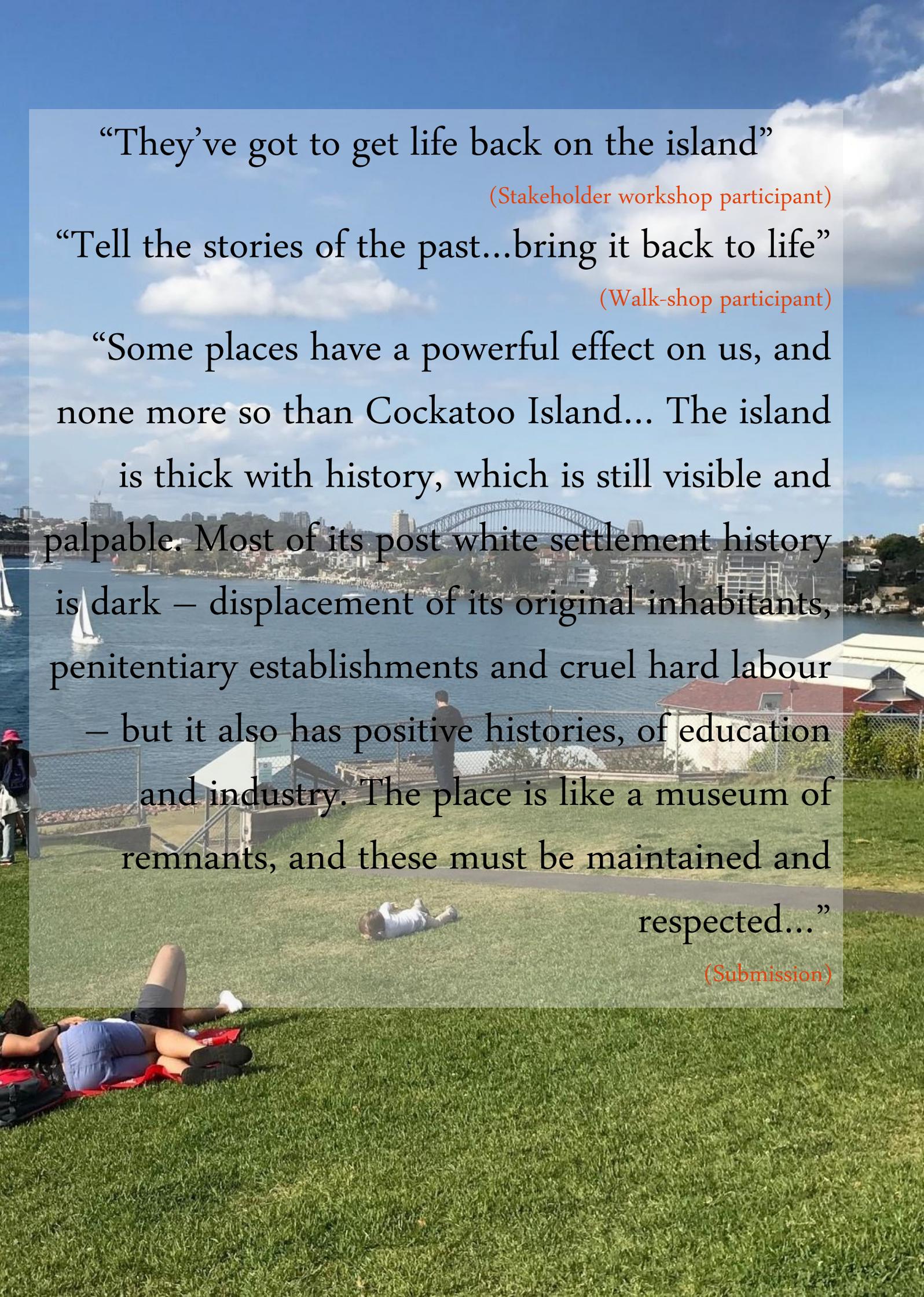
Snapshot of pop-up responses. Question 2: What was a great experience you had on the island?



Snapshot of pop-up responses. Question 3: What would encourage visitors to travel to the island?



Feedback obtained through the pop-up sessions in Barangaroo and Parramatta demonstrated a high level of consistency. Surprisingly, levels of visitation to Cockatoo Island were *similar in both locations*. However, there were lower levels of awareness about how to get to Cockatoo Island by participants from Parramatta.



“They’ve got to get life back on the island”

(Stakeholder workshop participant)

“Tell the stories of the past...bring it back to life”

(Walk-shop participant)

“Some places have a powerful effect on us, and none more so than Cockatoo Island... The island is thick with history, which is still visible and palpable. Most of its post white settlement history is dark – displacement of its original inhabitants, penitentiary establishments and cruel hard labour – but it also has positive histories, of education and industry. The place is like a museum of remnants, and these must be maintained and respected...”

(Submission)

3.3 Appealing to more diverse audiences

Key finding 2: The experience of Cockatoo Island should be extended to a greater diversity of Sydneysiders and visitors to our city.

An important theme raised as part of the consultation process was the importance of extending the appeal of Cockatoo Island to a greater diversity of audiences. While the island's offer was described as being rich and broad, its reach was thought to be narrow, but with potential to be more expansive.

Stakeholders placed emphasis on considering: 'who is Cockatoo Island for?'. People who participated in the engagement process commented on the existing low levels of awareness and visitation to Cockatoo Island – even among Sydneysiders. They want Cockatoo Island to be a place for Sydneysiders and visitors to our city alike – across cultures, age groups, locations and areas of interest.

Importantly First Nations Peoples should be recognised as central to the past, present and future of this place.

Cockatoo Island should be a welcoming and inclusive place for people from diverse cultural groups.

It should also be accessible for people across all income groups. People did not want to see Cockatoo Island become an exclusive destination for any one particular type of visitor, or a place that is only accessible for high income earners.

Commonly identified target groups were:

- » **Short and longer stay visitors** – people want Cockatoo Island to be a place for Sydneysiders exploring their own city, for people visiting Sydney from other parts of Australia, and for international visitors. It should better meet the needs of day trippers and provide drawcards to encourage longer stays.
- » **First Nations Peoples** – First Nations interviewees highlighted the importance of Cockatoo Island as a place for Aboriginal peoples, Sydneysiders and visitors from further afield including international visitors. People who participated in the wider engagement activities talked about the importance of engaging with First Nations Peoples as part of a Cockatoo Island that links past, present and future.
- » **Children and young people** – people wanted to see more opportunities for children and young people to enjoy and experience the island – including opportunities for learning, play and adventure.
- » **Families** – the island was regarded as providing an opportunity to meet the recreational needs of families – with its close proximity to many parts of Sydney, wide open spaces and car-free environment.
- » **People from Western Sydney** – members of the community and other stakeholders want the island to be a place for people from all parts of Sydney, not just people who live in the city and east.
- » **Our city's workforce** – feedback highlighted opportunities to create an everyday community on Cockatoo Island, through commercial tenancies, business opportunities, conference facilities and enhanced food and beverage experiences.



“...Don't make it for rich people in golf carts”

(Walk-shop participant)

“It's one of the great secrets of Sydney...you want more people to experience it, but the hidden secret quality is part of the magic [of Cockatoo Island].”

(Interview participant)

3.4 Offering more diverse experiences

Key finding 3: An opportunity exists to expand existing experiences and audiences through:

- » **recognising and actively telling First Nations Peoples stories**
- » **enhanced heritage interpretation and experiences**
- » **significantly improving transport access to and from the island**
- » **diverse education, learning and engagement experiences**
- » **improved food and drink options**
- » **a seasonal program of exciting events and festivals**
- » **everyday drawcards to help create a day to day community on the island**
- » **spaces and facilities for recreation and play**
- » **more evening/night time activities and events**
- » **spaces for production not just consumption**
- » **health and wellness activities, and**
- » **a wider range of accommodation options.**

Stakeholders highlighted the importance of each of these factors for the future of Cockatoo Island, as discussed below.

Recognising and actively telling First Nations stories was widely recognised as both an existing gap and important drawcard for Cockatoo Island. An enhanced experience of Cockatoo Island that provides opportunities for First Nations Peoples stories to be recognised, shared and understood was regarded as being critical for the future of Cockatoo Island. Whilst much of the traditional knowledges and stories associated with the island have been lost there still remains an understanding that this is a place of significant importance to Aboriginal peoples from Sydney and other regions as far as the South, Central and mid-North Coasts of NSW.

Cockatoo Island was widely identified as important for Aboriginal peoples, Sydneysiders and visitors to our city. Importantly First Nations stories should be told by First Nations Peoples. Feedback highlighted opportunities for Cockatoo Island to be a place for teaching and learning about culture and First Nations stories, for escaping the city and for reconnecting with country. Suggestions to support these outcomes included First Nations stories and culture as a lead for the site interpretive strategy, community education, arts and cultural production and programming, and design and landscaping of the public domain.

When reflecting on the historical and cultural significance of Cockatoo Island, overwhelmingly First Nations interviewees were passionate about the importance of acknowledging the island as a women's place, reviving the health and wellbeing of the island, and for retaining the remnants of the Aboriginal Tent Embassy. Some also expressed a desire to allow First Nations and Western cultures to meet by providing insights into both the black and white histories that have been a part of the island – a meeting of two cultures.

Opportunities to enhance the broader heritage experience of Cockatoo Island were raised by the community and stakeholders. Comments focused on connecting the stories of the past with our present through interpretation and experiences that make the island's diverse layers of European heritage relevant and accessible for a range of audiences – from school groups to visitors to Sydney. Suggestions ranged from improved signage and information to immersive heritage experiences – such as interactive digital engagement and in situ performers/actors

Significantly improving transport access to and from the island was identified as critical to support increased visitation to Cockatoo Island. Participants expressed the view that the successful transformation of Cockatoo Island – into a place for people – is dependent on successfully addressing this 'chicken and egg' problem. While current ferry services to the island were described as being "the best they have ever been", members of the community and other stakeholders commented that improved transport to and from Cockatoo Island is a critical first step to enable more people to visit (as such underpinning the success of all future

initiatives). Access to the island was also identified as a significant challenge for event producers and further investment was recommended if the island is going to host large events and accommodate large visitor numbers in future. In addition to more frequent and direct commuter ferry services in Sydney harbour and the Parramatta River, other suggestions included hop-on/off style transport, integrated transport/event ticketing, and access to the island for private boat users.

Diverse education, learning and engagement experiences were proposed, to support the experience and increase visitation to Cockatoo Island. Feedback focused on providing opportunities for people of all ages and across a stimulating range of interests – including First Nations stories and culture, environmental sustainability, arts and culture, and other areas of learning. The First Nations community, schools, universities, TAFE colleges, research institutes and corporates could all play a role in the future use and activation of the island (for instance, Sydney Institute of Marine Science). Establishing relationships with university partners was identified as an important opportunity by key stakeholders (for instance to establish a centre for research or professional education program). Consideration should also be given to opportunities for education, learning and engagement with a focus on digital technologies and innovation. For instance, Cockatoo Island could be a place for generating new ideas and prototyping solutions to address contemporary problems. Suggestions included a studio or residency program to explore creative solutions to the problems facing Sydney, NSW and Australia.

Improved food and drink options were widely identified as integral to an enhanced visitor experience of Cockatoo Island. People commented on the limited available options at present. They expressed a desire for a range of food and beverage options – from low cost and moderate options, through to premium offerings. Stakeholders commented that a higher end restaurant or restaurants could play an important role as a drawcard to the island for locals and visitors alike. Suggestions included a “hatted” restaurant, paddock to plate dining, and cafes and bars that Sydneysiders could enjoy as part of an everyday experience.

A seasonal program of exciting events and festivals was suggested to increase visitation using a sustainable approach. Many people called for more events and activities on Cockatoo Island. However, rather than focusing on increasing visitation through one-off major events, stakeholders suggested that Cockatoo Island should host activities that span an extended timeframe – such as a season, or one to three months. This approach was proposed to give members of the public time to find out what’s on. It was also seen as important to avoid peaks in demand for transport and other infrastructure created by major events. For instance it was noted that transport for major events is both costly and can negatively impact the visitor experience (through crowds and queues).

Suggestions for seasonal activities included First Nations arts and cultural activities, a summer series with music, art/culture, food and wine, satellite events linked to Sydney CBD and Parramatta-based festivals.

Both First Nations and other stakeholders commented on the importance of investment in infrastructure to support strong ongoing partnerships and future delivery of new and existing major events such as the NAIDOC Ball, an Indigenous festival and Biennale.

Further liaison with and promotion of the island through event organisers was recommended. Establish meaningful relationships with key stakeholders.

Everyday drawcards were proposed in order to help create a day to day community on the island. A day to day community was identified as critical to the future of Cockatoo Island as an active and sustainable place. Suggested drawcards focused on places for people to unwind and recharge (including parks, picnic and barbeque areas), cafes, regular markets, workspaces (such as a tech hub, corporate headquarters, co-working space, office space), a permanent museum, gallery or cultural centre that could act as a year round drawcard, and a wide range of other activities. In terms of the latter, people highlighted the importance of a forward calendar of programmed events and activities designed to target specific market segments, so that Sydneysiders and visitors know what’s happening on Cockatoo Island ‘this month’. Widespread promotion and a seasonal approach to events and activities were proposed.

People expressed a strong desire for Cockatoo Island to provide a destination for recreation and play. It was seen as providing an important opportunity to meet the needs of Sydney’s growing population through its extensive open space areas and enhanced facilities and amenities. Suggestions included walking trails, a children’s playground, water play, opportunities to touch the harbour, and water-based activities such as

kayaking. Some people suggested a swimming pool, whereas others thought a pool might be a less sustainable option than other types of facilities (considering both the cost of provision and ongoing maintenance).

“Western Sydney continues to suffer green space poverty. It is important that available spaces are optimised for community uses, even if it creates more activity...” (Stakeholder interview participant)

“...the broader communities of suburbs like Rhodes, Breakfast Point, Mortlake could see Cockatoo Island as their backyard – given Sydney’s traffic and density issues.” (Stakeholder interview participant)

More evening/night time activities and events. People expressed a desire for Cockatoo Island to become a destination for Sydneysiders and visitors to enjoy in the evenings and at night. They commented on positive experiences of past activities (such as the Island Bar) and the opportunity to take advantage of the island’s spectacular setting after dark, particularly in the warmer months. They suggested a mix of restaurants, bars, music and performances. Some saw Cockatoo Island as providing an important opportunity for people to have fun as part of a vibrant night time economy, while others commented on the importance of managing potential amenity impacts for nearby residents.

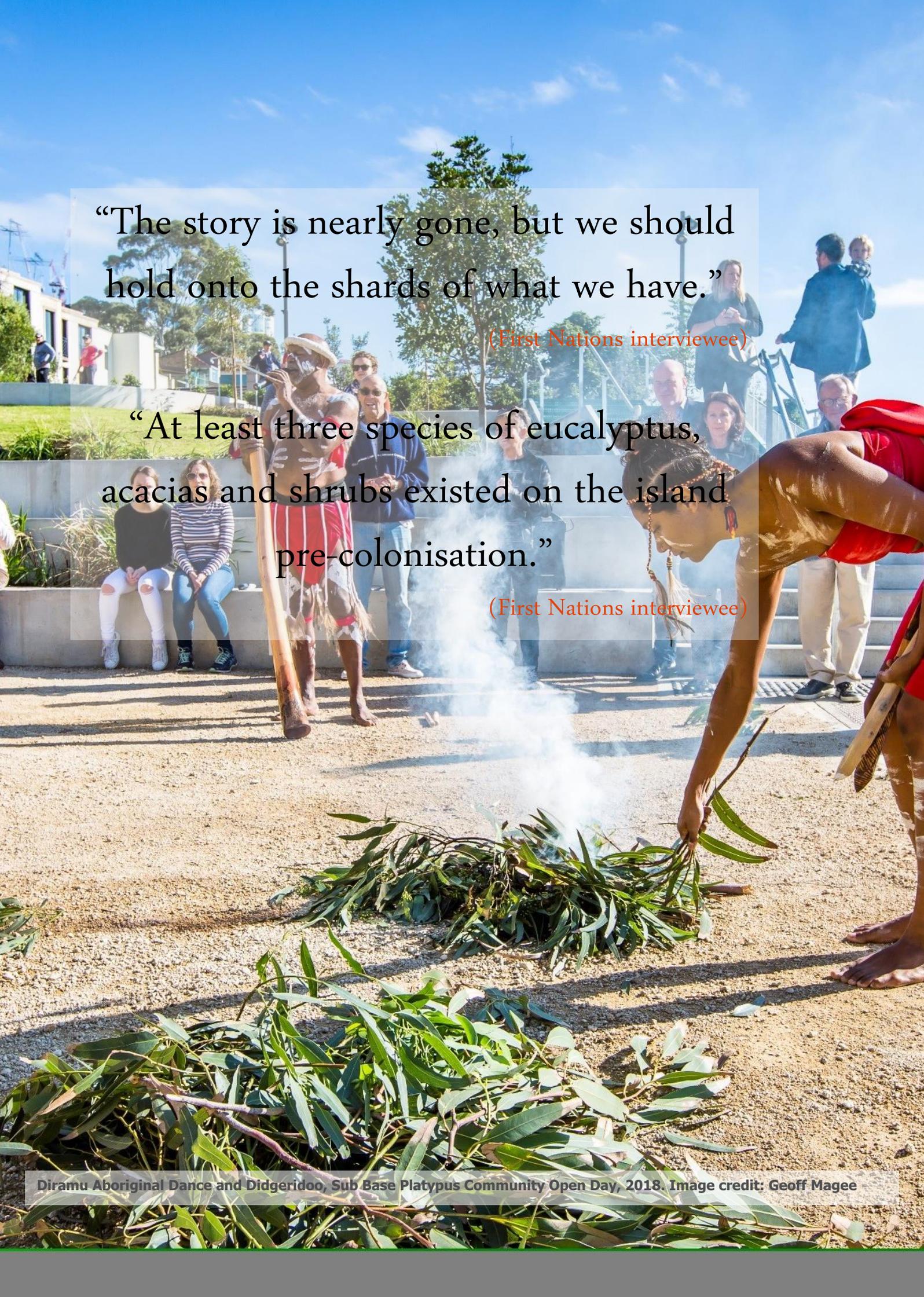
Spaces for production not just consumption. People want Cockatoo Island to be a cultural place that provides opportunities for people to visit and experience the arts and culture year round. Further to this, and consistent with its history as a place of production, people who took part in the consultations expressed a desire for this to be a place that provides opportunities for making, learning and doing. Cockatoo Island was identified as a place for both artisans and everyday people to get involved in making, rather than just consuming arts and culture. They proposed studio and workshop spaces for artists and creatives, classes for members of the public, as well as markets where artisans could sell their wares. First Nations interviewees discussed the importance of business and economic opportunities for Aboriginal peoples on Cockatoo Island. See also section 3.5.

Health and wellness activities. People talked about Cockatoo Island as a place for restoration and renewal. Free, low cost and premium offerings were proposed in order to cater for day trippers and visitors to Sydney. Suggestions ranged from outdoor gym equipment to yoga studios or a health retreat. Restoring the health of the island – its flora and fauna – was identified as an important opportunity by First Nations interviewees. The island itself was discussed as being a place of healing for Aboriginal peoples. Health and wellbeing focused activities identified by interviewees included healing workshops and wellbeing programs.

“...a place of restorative personal regeneration – for communities and First Nations peoples, and a place of new ideas...” (Stakeholder workshop participant)

People commented on the need for a wider range of accommodation options on Cockatoo Island. Accommodation was regarded as an important opportunity to enhance the experience of visiting the island – for local and international visitors alike. Suggestions focused on a range of options – from First Nations focused and operated experiences, to camping and glamping to Airbnb style accommodation, to premium accommodation such as a boutique / spa hotel or corporate retreat. Quality restaurants, business, wedding and conference facilities were also suggested.

Further to this, some people identified residential housing as an appropriate future use for the island, while others did not support this use. Suggestions included high end apartments, and affordable housing to meet the needs of Sydney’s population.

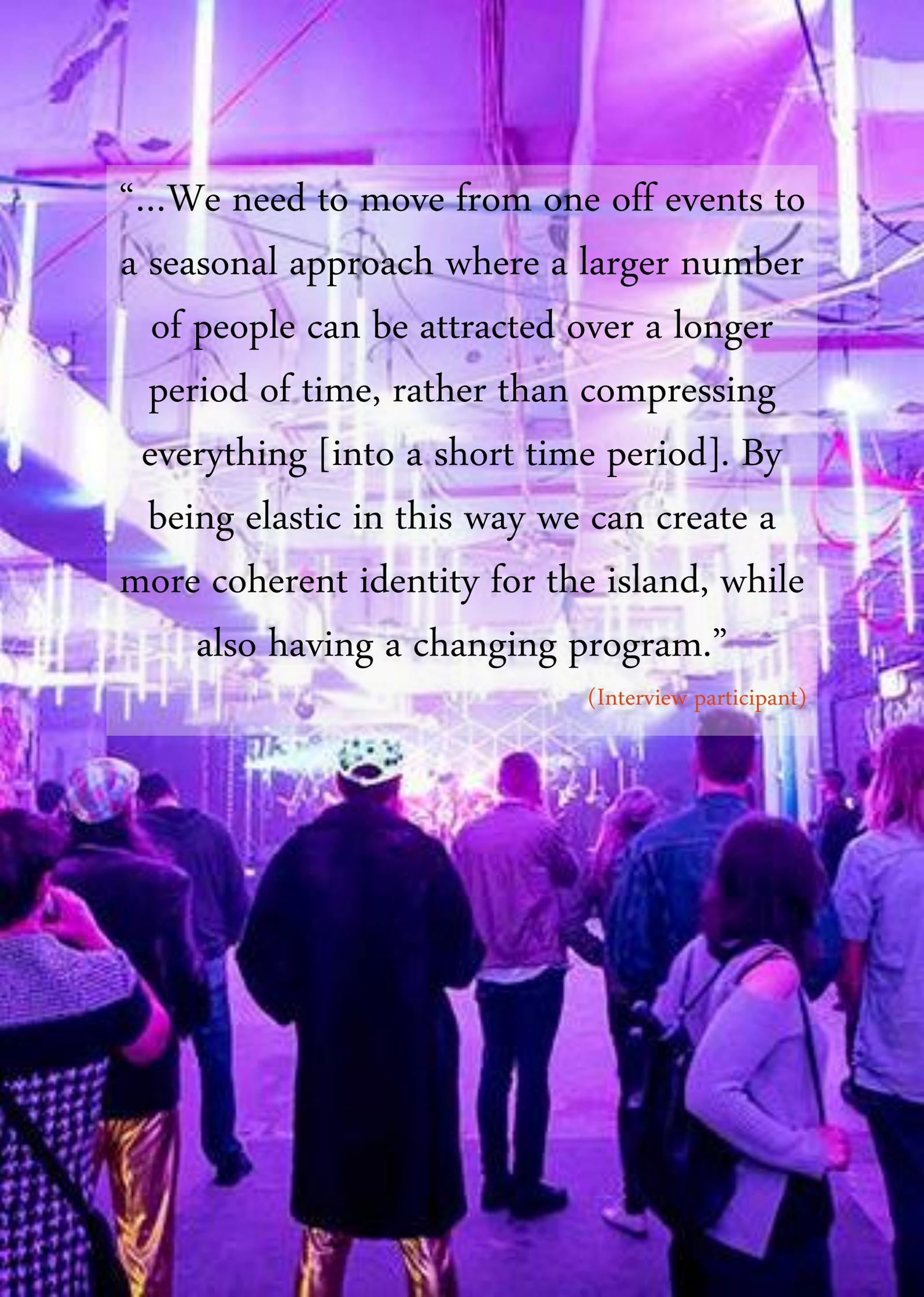


“The story is nearly gone, but we should hold onto the shards of what we have.”

(First Nations interviewee)

“At least three species of eucalyptus, acacias and shrubs existed on the island pre-colonisation.”

(First Nations interviewee)

The background image shows a lively outdoor event, possibly a festival or fair. In the foreground, several people are seen from behind, looking towards the event. The scene is filled with bright, colorful lights and structures, including what appears to be a large, illuminated archway or canopy. The overall atmosphere is festive and energetic. The text is overlaid on a semi-transparent white box in the upper half of the image.

“...We need to move from one off events to a seasonal approach where a larger number of people can be attracted over a longer period of time, rather than compressing everything [into a short time period]. By being elastic in this way we can create a more coherent identity for the island, while also having a changing program.”

(Interview participant)

3.5 Focusing on what's unique about Cockatoo Island

Key finding 4: Important considerations for the future of this unique place identified by people were focused on:

- » **its multilayered and evolving identity**
- » **the proximity of Cockatoo Island and its important role as a link between our Harbour City and Parramatta**
- » **the importance of a publicly accessible and democratic Cockatoo Island**
- » **the need for commercial / income generating activities that are consistent with the values of this place**
- » **opportunities for people to enjoy peace and quiet, but also opportunities for new experiences and fun**
- » **its pedestrian-only nature – making it a perfect place for respite, recreation and play.**

A series of important considerations for the future of Cockatoo Island were identified by the community and stakeholders, as discussed below.

Feedback highlighted the island's multilayered and evolving identity, expansive size, diverse spaces and capacity to accommodate a range of uses. A multi use and multilayered approach was seen to reflect the character and past uses of the island. Being "many things not one" was also regarded as key to drive visitation to Cockatoo Island and to enhance public benefits relating to the island. People strongly value the island's multi faceted character and uses – including its First Nations stories and culture, maritime, industrial, convict, arts and cultural uses. They want to see these uses celebrated and connected to contemporary life, as part of Cockatoo Island as an ever evolving and enduring place. The community and other stakeholders commented on the unexpectedly vast scale of the island and its capacity to act as a multipurpose precinct where no single use dominates nor impacts the others. Through this approach the many appealing attributes and activities of this place can be enjoyed by a wide range of people.

"It could have a lot more visitation because it's the same size as The Rocks. There's no reason a precinct that size couldn't successfully accommodate a diverse range of uses." (stakeholder workshop participant)

Stakeholders commented on the close proximity of Cockatoo Island to many parts of Sydney and its important role as a link between our Harbour City and Parramatta. Cockatoo Island was identified as a pivot point between Sydney's central and western CBDs. It was discussed as being a point for connecting our First Nations Peoples journey, Sydney's sandstone journey, and as a cultural connection linking arts and cultural institutions and activities in Sydney's east to the new Powerhouse Museum planned for Parramatta.

Feedback emphasised the importance of a publicly accessible and democratic Cockatoo Island.

Above all people want to see Cockatoo Island remain open – as a much loved and valued part of Sydney. Increased promotion of the place was regarded as important in order to support greater awareness of this important community asset. People want Cockatoo Island to be a place that provides no cost options, affordable options, and a premium offer that can be used to generate income. Feedback focused on the importance of continuing to provide free public access to the island and community events and activities, while also hosting ticketed events and activities (such as exhibition entry, performances and so forth).

Stakeholders highlighted the need for commercial / income generating activities to support a sustainable future for Cockatoo Island, that are consistent with the values of this place. They commented that a range of complementary and contemporary new uses could be introduced to support the ongoing life of the island and address its existing challenges (including low footfall, lack of permanent population and access/transport). Suggestions ranged from enhanced heritage accommodation, and food and beverage experiences, to commercial leasing opportunities (eg corporate headquarters for an innovation and technology company), a permanent arts and cultural centre/museum, a research or educational centre, and studio-based arts and cultural production. Current activities such as events and filming could be further supported through further

investment in infrastructure (transport, storage, toilets and other amenities) plus complementary new uses, as discussed above.

Opportunities for First Nations communities to engage in commercial activities relating to Cockatoo Island should be promoted. Further to this, commercial and economic development opportunities should be authentic, of the place and environmentally sustainable.

First Nations interviewees highlighted the importance of commercial and economic opportunities on the island – from tourism opportunities and cultural education through to events and accommodation. They commented that these opportunities should not be mutually exclusive from the cultural significance and stories of the island, and should in fact be developed and informed by the First Nations stories and cultural ways of being, doing and knowing. Specific opportunities discussed in the Two Point Co. report include:

- » Providing commercial leases for Aboriginal businesses including tourism operators such as Tribal Warrior, artists, cultural knowledge holders
- » Hosting events like Garma festival, but with an international focus and a focus on sustainability and the health of the country
- » Provide opportunities for Indigenous employment on the island through tourism and sharing of culture
- » Eco-sustainable cultural tourism and accommodation (a range of innovative suggestions were made including an underwater restaurant, reverse skyscraper beneath the harbour, a sustainable resort with underwater accommodation)
- » Strengthening infrastructure to allow for large scale events on the island
- » Camping managed by Aboriginal women.

People want the island to provide opportunities for people to enjoy peace and quiet, as well as opportunities for new experiences and fun that might get noisy. Maintaining opportunities for people to experience the solitude and quiet of Cockatoo Island was seen as integral to Cockatoo Island as a place for people. This was identified by First Nations interviewees and people who participated in the broader consultations. However, some people commented that Cockatoo Island should also provide opportunities to break away from the everyday and celebrate life through great music and fun. Being a good neighbour was identified as being important to consider as part of future spaces, programming and communications, to ensure that any potential impacts are managed.

People highlighted the island’s pedestrian-only nature as an asset – making it a perfect place for respite, recreation and play in our busy city. Cockatoo Island was seen as a place that could serve an important role as a recreation space or ‘playground’ for children, families and the wider community.

“...It has the qualities of a place further from the city...Achieve a good balance between developing income and preserving the authenticity of the island.”

(Walk-shop participant)



“[In 2036 it should be]... a place to ‘get away’ similar to the Botanic Gardens, in proximity to the CBD, offering opportunities not available in the built up city, like camping in front of the bridge, and exploring many generations of history. Focus on some way to make it creative/generative in ANOTHER LAYER without damaging the layers that exist.”

(Walk-shop participant)



3.6 Respectfully enhancing this place

Key finding 5: Paramount to its future is the respectful but not precious enhancement of this highly valued gem. People don't want it to be loved to death or to lose its grit – maintain the raw, industrial energy and spirit of this place.

Feedback focused on enhancing and updating Cockatoo Island to enable the place to open its doors wider to appeal to new and existing users. This means further recognising and telling the island's stories and culture, utilising the island's buildings and spaces, ensuring that they are safe, fit for purpose, and enhancing the overall amenity of this place. The First Nations community is passionate about unpacking the history of Cockatoo Island both pre and post colonisation, and ensuring that this is reflected in future designs, plans and developments. Suggestions for **bringing First Nations culture to life** are discussed in section 3.7.

People did not want to see the island "preserved in aspic" nor lose the "grit" that underpins its honesty and "found" appeal.

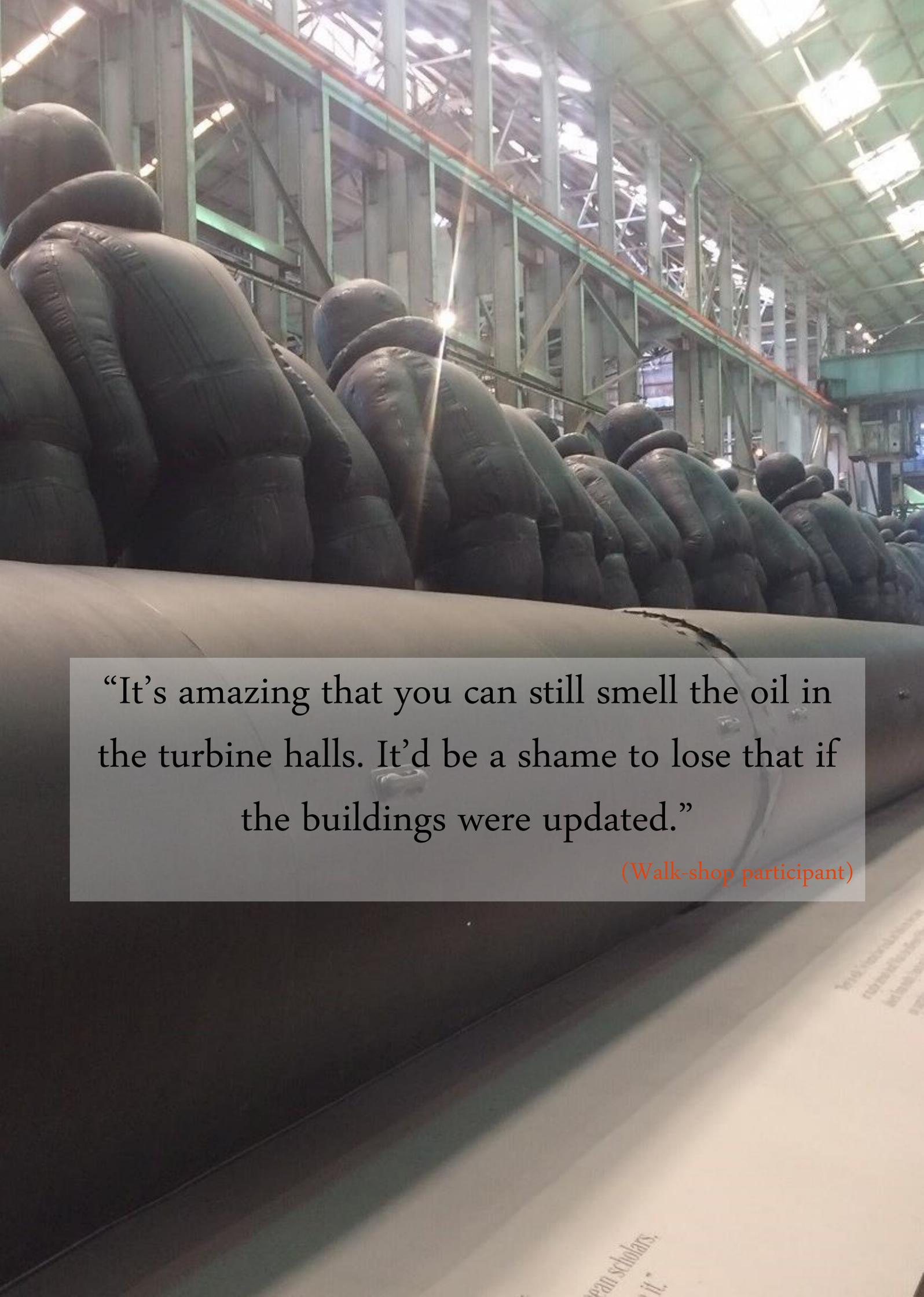
People who participated in the engagement process identified a number of **other places** that the Harbour Trust could look to as useful examples to guide the future of Cockatoo Island.

Suggestions included places that successfully tell the stories of past and present in an engaging way, places that are self sustaining (for instance, achieving activation throughout the year, not just around major events and festivals), and places that demonstrate a sensitive convergence of old and new.

"You could learn lessons from Carriageworks – with a weekly market, regular events plus culture. You need things that can bring people in on a regular basis." (Walk-shop participant)

"I see it as a place of cultural significance... with temporary accommodation from hotels to tents. A unique pedestrian only locale. In many ways it reminds me of Venice. Biennale in Venice has energy and history. A place that's capable of receiving new facilities in terms of cultural and private projects...I'm an architect. I think a major plan needs to be created. Once a positive image is generated for what this place could be, then you can go forward..." (Walk-shop participant)

"Whatever happens we can't lose the untarnished rawness and grit of the place. Cockatoo Island is rough and this is what makes it one of the few remaining authentic places in Sydney. Respect doesn't mean being precious about the place!" (Board member interview)



“It’s amazing that you can still smell the oil in the turbine halls. It’d be a shame to lose that if the buildings were updated.”

(Walk-shop participant)

apan scholars,
it.”

Learning from other places

Other places people identified were:

- » Garma (Festival), NT
- » Carriageworks, Eveleigh
- » Port Arthur and MONA, Tasmania
- » Fremantle Gaol, Perth
- » GOMA, Brisbane
- » Desert Mob, NT
- » Setouche, Japan
- » Governor's Island, NYC
- » Inhotim Institute, Brazil
- » The Arts centre Vooruit, Ghent
- » Arsenale, Venice
- » Dowgoon, Hong Kong
- » Route of Industrial Heritage, Ruhr Valley
- » Former naval yards, Copenhagen
- » Granville Island, Vancouver
- » The Conservancy, San Francisco
- » Bath, Edinburgh 101, British Naval Museum Greenwich, and National Museum Royal Navy, UK

Arsenale, Venice (2019)



“Look at the arts centre in Vooruit in Ghent – they reinvented themselves with the bar and restaurant as their core offering. Their ethos is: “Nothing for everyone, something for everybody.”

(Stakeholder workshop participant)



3.7 Aspirations for the future / principles

As discussed in section 3.2 of this report, community and stakeholder feedback suggests that we could be deriving considerably more community benefit from Cockatoo Island, while continuing to preserve its important qualities. As one interviewee commented:

“We need to consider...how to create consensus and optimise Cockatoo Island for the benefit of the community...”
(Interview participant)

Opportunities exist to reimagine community benefit in a balanced and focused way that considers:

- » **the role of the Island in bringing First Nations stories and culture to life**
- » **the past, present and future stories the Island wants to tell**
- » **a balanced approach to visitation and activation**
- » **the right mix of uses and experiences**
- » **balancing time and space for contemplation versus opportunities for people to kick up their heels**
- » **making physical and digital experiences of the Island more interactive**
- » **long term strategic directions and development of a strong brand proposition to bring people to Cockatoo Island**
- » **not being too timid about change.**

Each of these factors is discussed below.

Stakeholders highlighted the importance of bringing First Nations stories and culture to life and recognising First Nations Peoples voices in planning for the future of Cockatoo Island. In the First Nations consultations, interviewees emphasised the importance of privileging the voices of Aboriginal peoples and allowing the First Nations story to lead in any visioning work relating to the island. Broader feedback focused on Cockatoo Island as an opportunity to realise positive outcomes for First Nations Peoples, the broader community and visitors to Sydney/Australia seeking to explore First Nations culture and heritage.

The First Nations engagement identified a range of opportunities to bring culture to life such as reverting to the use of the island’s traditional name Wareamah, flying the Aboriginal flag, cultural interpretations that reflect Gadigal culture, wayfinding signage in language and cultural event spaces, retaining the remnants of the Tent Embassy, establishing an Aboriginal cultural centre, memorial to people who died of small pox and flora and fauna, Aboriginal public art, an open air education space, fire pits, holding healing workshops and wellbeing programs. The importance of further engagement with key First Nations community stakeholders was also highlighted.

In the broader consultations First Nations Peoples stories and experiences were identified as an important opportunity for Australians to learn more about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and to also appeal to international visitor audiences. Participants also highlighted opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists, film makers and creatives to work on the island. Importantly they commented that these initiatives should be led by First Nations Peoples.

“As we’ve just heard, the original use of this area was for Indigenous women. It has a real sense of calm about it, but there’s nothing that’s been developed that tells the spiritual story. I’d like to see it getting in touch with its Indigenous roots, or spiritual roots more generally.” (Walk-shop participant)

Consideration should be given to the past, present and future stories the Island wants to tell.

Feedback suggests that it will be important to enlist creatives to tell these stories, which only make sense when embodied in place. This is a job for writers, poets, artists, film makers. It is also a task for the Harbour Trust’s expert guides and volunteers who were described as being knowledgeable, passionate and inspiring. Interpretive strategies, immersive experiences and use of technology should also be considered as part of enhanced storytelling about this place.

“It is most important that the present generation and those following be made aware of the history, the importance of the Dockyard and the contribution it made to the development of Australia. The history of most of the shops built on the island are generally well known but little is understood of what was involved in ship construction, engineering, general production and service work carried out over more than 100 years in Australia’s largest dockyard.”
(Submission)

“We need to bring the varied stories of the island to life in a much more creative, embedded and engrossing way. We need to use artists and technology. These narratives should also resonate with the contemporary world.” (Board member interview)

Feedback focused on a balanced approach to visitation and activation. People reported that Cockatoo Island is not a place for mass visitation, due to its unique qualities and infrastructure challenges. People commented that it should be a place that is both active and exciting, but also provides a peaceful antidote to busy city life. Importantly, there is a need to get access arrangements right in order to achieve this balance. A seasonal approach was proposed to attract increased audiences but over extended timeframes.

Feedback focused on ensuring that Cockatoo Island offers the right mix of uses and experiences to ensure its appeal to diverse audiences and ongoing sustainability. People placed emphasis on ensuring an environmentally sustainable future for the island and commented on the need to successfully grasp the potential of the Island’s diverse spaces, places, people and possibilities through careful planning and a multilayered approach.

The First Nations consultations demonstrate that for many Aboriginal people Cockatoo Island is considered to be sick and in need of cleansing through traditional ceremony and regeneration, through the revival of cultural practices and First Nations ways of caring for country. Interviewees reflected on the native flora and fauna that once thrived on the island – the trees, native grasses and shrubs, the fish and bird life. They expressed a common hope to see the island revegetated to help to bring it back to health.

“It is important that all layers of the island - indigenous, convict, military, maritime/ industrial and more recently cultural/ recreational activities are all reflected across the island and have equal weight.” (Board member interview)

Stakeholders discussed the need to balance time and space on the island that serves a purpose for contemplation, versus opportunities for people to kick up their heels and make noise. Feedback highlighted the important role played by Cockatoo Island as a cultural hub in Sydney and Australia. People commented that arts and culture should be integrated into the life of the island, that Cockatoo Island could provide a platform for arts and cultural events and could also incorporate a permanent arts and cultural institution (such as a museum or gallery). However, the island’s arts and cultural offering should have broad appeal for a wide range of people; it shouldn’t be “too high brow” or “too worthy”.

“The Biennale is fantastic. However it appeals to a very narrow demographic.” (Interview participant)

“Cockatoo Island could be a place to show artworks from our state collection [that are not currently on display] in interesting places... in addition artists are always looking for spaces to rehearse...” (Interview participant)

“You want a big museum experience – so that people feel they could stay all day but not see everything. There are too many stories for one day, too many things to go to or that keep changing, so they have a reason to go back...” (Stakeholder workshop participant)

“We need to think about principles. You want it to be appealing to tourists but you want it to be open to families also. It’s got to have ongoing stuff – not just events and festivals that happen from time to time. It needs ongoing things to sustain it.” (Walk-shop participant)

“... I’m imagining it could be a fantastic cultural hub for arts at all levels – with studios, exhibition spaces and places for the public to make art. It’s on the ferry route to Parramatta where the Powerhouse is going to be, so it’d be great to link them together. It could be a great centre for Indigenous arts and engagement. It also has strong parallels with the National Art School as another heritage site. You could have a range of spaces [on the island] and the public could engage in art making [as well as events like Biennale which are about experiencing art]. Creative workshops where you could stay here for the week would be good. I can see someone like Sydney Printmakers moving in here. People could come for a weekend or a week and make art.” (Walk-shop participant)

Making physical and digital experiences of the Island more interactive. Stakeholders identified multiple opportunities to enhance the experience of Cockatoo Island through a greater level of interactivity. Feedback focused on opportunities for children to play, opportunities for people to engage in immersive learning, opportunities for people to engage in cultural production, opportunities for people to explore the island's uses and features using technology. Ideas included an advanced manufacturing partnership with TAFE, a corporate headquarters for a technology or innovation organisation, and further opportunities that support new ways of learning, working and prototyping.

"It needs to be more interactive. You could have a boat that kids could go on, maybe do something in collaboration with the National Maritime Museum. It's not going to capture their imagination the way it is now – it's a bit of a shell. I haven't seen information and plaques about that tell the Aboriginal story of the island. It'd be good to be able to learn much more about the history on your own [without a guide] by just walking around. About things like Aboriginal plantings; information about edible plants that you could try..." (Walk-shop participant)

"We should make it easy for someone with a great but small idea to use part of the island. The island could be a place to prototype and test ideas. The motto should be "test fast, fail fast". If the idea works it has potential to evolve and be scaled up, but if it doesn't we have learnt something as well." (Board member interview)

A long term and strategic approach to planning for the future of Cockatoo Island was proposed. Stakeholders highlighted the importance of first determining the optimum number of annual visitors, and based on this figure, the related programming and infrastructure required to support this. For instance if the Harbour Trust's goal is to attract 1.5 million annually, then decision making needs to support that target.

Closely related to this, the community and stakeholders highlighted the importance of developing a strong brand proposition to increase awareness and attract people to visit Cockatoo Island. The brand proposition needs to be effectively and widely communicated as part of the overall story / visitor experience of Sydney. NSW and Australia. People talked about aiming to position Cockatoo Island as one of the top five or ten unmissable experiences in Sydney. For instance, the brand proposition could talk about Cockatoo Island as a place of 'discovery' for people of all ages'. Once established, the brand proposition could be used to support the development of commercial partnerships based on a shared understanding of the identity, values and aspirations for the island.

"Cockatoo Island needs a strong vision statement that everyone feels comfortable with and confident about..." (Stakeholder workshop participant)

Stakeholders commented that the Harbour Trust should not be too timid about change as part of the next phase of this evolving place. This means making incremental change where appropriate, but also seizing opportunities to be bold, future focused and contemporary.

"Cockatoo Island needs to be a springboard for contemporary issues, not just present what things used to be like." (Interview participant)

"My interest in Cockatoo Island is in its old steam crane demonstrations. It's interesting to come and talk to the other guys about the cranes. My partner and I are really into industrial photography. My big suggestion is having other things for the family members who aren't interested in steam cranes – which is pretty niche right? To get some synergies going in the way things are scheduled. The guys bring their partners to have a day out and enjoy lunch, but it seems a missed opportunity not to offer something on those demonstration days that could appeal more to them. You could do something like beading or jewellery making workshops, or put something on for kids. Cockatoo Island has to change as Sydney changes. You don't want to lose the industrial heritage which is what makes it. So many other places have lost that. You could have more upmarket cabins as well as glamping. I like the glamping and come here to stay at least once a year, but if there was other accommodation on offer I think that'd be good. Imagine waking up to [views of] the Harbour Bridge from accommodation where they'll bring breakfast to you in the morning." (Walk-shop participant)

“Open the island up and have it more grounded authentically with cultural knowledge that could provide opportunities for Indigenous employment through talks, tours and culture.”

(First Nations interviewee)

“Avoid making this place a living museum. Provide a sense of space to let our two worlds gently meet whilst letting Aboriginal voices lead.”

(First Nations interviewee)

“People are looking for a different type of tourism – well beyond an extractive relationship, they want a two-way exchange.”

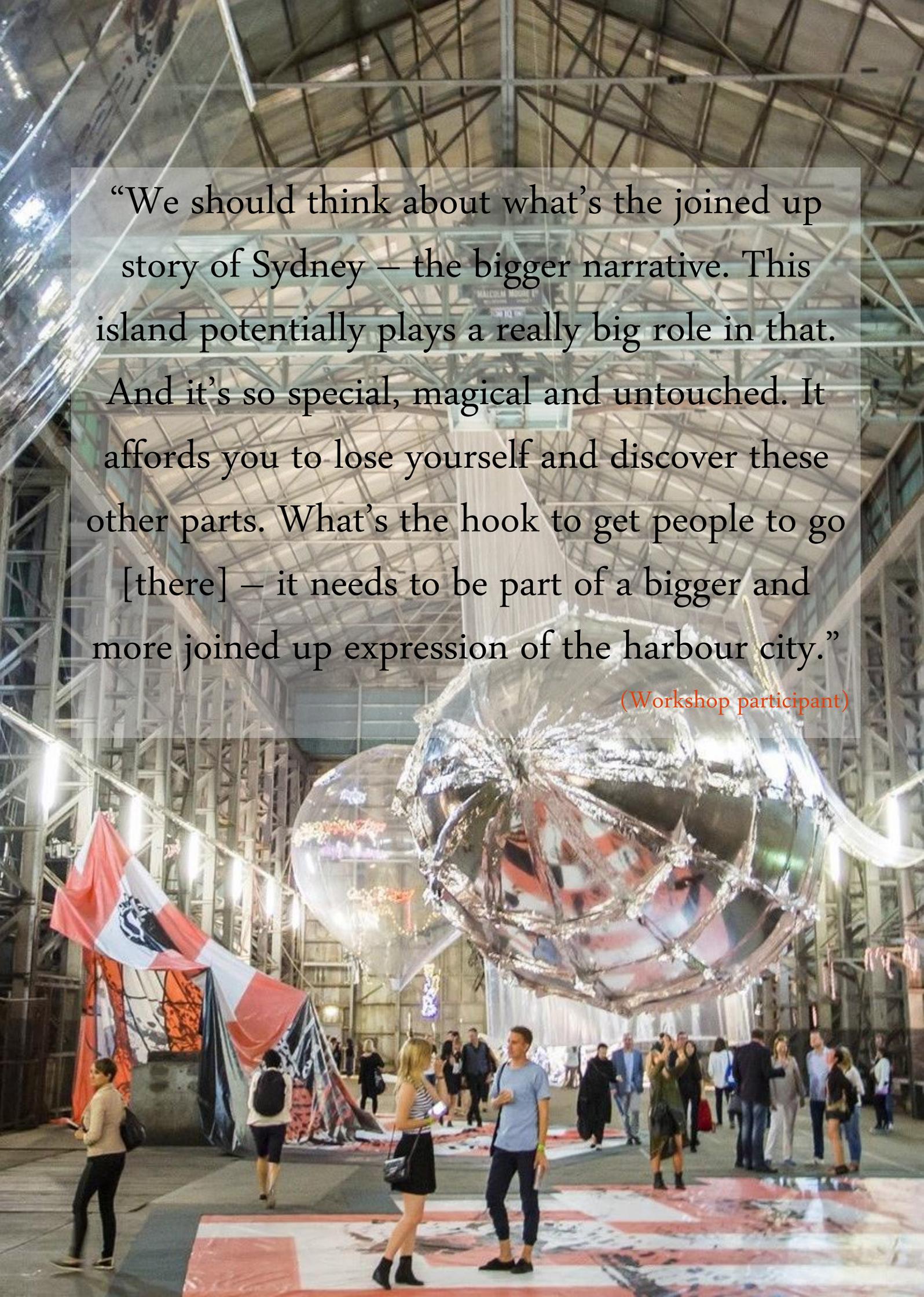
(First Nations interviewee)

“...it is a place with enormous potential for positive change and preservation. A place that is probably underutilised... [In 2036 Cockatoo Island could play a role as] a place of cultural significance and a venue for cultural expression, a place of temporary accommodation on various scales, a unique pedestrian only locale, a place capable of receiving new facilities including cultural and selected private projects.”

(Walk-shop participant)

“We should think about what’s the joined up story of Sydney – the bigger narrative. This island potentially plays a really big role in that. And it’s so special, magical and untouched. It affords you to lose yourself and discover these other parts. What’s the hook to get people to go [there] – it needs to be part of a bigger and more joined up expression of the harbour city.”

(Workshop participant)





“Don’t try and be all things to all people. There’s a danger of trying to do too much and failing at it all. Have a focus.”

(Staff workshop participant)

4.0 Next steps



4 Next steps

Summary

Conversations about the future of Cockatoo Island revealed a high overall level of consensus among different stakeholder groups and across the various engagement activities.

Many interviewees and workshop participants were particularly knowledgeable about Cockatoo Island and provided deep insights about its past and future. Workshop discussions provided participants with an opportunity to share their perspectives and bounce ideas off one another – resulting in some big picture thinking and suggestions for change. While the results of the survey, pop-ups and other activities appear to show that members of the broader community may have more of a 'status quo' approach or perhaps simply less considered ideas about the future of the island than other stakeholders.

Some stakeholders had a particularly strong focus on ideas relating to their specific area of interest such as First Nations heritage and culture, marine heritage or working harbour heritage. However there was general agreement across the various discussions that Cockatoo Island should continue to be a multipurpose place encompassing a wide range of diverse uses and with appeal for new and existing audiences. A key challenge for the Harbour Trust will be establishing a strong identity and brand proposition for the place, to support a long term and strategic approach to planning for the future of Cockatoo Island.

From aspirations to principles: key considerations

Community and stakeholder perspectives expressed through the engagement process have been synthesised into a number of recommendations and potential principles that could be used to guide the future of Cockatoo Island. These are outlined below for consideration by the Harbour Trust.

Principles derived from the broader engagement process focus on the island as:

- » A place where First Nations stories are told by First Nations peoples.
- » A place for learning and discovery where the stories of our past are told – authentically, creatively, and immersively – to illuminate the present and posit a new future.
- » A place of renewal and reflection for people to escape city life – and a place for recreation and play, where people can touch the land and water.
- » A working place with enriched cultural, recreational and commercial activity that are of the place and contribute to peoples experience of the island – where things are produced and not just consumed.
- » A place that functions well for activities of various scales – from major events to seasonal and smaller scale uses – where supporting infrastructure can be dialled up or down.
- » A welcoming and inclusive place that celebrates diversity – of uses, activities and cultures – and is accessible and affordable.

The consultation with First Nation Peoples brought forward these additional ideas:

- » In acknowledgement of the island as a sacred women's place include Aboriginal women in the visioning, decision making and governance of the island going forward.
- » Allow Aboriginal women of Sydney the opportunity to cleanse and heal the country.
- » Provide ongoing opportunities for First Nations stakeholders to engage in the conversation about the future of the island.
- » Ensure appropriate archaeological and anthropological studies are done on the Island as a first step in any design phase/discussions.

-
- » Establish an Advisory group/reference group specific to the future of Cockatoo Island incorporating relevant and appropriate expertise.
 - » Develop and implement an Indigenous Economic Participation Plan outlining how the Harbour Trust will engage Indigenous-owned businesses in future visioning, design and planning for Cockatoo Island.
 - » Treat the First Nations narrative as the key/overarching narrative of the island and build from and around this - incorporate First Nations ways of being, doing and knowing in all elements of the island.

Appendices

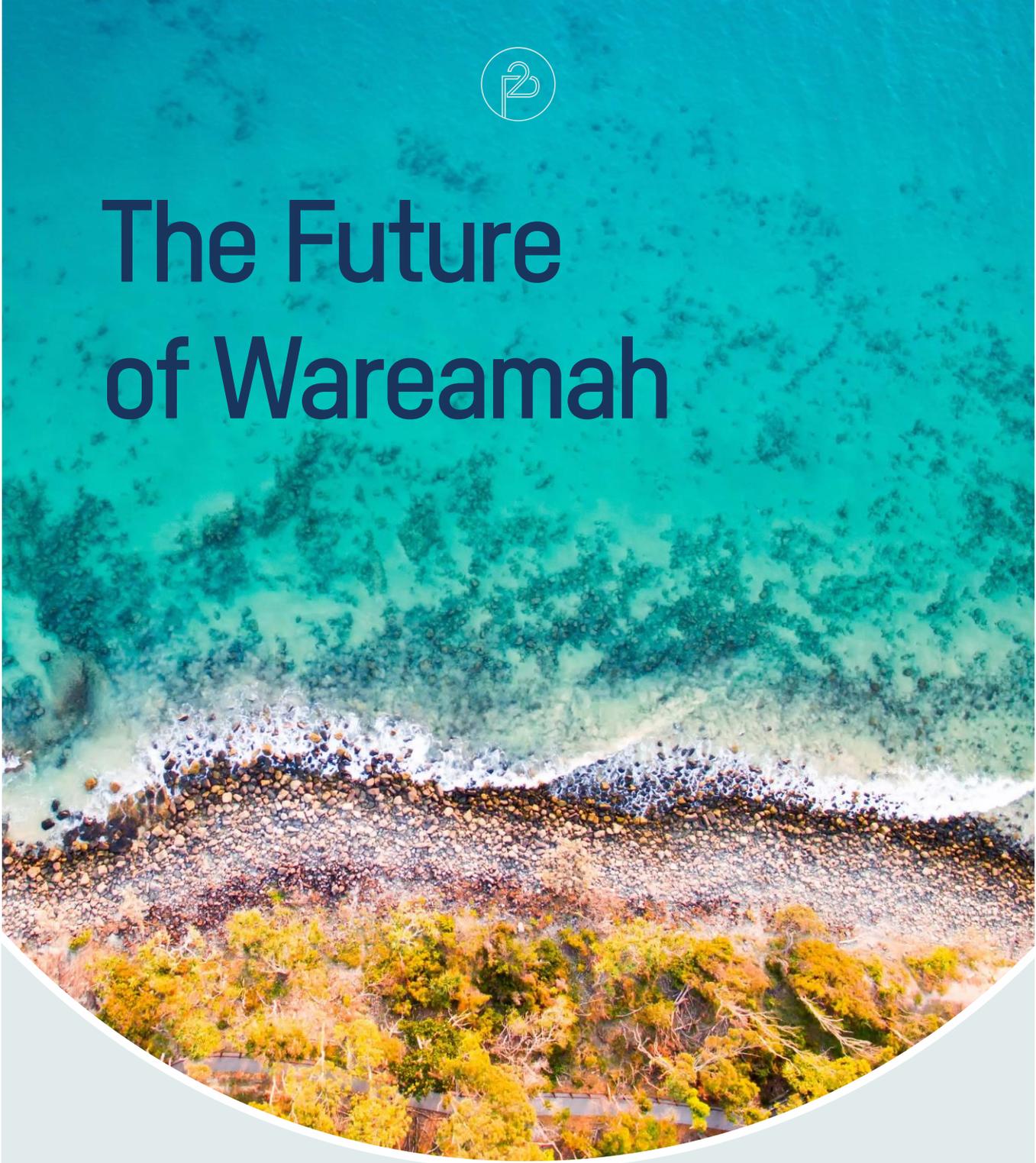
- A First Nations Peoples Engagement Outcomes Report by Two Point Co. – The future of Wareamah
- B Participating stakeholders
- C Survey results
- D Submissions



**A First Nations Peoples Engagement
Outcomes Report by Two Point
Co. – *The Future of Wareamah***



The Future of Wareamah



two point co:



Cockatoo Island™

： EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Two Point Co. was engaged by the Sydney Harbour Federation Trust to conduct targeted consultations with the First Nations community to explore the historical and cultural significance of Cockatoo Island's past and to uncover the values and principles important for its future.

Our approach to this piece of work began by reviewing existing written resources about the island to understand what previous research had been done, which language groups were and still are associated with the island, and traditional stories that may have been previously captured.

Throughout the consultations, and through our desktop research it became evident that this island was an important and sacred site for many clan groups both within the harbour area in Sydney, and outside of these border lines as far as Dharug, Dharawal and Yuin countries.

In considering the past and the future of the island, as with any Aboriginal land, is it important to acknowledge and respect the deep spiritual connection Aboriginal people have to country. Aboriginal people believe that we come from the earth, that the earth is our mother, that we cannot be separated from it, and it is our duty to care for it just as it cares for us. The current state of 'sickness' of the island is a significant pain point for many of the people we interviewed.

The interdependence between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and the land is based on respect - while the land sustains and provides for the people, people manage and sustain the land through culture and ceremony. It is because of this close connection, we see that when the land is disrespected, damaged or destroyed, there are real impacts on the wellbeing of Indigenous people.

[source: <https://www.commonground.org.au/learn/connection-to-country/>]



Cockatoo Island aerial. Image credit: Mark Merton.



The most consistent feedback offered throughout the consultations is that the Aboriginal community sees Cockatoo Island as an opportunity for Sydney to connect with country, to embrace culture and the ancestors, and to revive the physical beauty of the place. It is also widely acknowledged and validated that this is a sacred place, historically associated with ceremony and women's business, which many of the interviewees consider to be critical to the island's future.

The community wants to share this place with their people and their children to promote health and wellbeing within their own communities, but they also want to share it with other Sydney-siders and people from further afar to provide an opportunity for non-Indigenous people to learn about First Nations culture. They want opportunities to care for and heal country, and access to commercial opportunities for Aboriginal businesses.

The overarching themes arising from these consultations are:

1. Respecting and acknowledging this as a sacred women's place, and
2. The importance of caring for country and identifying the island as a place of cultural connection.

Other key themes arising can be grouped into the following buckets:

- Values and Principles important for Cockatoo Island's future,
- Environmental considerations,
- Bringing culture to life, and
- Commercial and economic opportunities.

The following pages outline our methodology, the cultural significance of the island as shared with us by the interviewees, and the First Nations Community's visions and aspirations for its future.



OUR METHODOLOGY

Two Point Co. is a 100% Indigenous owned consultancy specialising in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander engagement through strategy design, facilitation, community consultation and social impact assessment. We utilise a number of methodologies to help our partners to reach their Indigenous Engagement and strategy goals including individual consultations, community consultation, workshops, focus groups and strategy development processes.

We have a strong focus on consultation that uncovers the voice of the communities that will benefit from or be impacted by developments, policies and strategies, and which will ensure leadership priorities are understood and incorporated.

Due to the high frequency of consultations undertaken with the Sydney Aboriginal community and the resulting consultation fatigue experienced by many people over recent years, Two Point Co. advised that the best approach for these discussions was to undertake a series of individual in-depth yarning style interviews with a targeted list of key stakeholders.

Our stakeholder list included people who have family lineage to the Sydney area, members of the Harbour Trust's Indigenous Advisory Committee, representatives from peak bodies such as local land councils, representatives of arts and cultural organisations, representatives of the Sydney City Council, those with vested interests in archaeological and anthropological studies, Aboriginal Knowledge Holders, Indigenous employees of the Harbour Trust and First Nations artists.

The following list of stakeholders have participated in interviews with Two Point Co. as part of this process:

- Josephine Cashman - Harbour Trust, Indigenous Advisory Committee
- Roy Mundine - Harbour Trust, Indigenous Advisory Committee
- Djon Mundine - Harbour Trust, Indigenous Advisory Committee
- Susan Moylan-Coombs - Harbour Trust, Indigenous Advisory Committee
- Dennis Foley - Harbour Trust, Indigenous Advisory Committee
- Nathan Moran - Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council
- Shane Phillips - Tribal Warrior Association
- Wesley Enoch - Sydney Festival
- Cameron White - NSW Aboriginal Affairs
- Edie Coe - City of Sydney
- Paul Callaghan - Callaghan Cultural Consultancy
- Donna Ingram - Redfern local resident



- Aunty Frances Bodkin - Botanist, Dharawal Knowledge Holder
- Uncle Gavin Andrews - Dharawal Knowledge Holder
- Angie Abdilla - Old Ways, New
- Scott Franks - Tocomwall, Archaeology/ Anthropology
- Dillon Kombumerri - Office of the Government Architect, NSW
- Daniele Hromek - Artist, Researcher
- Will Cooper - Harbour Trust Indigenous employee
- Jeremy Kenna - Harbour Trust Indigenous employee
- Leanne Watson and Erin Wilkins - Dharug Custodians

Same key stakeholders were unable to be reached during the consultation period and Two Point Co. recommends that the Harbour Trust continues to attempt to engage these people as their input is critical in the ongoing conversations about the Island. A list has been provided to the Harbour Trust.

In addition to our targeted stakeholder list a communications plan was developed with the aim of disseminating details about the consultations to the broader Aboriginal community. This included the following tools and channels:

- Interview with Harbour Trust CEO, Mary Darwell on Blackchat with Lola Forrester, Koori Radio
- Fliers distributed via Two Point Co. and Harbour Trust social media channels including LinkedIn, Facebook and Instagram
- Fliers distributed via community noticeboards at the National Centre of Indigenous Excellence, Aboriginal Medical Service and Redfern Community Centre
- Distribution of fliers via email to local Land Councils



● THE HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE OF COCKATOO ISLAND



Diramu Aboriginal Dance and Didgeridoo, Smoking Ceremony, A Sunset Sessions Special: Live Music for National Reconciliation Week. Image credit: Ian Evans

Two Point Co's Directors are not from the Sydney region and do not have family connections to the area, and therefore do not have authority to speak on behalf of the sacred country that is Cockatoo Island or to pass on the stories associated with it. Our role in this process is to gain insights from the First Nations Community about the stories that have been passed down through the family and community connections of the interviewees.

We do not take the position of proving or disproving historical recollections, but rather we spend time listening deeply to stories, memories and cultural knowledge, and cross check these with written resources to understand the historical and spiritual connections First Nations people have with a place.

Much of what we had read referencing Cockatoo Island as a place deeply connected to the Aboriginal peoples of Sydney and more specifically a sacred women's place, was validated during the consultations.

Whilst much of the traditional knowledges and stories associated with the island have been lost there still remains an understanding that this is a place of significant importance to Aboriginal peoples from Sydney and other regions as far as the South, Central and mid-North Coasts of New South Wales.

Many interviewees spoke about the significance of the island's position in the harbour - at the mouth of the Parramatta and Lane Cove rivers, and at the intersection of Wullumedegal, Wangal, Cammeraygal and Gadigal traditional lands. Many people reflect on the uniqueness of a place that was seemingly not exclusively associated with one particular clan group, but rather a place visited and used by many.

Historically the island has had three names - Wareamah translating to 'Women's Place' which is what this place is most commonly known as amongst the First Nations community, Biloea, a North Queensland Aboriginal word, and subsequently the English translation of Biloea - Cockatoo.

Many of the interviewees reflect on how difficult it can be to uncover traditional stories associated with the island, however Professor Dennis Foley, who's matrilineal connection is Gai-mariagal of northern Sydney shared a story about how the island was a place that women would visit to birth children that were to be born 'different', and that it was a place in which cremation ceremonies would take place.



Dharawal Knowledge Holder and Bidiagal descendent, Aunty Frances Bodkin shared stories about the physical landscape of the harbour area thousands of years ago, and the interconnected relationships between the islands and different points within the harbour.

Three significant events define the First Nations post-colonial modern history of the island:

1. The imprisonment of Aboriginal people on what was known as the Cockatoo Island Penal Settlement (as referenced in the Harbour Trust First Nations Interpretation).
2. The story of Captain Thunderbolt, a bushranger who was imprisoned on Cockatoo Island multiple times during the 1800's. Thunderbolt was married to an Aboriginal woman, Mary Ann Ward (nee Bugg), and a number of websites recount that Captain Thunderbolt escaped the Cockatoo Island penal colony without the assistance of his wife. However, oral accounts by many Aboriginal people say that she did, in fact assist him in his escape. Whatever the truth may be, the importance of this story remains as it involved a well-known Aboriginal woman, her husband and their connection to the Cockatoo Island Penal Settlement.
3. The establishment of an Aboriginal Tent Embassy by Land Rights activists in 2000, and its subsequent dismantling following a stay of eviction in response to a land claim by the Tent Embassy custodians (as referenced in the Harbour Trust First Nations Interpretation).

When reflecting on the historical and cultural significance of the island, overwhelmingly the interviewees are passionate about the importance of acknowledging the island as a women's place, reviving the health and wellbeing of the island, and for retaining the remnants of the Aboriginal Tent Embassy. Some also expressed a desire to allow First Nations and Western cultures to meet by providing insights into both the black and white histories that have been a part of the island – a meeting of two cultures.



Members of the Harbour Trust Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Committee, Harbour Trust RAP launch, 2018. Image credit: Mark Tang



● VALUES AND PRINCIPLES IMPORTANT FOR COCKATOO ISLAND'S FUTURE

“Cockatoo Island should be a place to put our feet on the ground to connect with country and culture.” – First Nations interviewee



Diramu Aboriginal Dance and Didgeridoo, Smoking Ceremony, A Sunset Sessions Special: Live Music for National Reconciliation Week. Image credit: Ian Evans

Cockatoo Island is acknowledged by the First Nations community as a unique and significant site in Sydney Harbour, based not only on its pre and post-colonial histories, but also due to its size (the largest island in the harbour) and its position, at the mouth of two rivers and intersecting with multiple Aboriginal Nations.

For Aboriginal peoples, islands are important teaching places and Cockatoo Island is widely considered by the community to be an appropriate place for teaching and learning about culture and First Nations stories, for escaping the city and for reconnecting with country.

Aboriginal peoples' connection to country is intrinsically linked to health and wellbeing and Cockatoo Island poses an opportunity for the First Nations community to access a place that can directly and positively impact this by allowing ceremony and traditional ways of caring for country to occur.

Many people share ambitions of keeping the island as a place of open space, providing an opportunity for quiet connection to country that many First Nations people crave, and which is hard to come by in the “concrete and shadows” of the city.

The significance of the island as a sacred women's place was reiterated by the majority of the interviewees and many touched on the importance of involving the Aboriginal women of Sydney, those with cultural authority in this place, in discussions about its future.

In all of the consultations, interviewees reiterated the importance of privileging the voices of Aboriginal peoples and allowing the First Nations story to lead in any visioning work relating to the island.



In addition to these insights the following feedback and aspirations were offered throughout the consultations:

- “It is important for non-Aboriginal people to learn and understand that Aboriginal culture is valuable and beautiful”.
- “Acknowledge Aboriginal people’s knowledge and contributions in any reports and designs”.
- “Incorporate creation stories in design and any developments on the island”.
- “Provide affordable access to the island for Elders and children”.
- “Provide a place to bring the western and First Nations worlds together to focus on sustainable futures”.
- “The history of the island is not just convict and naval history – begin by expressing what the land means to Aboriginal people in an authentic way, then acknowledge the modern history of the place”.
- “Opportunities on the island should be afforded to a range of people and groups, not exclusive to one or two – allow opportunities for community groups to access the island and run activities (e.g. Aboriginal Medical Service could run community events, Tribal Warrior could run tours, education groups could take Indigenous and non-Indigenous people out there for learning opportunities)”.

“Women are responsible for life-giving water because they can give life. They should be looking after the country and making the decisions.” –
First Nations interviewee

- “The island needs an act of imagination and a narrative that the entire community can get behind”.
- “Any future development of the island will require a high level of advocacy within community, government and philanthropy”.
- “Could this become Sovereignty Island” – the home of Makarrata”?
- “This was a women’s place – allow Aboriginal women to reclaim the place and give them long term stewardship over its governance”.



ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

“At least three species of eucalyptus, acacias and shrubs existed on the island pre-colonisation.” – First Nations interviewee



Diramu Aboriginal Dance and Didgeridoo, Sub Base Platypus Community Open Day 2018. Image credit: Geoff Magee

For many Aboriginal people Cockatoo Island is considered to be sick and in need of cleansing through traditional ceremony and regeneration, through the revival of cultural practices and First Nations ways of caring for country.

Many people reflect on the native flora and fauna that once thrived on the island – the trees, native grasses and shrubs, the fish and bird life. A common hope amongst interviewees is to see the island revegetated to help to bring it back to health.

Aunty Frances Bodkin, a Dharawal Knowledge holder and descendent of the Bidiagal people, has intimate knowledge of the specific plants, trees and grasses once found there and feels passionate about reinstating these “not as garden beds, but in their natural ways”. She also has knowledge of native grasses that would assist in the killing and removal of some of the introduced grass species and weeds now found on the island.

Commonly questions were raised about contamination of the island due to modern developments and military uses, and whether an appropriate contamination survey had been undertaken. In addition to this many people are keen to see appropriate archaeological and anthropological studies conducted on the island which should be led by Aboriginal consultants.

One interviewee suggested reverting back to traditional recognition of seasons and calendars, and many suggested the implementation of eco-sustainable infrastructure including solar panels, water management systems and waste management systems.

Another interviewee suggested investigating Food Ladder (foodladder.org) as an option for growing and cultivating native foods on the island.



● BRINGING CULTURE TO LIFE

“We don’t want a four wall, two-story monolith that just has our artworks in it.” – First Nations interviewee

Whilst the island boasts a long and proud First Nations history, interviewees also reflected on the seemingly blank canvas from which to build and the opportunities that this offers. The First Nations community is passionate about unpacking the history of Cockatoo Island both pre and post colonisation, and ensuring that this is reflected in future designs, plans and developments.

Some interviewees reflected on the impact of simple gestures like flying the Aboriginal flag, while others are keen to see permanent public art, wayfinding signage in language and cultural event spaces such as a bunggul ground, an open air education space (similar to what can be found in Gulkula, North East Arnhem Land) and fire pits.

Perhaps the simplest suggestion shared by interviewees, and one which could be easily implemented but with high impact is to revert to the use of the island’s traditional name Wareamah. This is a simple gesture and one which allows both Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples to protect and sustain the local language and culture.

Other suggestions for how culture can be interpreted and brought to life on the island include:

- “Cultural interpretations whatever they end up being, need to reflect Gadigal culture”.

- “Include signage in Aboriginal words and place names on the island”.
- “Host healing workshops and wellbeing programs focused on the social and emotional wellbeing of people”.
- “Keep the current built environment – it’s part of the history (referring to remnants of the Tent Embassy)”.
- “Build an Aboriginal cultural centre”.
- “Incorporate artworks that identify this as an Aboriginal place”.
- “Consider creating a memorial – remembering of the plants and animals, the thousands of people who died of small pox in the first 3-4 years of the colony, a place you go to think about the Aboriginal history of this place”.
- “Host Aboriginal events such as a NAIDOC Ball or Indigenous festival on the island”.
- “Install permanent Aboriginal public art on the island”.

“The story is nearly gone, but we should hold onto the shards of what we have.” – First Nations interviewee



● COMMERCIAL AND ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES

“Open the island up and have it more grounded authentically with cultural knowledge that could provide opportunities for Indigenous employment through talks, tours and culture.”

– First Nations interviewee

Commercial and economic opportunities on the island are considered important by all stakeholders and suggestions ranged from tourism opportunities and cultural education through to events and accommodation. All interviewees were clear that these opportunities should not be mutually exclusive from the cultural significance and stories of the island, and in fact that these should be developed and informed by the First Nations stories and cultural ways of being, doing and knowing.

The majority of stakeholders made mention that any commercial and economic developments on the island should be eco-friendly and environmentally sustainable, and most people were not keen to see the island over-developed. In fact, a few interviewees stated that tourism and other commercial opportunities on the island should come only after the community has been afforded the opportunity to reconnect with the space to heal it.

Shane Phillips, CEO of Tribal Warrior Association expressed a desire to have access to wharves for their maritime tourism business, and to have access to a commercial lease on one of the existing warehouses for high end tourism opportunities and events. He reflects that Sydney Harbour event spaces are limited, and Tribal Warrior would be keen to access space on the island.

Wesley Enoch, Sydney Festival Director shared some of the challenges that his team have encountered in transporting people to and from the island for large events. He views the island as a special destination for contemporary uses, but the current infrastructure does not support large events and large crowds. He advised that a big investment is required to upgrade the island to house such events into the future. In its current state the island is better for smaller events that have no fixed time of arrival or departure (e.g. art exhibitions).

Wesley also shared more creative aspirations with us regarding potential commercial uses of the island including the possibility of building an underwater restaurant to educate people about the ocean life around the island, building a reverse sky scraper beneath the water, developing a sustainable resort with underwater and underground accommodation – leaving space for revegetation and regeneration above ground. He also spoke about the recent political history associated with the island and how this has potential to inform the narrative. In light of recent discussions around truth telling and Makarrata he suggested that perhaps the island could be called ‘Sovereignty Island’ and become the “seat of sovereignty for Sydney”. A place where truth telling can happen, the home of Makarrata. A place where land councils, Aboriginal peak bodies and arts and cultural organisations could be housed together.



“Avoid making this place a living museum. Provide a space to let our two worlds gently meet whilst letting Aboriginal voices lead.”
– First Nations interviewee

Other commercial and economic opportunities suggested by interviewees included the following:

- “Provide commercial leases for Aboriginal businesses including tourism operators such as Tribal Warrior, artists, cultural knowledge holders, and other goods and services including facilities management, security, transport and accommodation providers”.
- “Host events like Garma festival, but with an international focus and a focus on sustainability and the health of the country”.
- “Provide opportunities for Indigenous employment on the island through tourism and sharing of culture”.
- “Make the island affordable and accessible to visit by Aboriginal community members”.
- “There is a real opportunity for eco-sustainable cultural tourism and accommodation”.
- “Infrastructure needs to be strengthened to allow for large scale events on the island, in particular the wharves need to be rebuilt to accommodate larger vessels and more people”.
- “Camping and accommodation should be managed by Aboriginal women”.

“People are looking for a different type of tourism – well beyond an extractive relationship, they want a two- way exchange.”
– First Nations interviewee



RECOMMENDATIONS

“This was a women’s place – allow Aboriginal women to reclaim the place and give them long term stewardship over its governance.” – First Nations interviewee

The following recommendations are presented to the Harbour Trust for consideration as part of any ongoing review process, visioning or design work with regards to Cockatoo Island.

By implementing these recommendations, the Harbour Trust will stay true to their vision for reconciliation *for all Australians to recognize and celebrate the cultures and histories of First Nations Peoples as well as their continuing connections to the extraordinary foreshore sites under our stewardship.*

- In acknowledgement of the island as a sacred women's place include local Aboriginal women in the visioning, decision making and governance of the island going forward.
- Allow local Aboriginal women of Sydney the opportunity to cleanse and heal the country.
- Provide ongoing opportunities for First Nations stakeholders to engage in the conversation about the future of the island, and in particular follow up with those who were unable to contribute to this first conversation.
- Ensure appropriate archaeological and anthropological studies are done on the Island as a first step in any design phase/discussions. Allow enough time for this process to be planned and completed appropriately as these studies can take months to complete. Engaging a qualified consultancy is critical.

- Establish an Advisory group/reference group specific to the future of Cockatoo Island incorporating relevant and appropriate expertise including:

- Archaeology
- Anthropology
- Architecture
- Botany
- Cultural custodianship
- Tourism
- Women's leadership

- Develop and implement an Indigenous Economic Participation Plan outlining how the Harbour Trust will engage Indigenous-owned businesses in future visioning, design and planning for Cockatoo Island, including all of the services outlined above and others that may be appropriate or relevant to the process.
- Treat the First Nations narrative as the key/ overarching narrative of the island and build from and around this – incorporate First Nations ways of being, doing and knowing in all elements of the island.





two point co:

Two Point Co is a 100% Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander owned consultancy, specialising in Indigenous engagement through strategy design, facilitation, community consultation and social impact assessment. We believe in an inclusive Australia. One that provides the opportunity for everyone to participate in a thriving economy and to contribute to a bright future for our country and our children.

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land, sea and skies – Australia's First Peoples. We are grateful to those who have come before us and who have nurtured and protected Country for future generations, and we pay our respects to Elders past and present.

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B Participating stakeholders

Participating stakeholders

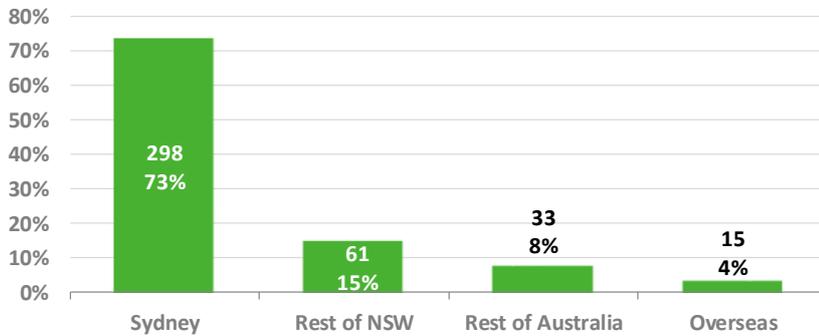
First Nations Community	See Appendix A Two Point Co. Report "The Future of Wareamah"
Harbour Trust Board	Josephine Cashman Joseph Carrozzi Jean Hay Sandra Hook Garth Callender Tim James Jessica Keen
Harbour Trust Staff	Approximately 50 members of the Harbour Trust team were involved in the consultation process including Executive Director Mary Darwell (NB names of individual team members have not been listed)
Harbour Trust Family	Community Advisory Committee members (General): Robert Crawford Sarah Dinning Kate Eccles Paul Forward Colleen Godsell Julie Goodsir Geoffrey Lambert Beth Lawsen Jill L'Estrange Prof. Roy Macleod Matthew Rafferty Robyn Lewis Rita Chowdhury John Trotman Stewart Sprott Kate Evers Malcolm Moir
Key stakeholder interviewees	Michael Rose – Committee for Sydney / Institute for Global Development UNSW Dr Tim Williams – Australasia Cities Leader, ARUP Lucy Turnbull – Greater Sydney Commission Matt Hingerty – Chairman, Business Events Council of Australia David Borger – Western Sydney Business Chamber John King – Former Board member Destination NSW and Tourism Australia Jess Scully – Sydney of Sydney/Curator Department of Premier of Cabinet

Stakeholder workshop participants	<p>Julie Turpin – Destination NSW</p> <p>Alan Edenborough – Sydney Maritime Museum</p> <p>Bronte Pollard – RSL</p> <p>Martyn Killion – NSW State Archives</p> <p>Juliana Do Vaue – Right Angle Studio</p> <p>Michael Rampe – Macquarie University</p> <p>Yan Tristant – Macquarie University</p> <p>Lee de Gail – National Parks and Wildlife Service</p> <p>Robyn Sam – National Parks and Wildlife Service</p> <p>Dr Caroline Butler-Bowdon – Department of Planning, Industry and Environment</p> <p>Eamon Waterford – Committee for Sydney</p> <p>Geoff Reinhardt – Royal Botanic Gardens and Domain Trust</p> <p>John Jeremy – Former Cockatoo Island worker / maritime historian</p> <p>Don Dinnie – Former Cockatoo Island resident / worker</p> <p>Garry Dinnie – Former Cockatoo Island resident</p> <p>Melanie Keith</p> <p>Augusta Supple – Create NSW</p> <p>Chris Tooher – Sydney Festival</p> <p>Nick Hollo – Artist / Former Deputy Executive Director, Harbour Trust</p> <p>Barbara Moore – Biennale of Sydney</p> <p>Euan Upston – Carriageworks</p>
Key stakeholder walk-shop participants	<p>An additional 38 members of the community were involved in the walk-shops (NB names of individual community members have not been listed)</p>

C Survey results

Participation

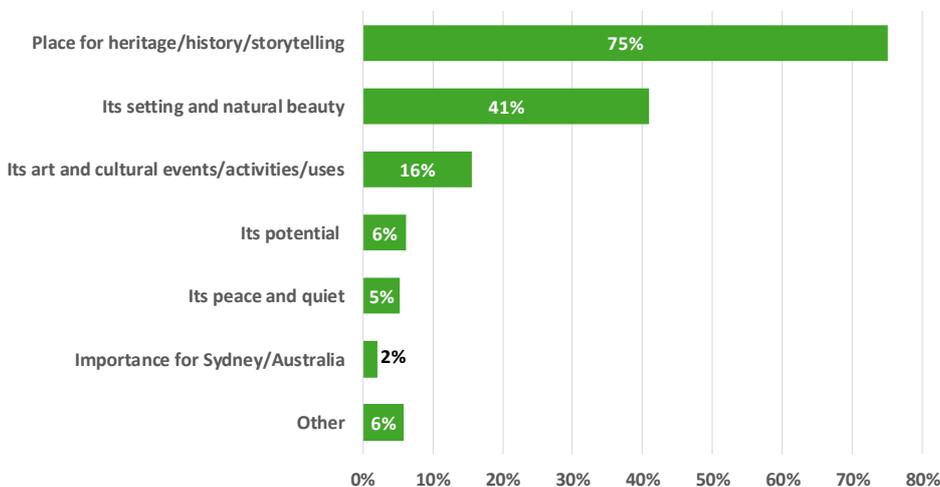
Profile of survey participants (n=407)



Just under three quarters of all survey participants (73 percent) were based in Sydney. Another 15 percent were from wider NSW and eight percent live in other parts of Australia. Four percent were based overseas.

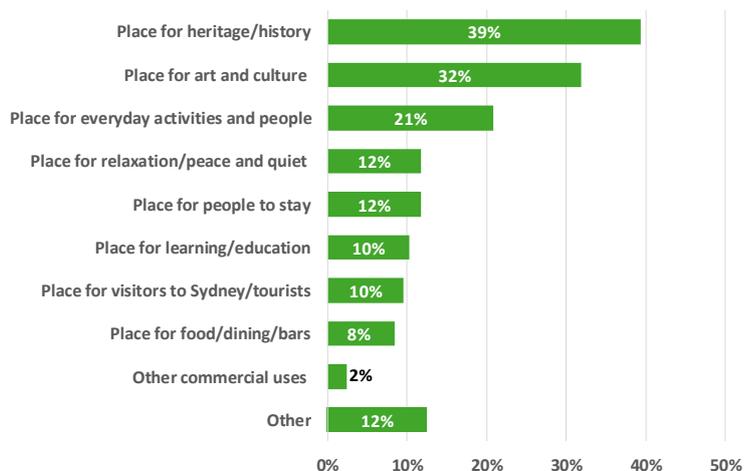
Survey results

1. What captures your imagination about Cockatoo Island? (n=417, multiple responses allowed)



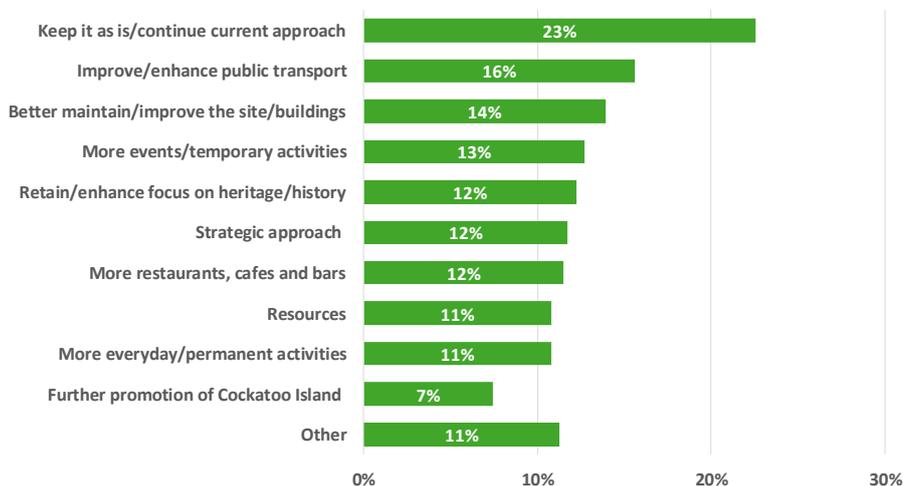
Three quarters of survey participants (75%) reported that what captures their imagination about Cockatoo Island is the heritage, history or stores of the place. Its harbour setting and natural beauty was nominated by four out of ten survey respondents (41%). One in eight survey respondents (16%) identified its art and cultural events and activities as central to its identity.

2. What role do you see Cockatoo Island playing in a growing city with so many varied interests and needs? (n=417, multiple responses allowed)



The community survey demonstrated the important ongoing role for Cockatoo Island as a place for telling the stories of our past – including First Nations Peoples stories and European stories (supported by 39% of all participants). Art and cultural activities were supported by just under a third of all survey participants (32%). More than one in five survey participants (21%) want Cockatoo Island to be a place for everyday activities and people. And around one in ten survey respondents thought the island should play a role as a place for relaxation, a place for people to stay, a place for learning and education, a place for visitors to Sydney, and a destination for eating and drinking. The survey results generally reflect feedback obtained through the workshops and interviews, with a strong focus on heritage and story telling.

3. What needs to happen to make this imagined future real? (n=417, multiple responses allowed)



Close to a quarter of all survey respondents (23%) expressed a desire for Cockatoo Island to be kept as is or managed in a way that is consistent with the Harbour Trust's current approach. People recognise there is a need for a strategic approach to planning and additional resources (23% combined) to support ongoing maintenance of Cockatoo Island's heritage items and infrastructure. Improved transport access, better maintained buildings and spaces, more events and increased activation, an improved heritage experience, more food and beverage options, and more everyday activities were all proposed by more than one in ten survey respondents.

D Submissions

Four submissions were received by Elton Consulting/Two Point Co. and the Harbour Trust as part of the consultation period.

Submission 1 highlighted the importance of considering Cockatoo Island within the broader context of Sydney Harbour. Specifically it recommended examining and managing the island's heritage precincts as part of the "collective of Sydney Harbour sites and their intrinsic linkage to the Harbour and our very founding origins and history" – each with its individual Conservation Management Plan. Relocation to Cockatoo Island of the Maritime Museum and Powerhouse Museum (Pyrmont) was proposed.

Submission 2 strongly supports any plans to further preserve the history of Cockatoo Island and promote its attractiveness and interest to the public. It recommends a series of photographs and information be installed around the island, the Power Station be developed as a museum and the Heavy Machine Shops be developed to exhibit heritage items. It states: "It is most important that the present generation and those following be made aware of the history, the importance of the Dockyard and the contribution it made to the development of Australia. The history of most of the shops built on the island are generally well known but little is understood of what was involved in ship construction, engineering, general production and service work carried out over more than 100 years in Australia's largest dockyard."

Submission 3 highlights the Trust's deep and serious consideration of Cockatoo Island over the years, but comments on the need to "highlight the Aboriginal origins of the island, and the importance of reintroducing a living Aboriginal presence and culture to the island." It identifies an opportunity to re-vegetate the northern apron as part of fulfilling the First Nations objectives of the Trust; and including an outdoor area for ceremonies, an undercover area for meetings and orations, and a First Nations cultural centre (including museum and gallery). It proposes use of the rest of the island in line with the Trust's vision – including: Eastern apron civic space, plus decontamination, repair and reuse of the old workshops; Southern apron maritime industry and education, adaptive reuse of buildings and new compatible buildings for hotels, restaurants etc; the Plateau circuit walk revealing the convict and maritime history of the island accompanied by workshops, accommodation, artists' studios. Aboriginal employment and learning opportunities were also proposed. Over development, over interpretation and access for cruise ships were opposed. It states: "Some places have a powerful effect on us, and none more so than Cockatoo Island... The island is thick with history, which is still visible and palpable. Most of its post white settlement history is dark – displacement of its original inhabitants, penitentiary establishments and cruel hard labour – but it also has positive histories, of education and industry. The place is like a museum of remnants, and these must be maintained and respected..."

Submission 4 is encapsulated within the First Nations feedback and Two Point Co. report.

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consulting