



SYDNEY HARBOUR FEDERATION TRUST STATEMENT OF INTENT 2024

The Sydney Harbour Federation Trust (Harbour Trust) welcomes the Statement of Expectations from the Hon Tanya Plibersek MP, Minister for the Environment and Water, dated 15 August 2023, and shares the Minister's vision “to protect more of what is precious, to repair more of what’s damaged and to manage nature and heritage better for the future.”

Located within what many consider to be the world’s most beautiful harbour, our nine sites are places of 20,000 years of First Nations connection and culture, intertwined with colonial and military history, a unique biodiversity and the continuing stories of Australians.

We commit to protect and share these values, and to be a leader in the responsible management of Sydney Harbour. We will do this through protecting, preserving and sharing our land and waters and, through these sites and our broader partnerships, contribute to the national story and the responsible care of Australia’s heritage.

Our vision is that our sites become extraordinary places that excite and inspire.

Introduction

The Harbour Trust was formally established in 2001 under the *Sydney Harbour Federation Trust Act 2001* (the Act), to protect, manage and care for approximately 145 hectares of former Defence and other Commonwealth lands located at nine sites around Sydney Harbour. The lands hold nationally and internationally significant cultural, natural, industrial and heritage value. Initially a temporary body with a sunset clause, but permanent since 2021, the purpose of the Harbour Trust is to welcome everyone to connect, celebrate and respect the natural, cultural and historical significance of our places as we foster their ongoing renewal and care.

The Harbour Trust is committed to fulfilling our statutory obligations under the Act and the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013* (the PGPA Act), as well as meeting the expectations of the Minister, the Parliament, and the Australian public. The Harbour Trust will continue to operate with transparency, integrity, accountability, and efficiency, and in accordance with the principles of best practice for Commonwealth agencies.

This Statement of Intent outlines how the Harbour Trust will respond to the Minister's expectations and priorities. It also sets out the Harbour Trust's strategic objectives and major initiatives for delivering its outcomes. The Statement of Intent will be integrated into the Harbour Trust's performance reporting processes, including our Corporate Plan and Annual Report.

Protection and preservation

The Harbour Trust recognises the importance of protecting and preserving the environmental and heritage values of our sites, all of which are of national and international significance. The Harbour Trust will:

- Preserve heritage while complying with established guidelines and legal requirements.
- Explore and create new opportunities to make our places open to the community, including through activation, storytelling, inclusive access, wayfinding and media.
- Bring forward investment options to the Commonwealth for executing master plans, improving public access, protecting natural and cultural values and achieving greater financial sustainability.
- Implement the first stage of the Middle Head/Gubbuh Gubbuh master plan to improve the public parklands and community benefit.
- Engage with the community and stakeholders to build partnerships for heritage management, fostering ownership, and connection.

Climate impacts on environmental sustainability

The Harbour Trust is committed to planning for long-term environmental sustainability and resilience, and to minimising our environmental footprint and greenhouse gas emissions. We will:

- Implement our Environmental Sustainability Strategy to achieve carbon neutrality by 2030.
- Integrate climate considerations into our planning to minimise our environmental footprint effectively, take a nature positive approach and increase resilience of our sites and their heritage values.
- Implement master plans incorporating sustainable design practices, including renewable energy and circular economy.
- Leverage a robust environmental commitment among our staff, volunteers, community and stakeholders, to drive sustainability initiatives.
- Engage in networks promoting environmental sustainability, collaborating for best practices and knowledge sharing.

Protect biodiversity and ecological habitats

The Harbour Trust values the biodiversity of our sites, which include bushland, grassland, wetland, coastal and marine ecosystems, and provide habitat for a variety of native flora and fauna, some of which are threatened or endangered. The Harbour Trust will:

- Monitor biodiversity at North Head Sanctuary to inform management actions and priorities, safeguarding the communities of plants, animals and other organisms.
- Manage and improve habitats for threatened species through best practices in pest control, fire management and conservation.
- Provide education on biodiversity and First Nations land management to increase knowledge and stewardship among visitors and educational groups.
- Collaborate with NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service, local councils, community groups, environmental organisations for a coordinated approach to the conservation of biodiversity and ecological habitats across Sydney Harbour.

The Harbour Trust acknowledges the importance of biodiversity as a key focus in our planning, especially in the implementation of the master plan for North Head Sanctuary, a site of high ecological value and significance, and home to the endangered Eastern Suburbs Banksia Scrub and endangered Long-nosed Bandicoot. The master plan reflects our commitment to conserving and celebrating the natural heritage of North Head Sanctuary.

Financial sustainability

The Harbour Trust, tasked with preserving nine sites of Sydney Harbour's historical, cultural, and natural treasures, has the responsibility to meet our legislative remit as defined by the Act. This includes managing and conserving former defence lands around Sydney Harbour so these areas are protected and maintained for public access and enjoyment, while safeguarding their environmental, cultural, and historical values. To date, the Harbour Trust has been unable to generate sufficient revenue to fully meet these responsibilities through commercial residential and activation activities alone. This has led to a critical backlog of maintenance, and lack of interpretation of our sites' heritage significance. Nonetheless, the Harbour Trust will continue to progress towards self-sufficiency, while fulfilling our statutory obligations and delivering on strategic outcomes. To support this transition, we will work with Government to develop plans for long-term financial sustainability, while fully meeting our responsibilities.

In 2022 the Harbour Trust completed for the first time a comprehensive audit of our built assets. The Strategic Asset Management Plan (SAMP) identified that a total of \$350 million over 10 years would be required simply to prevent further deterioration of our heritage-listed assets. However, while important, on its own the implementation of the SAMP through periodic injections of capital funds will not help the Harbour Trust become operationally self-sufficient or meet legislative requirements.

Master plans for Cockatoo Island/Wareamah and North Head Sanctuary have now been prepared, together with a master plan for the Middle Head/Gubbu Gubbu site. They provide a vision that with investment could transform these sites into thriving destinations, address the current organisational shortfalls, offer a lasting legacy for present and future generations, and contribute to the broader tapestry of world heritage.

The implementation of the master plans will require significant initial investment of government funds, yet they will transform our sites and expand the spaces available for community use. These master plans will draw larger and more diverse audiences by offering a broader range of experiences through the adaptive reuse of our heritage buildings and spaces. They aim to attract and retain tenants and partners who align with our vision and values, contributing to the vibrancy and diversity of our sites. Furthermore, these master plans provide a pathway to long-term financial sustainability by increasing and diversifying our revenue raising opportunities in appropriate ways.

Therefore, the Harbour Trust will:

- Bring to the Commonwealth Government investment options to optimise revenue potential and community benefit by implementing our master plans
- Seek specific listing for the Harbour Trust and the Sydney Harbour Foundation Ltd, so that together we can attract philanthropic support with donors able to make tax-deductible gifts, and explore complementary funding sources such as partnerships and grants.
- Continue to manage our financial resources and assets prudently and efficiently, in accordance with the PGPA Act and other relevant legislation and standards, with our financial performance transparent and accountable to the Commonwealth Government and the public.
- Conduct regulatory activities in line with the Regulator Performance RMG 128, adopting a risk-based proportionate approach to compliance and enforcement, aligned with the principles of effective and efficient government regulation.

Collaboration

The Harbour Trust recognises the value and importance of collaboration and engagement, including with First Nations communities, stakeholders and partners as well as the general public, to achieve our vision and purpose, and in the delivery of our master plans. The Harbour Trust will:

- Develop a First Nations Strategy, with Connecting to Country central to our work.
- Explore partnerships with the National Cultural Organisations, and NSW Agencies for co-location, co-delivery and co-funding of programs and services to deliver public benefit.
- Continue to engage community and stakeholders, incorporating feedback into our planning and services to maximise public benefit.
- Foster a whole of harbour approach to the sustainable management of Sydney Harbour, acting as a catalyst for collaborations that deliver tangible improvements to its heritage management, the health of the waters and foreshore, and bring new research and experiences to the community.

Conclusion

The Harbour Trust appreciates the Minister's guidance and direction, and is confident that we can meet the Minister's expectations and deliver on our statutory functions and strategic objectives with the support of the Government. The Harbour Trust will carry out our functions in a way that ensures we maintain an effective balance between the requirement to protect and conserve the environmental and heritage values of the land with sensitive adaptive reuse that contributes to maximising public access to Trust land.

The Harbour Trust looks forward to working closely with the Minister, the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water, and other relevant agencies and stakeholders, to achieve our vision and create a lasting legacy for the people of Australia.

Yours sincerely



Professor Tim Entwisle
Chair
Sydney Harbour Federation Trust