



SYDNEY HARBOUR FEDERATION TRUST STATEMENT OF INTENT 2026

Located within what many consider to be the world's most beautiful harbour, the Sydney Harbour Federation Trust (Harbour Trust) manages some of the world's most spectacular waterfront land. Our 9 sites are places of over 20,000 years of documented First Nations connection and culture as Sea Country, intertwined with colonial and military history, a unique biodiversity and the continuing stories of new Australians.

With over 2 million visits per year already, we are ambitious to continue their transformation and activation so that when our sites' full potential is unlocked, they become truly must-visit, must-experience destinations popular with Australians and international visitors alike, as well as vibrant precincts where people live and work.

Our vision is that our sites become extraordinary places that excite and inspire, and to complete their transformation from former military uses to places with lasting natural and cultural values. In doing this the Harbour Trust will work with the Australian Government and partners to achieve financial sustainability, so that it can protect and celebrate these unique parts of Australia and world's heritage in perpetuity.

The Harbour Trust welcomes the Statement of Expectations from Senator the Hon Murray Watt, Minister for the Environment and Water, dated 25 March 2026, and shares the Minister's vision 'to protect, repair and manage nature and heritage better for the future.'

We commit to protect and share all these values, and to be a leader in the responsible management of Sydney Harbour as a key Australian cultural institution, but uniquely one without walls. 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.

Introduction

The Harbour Trust operates under the *Sydney Harbour Federation Trust Act 2001* (the Act), and we protect, manage and care for approximately 145 hectares of former Defence and other Commonwealth lands located at 9 sites around Sydney Harbour. The lands hold nationally and internationally significant cultural, natural, industrial and heritage value. 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 Government 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 both in the short and longer-term as we continue to transform these extraordinary places and create value for our communities. 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 and being a leader in heritage conservation.
- Seek significant investment from the Government and partnerships for master plans execution at key sites, protecting their natural and cultural values while achieving full public access and stronger engagement, activation and financial sustainability.
- In the immediate term, deliver the first stage of the Middle Head / Gubbuh Gubbuh Master Plan to provide public parklands and destinations, with lasting community benefit.
- Engage with the community and stakeholders for input on 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:

- Complete implementation of our Emissions Reduction Plan to achieve net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2030.
- Integrate climate considerations into our planning to minimise our environmental footprint effectively and increase resilience of our sites and their heritage values.
- Implement all master plans incorporating sustainable design practices, including renewable energy and waste reduction.
- Foster a strong environmental commitment among our staff, volunteers, community and stakeholders, encouraging participation in 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 and assess biodiversity at North Head Sanctuary to inform management actions and priorities, safeguarding the community of plants and animals.

- Manage and improve habitats for threatened species through best practices in pest control, fire management and conservation.
- Provide education on biodiversity to increase knowledge and stewardship among visitors and educational groups.
- Collaborate with Indigenous ranger organisations, NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service, local councils, community groups and 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 bandicoots. The master plan reflects our commitment to conserving and celebrating the natural heritage of North Head Sanctuary, while creating more opportunities for public access, education and enjoyment.

Financial sustainability

The Harbour Trust, tasked with preserving 9 sites of Sydney Harbour's historical, cultural and natural treasures, faces financial barriers in delivering our vision due to insufficient revenue to fully adaptively reuse and operate our built heritage assets. This has led to an increasing, critical backlog of maintenance, more than 20% of our built assets empty and unable to be used, and a lack of interpretation of our sites' heritage significance.

The Harbour Trust has a goal to deliver on the full potential of all our sites and to play a larger part in the tourism, cultural and property ecosystems. By creating more community and commercial value and activation we aim to achieve long-term financial sustainability and self-sufficiency, while fulfilling our statutory obligations and delivering on our vision.

To create a firm foundation for investment, 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 reach its full potential or achieve financial sustainability.

Master plans for Cockatoo Island / Wareamah, North Head Sanctuary and Middle Head / Gubbuh Gubbuh have been prepared. The plans are the next step in transforming our sites, attracting more diverse audiences and offering more diverse experiences; completing adaptive reuse of our heritage buildings and spaces, and attracting and retaining tenants and partners that align with our vision and values, and that contribute to the vibrancy and diversity of our sites. They provide a comprehensive and evidence-driven route for us to deliver outstanding community outcomes and achieve financial sustainability, and we see that as just the start of what is possible.

Therefore, the Harbour Trust will:

- Work with the Government so that our sites can reach their full potential including exploring complementary funding sources such as partnerships, grants and philanthropy, as we implement our master plans that will conserve and improve the considerable cultural, natural and First Nations significance for current and future generations.



- Once legislated, use the newly agreed specific DGR listing for the Harbour Trust and the Sydney Harbour Foundation Ltd, to attract philanthropic support with donors now they can make tax-deductible gifts.
- 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 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:

- Complete implementation of our First Nations Strategy, with Connecting to Country central to our work.
- Continue to engage community and stakeholders, incorporating feedback into our planning and services to maximise public benefit.
- Explore the potential for co-location, co-delivery and co-funding of programs and services to deliver 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 to 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 engagement on Harbour 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 strive towards our ambitious vision and create a legacy for the people of Australia.

Professor Tim Entwisle AO
Chair
Sydney Harbour Federation Trust

20 August 2026