

MEDIA RELEASE

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COCKATOO ISLAND / WAREAMAH DRAFT MASTER PLAN OPEN FOR PUBLIC FEEDBACK

The Harbour Trust today announced the release of its draft master plan for Cockatoo Island / Wareamah, which outlines a vision to reactivate and transform the island into the vibrant heart of Western Sydney Harbour.

The draft master plan, which is on public exhibition until mid-December, proposes to reposition the island into one of Australia's premium visitor destinations, protecting the site's values of place as stated under its UNESCO World Heritage listing and acknowledging the traditional custodianship of First Nations peoples to the lands and waters of Wareamah.

The Harbour Trust's Executive Director Janet Carding said; 'We are delighted to present our draft master plan Cockatoo Island / Wareamah to the community for public consultation.'

'Cockatoo Island / Wareamah is the jewel of Sydney Harbour, and our vision is to reconnect the island and its precincts into the cultural fabric of Sydney.'

'We are looking to create an island for all, that will draw people from all over Sydney, Australia and the world. Our draft master plan will unearth the island's many layers of stories to allow visitors to learn about Australia's remarkable history.'

'Our aim is that by improving public access, and the range of experiences you can have, we can attract more people to this UNESCO World Heritage site and establish the island as a place of significant local and international visitation.'

The Cockatoo Island / Wareamah Draft Master Plan will include a new arrival point with a proposed additional ferry wharf and arrival square that will serve as the new welcoming point to the island. This will lead to a new visitor orientation and education hub in the former Convict Workshop.

Fitzroy Dock, a former dry dock, will be drained so visitors can see the scale of the engineering and human achievement in digging its vast volume out of solid rock, which was mainly done by convicts as part of their hard labour on the island. Activations and displays will also tell the story of Cockatoo Island as a thriving dockyard and ship building operations, and of the many apprentices and workers who once filled its workshops.

There will be an immersive evening program, using light, projection and sound to create a premium island experience and encouraging visitors to extend their stay into the evening and overnight.

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Marine ecology reefs will be created to support the rehabilitation and biodiversity of the waters and harbour around Cockatoo Island / Wareamah. The island's former slipways will be converted into a new harbour public swimming pool and allow for public access to the harbour for kayaks and other small, non-powered marine vessels.

The Harbour Trust's Acting Chair Alison Page said: 'From its deep time history as an ancient valley occupied by my ancestors to the backdrop to many of our country's greatest celebrations, Sydney Harbour has a special place in the hearts and minds of all Australians. It is an iconic part of our national identity. Cockatoo Island / Wareamah tells the story of Australia and its layered history, from the Dreaming, our convict history, our wartime efforts and our maritime industry that defines us all as saltwater people of this land. This history will come alive with many different activations across the island.'

'Central to the long-term plan for the site will be to develop, in consultation with traditional custodians, a deep sense of the spiritual and cultural significance of place to First Nations people and to care for the marine life and wildlife in the way our people have for millennia. Now is the opportunity to reconnect and better understand this magnificent location from the perspective of First Nations Australians.'

The popular campgrounds and cabins will be relocated to a more discrete and quiet location on the island's northwestern headland to create space for new parkland to improve public understanding of Caring for Country. Through partnerships, the aim is to support Indigenous cultural practice and business in canoe building and kayak hire on the island.

The Cockatoo Island / Wareamah Draft Master Plan is on public exhibition until **5pm Wednesday 13 December 2023 (AEDT)**, with the public welcome to visit www.harbourtrust.gov.au/cockatoo-island-consultation to provide online feedback. The Harbour Trust will review feedback received and publish a consultation outcomes report before finalising the master plan.

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ABOUT COCKATOO ISLAND / WAREAMAH

Located in the heart of Sydney Harbour, Cockatoo Island connects to the waterways and homelands of the Wallumedegal, Wangal, Cammeraygal and Gadigal peoples, who know it as Wareamah.

In 2010, parts of Cockatoo Island / Wareamah were inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List, together with 10 other historic sites that collectively form the Australian Convict Sites World Heritage Property. Remnant structures from the island's former penal establishment (1839–1869) offer a window into a period when criminal offenders were forcibly transported to Australia and put to work on the colony's building projects.

Cockatoo Island / Wareamah also has a remarkable history as a shipbuilding and ship repair facility, and contributed significantly to Australia's maritime affairs between 1857 and 1991, including during periods of global conflict. More than 80 colonial and industrial assets survive from this storied period.

Today, Cockatoo Island / Wareamah is a major contemporary arts and live performance precinct. It has served as the backdrop for major cultural events such as the Opera Australia's Carmen on Cockatoo Island, Biennale of Sydney and Sail GP as well as music performances from a variety of artists.

ABOUT THE HARBOUR TRUST

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

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

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

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