



# Rob Stokes MP

Minister for the Environment  
Minister for Heritage  
Minister for the Central Coast  
Assistant Minister for Planning

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## MEDIA RELEASE

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### FROM BENEATH THE FLOORBOARDS

Heritage Minister Rob Stokes has met with descendants of immigrant women who called Hyde Park Barracks home in the 1800s and left behind some 130,000 artefacts that were lost to them beneath the floorboards.

The Minister said it was not well known that the Hyde Park Barracks played an integral role in the history of Australian immigration, providing temporary shelter for around 40,000 female immigrants between 1848 and 1886.

“The women left behind thousands of items, some of which are currently in a display at the Barracks entitled *Female Immigration Depot*,” Mr Stokes said

“I am delighted to be meeting with descendants of the courageous young women who made the difficult decision to leave their homelands, many very young and alone, to take their chance for a new life in a land of opportunity.

“It is possible that over a million Australians are descended from the original 40,000 women who arrived during this time and called the immigration depot home – illustrating what an incredible contribution these women made in shaping our country.

“The women are long gone, but remnants of their simple belongings have survived, connecting us with the women and allowing us a glimpse into their lives and living conditions.

“Their stories have been pieced together from official records, family research, oral histories, photographs and archaeological artefacts.

“On display are a careful selection of some of the 130,000 items found by archaeologists beneath the floorboards of the barracks such as hair combs, letters, sewing items and jewelry.

“The exhibition also features a family album, inviting other descendants to share their story.”

On the eve of the exhibition launch, two of the direct descendants, Christine Bryan and Barbara Zammit have joined with the Minister to share the story of their relatives.

“The personal stories that Barbara and Christine tell of their great and great-great grandmothers respectively really brings this exhibition of artefacts to life,” Mr Stokes said.

“This exhibition provides a fascinating insight into our early colonial past and highlights the strength of character these women had and the often remarkable lives they led.

“We know there are hundreds of thousands of descendants of these women in the community and Sydney Living Museums is now calling on anyone whose ancestors stayed at the female Immigration Depot to visit the museum, see the new display and connect with their ancestors.”

**The exhibition *Female Immigration Depot 1848 – 1886* officially opens today.**

**Photos available** of Barbara Zammit and Christine Bryan in the Barracks where their great grandmothers once stayed. **Credit:** *Sydney Living Museums, Photograph © James Horan*