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MEDIA RELEASE

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NEW HOUSING FOR MANLY'S LITTLE PENGUINS

New custom-made nest boxes will provide additional housing for Sydney Harbour's little penguin colony in the Critical Habitat area at North Head, near Manly.

Environment Minister Rob Stokes today joined students from Beauty Point Public School in Sydney Harbour National Park, to replace the old plastic nesting boxes with new wooden boxes built and painted by the children.

"Manly's little penguin colony is the only mainland breeding colony in NSW. It was listed as an endangered population in 1997 and has been subject to one of the most intensive recovery programs in the country," Mr Stokes said.

"The new shelter will provide improved housing in the Critical Habitat area this breeding season, after excellent results last year."

NSW Premier and Manly MP Mike Baird said: "The birds breed at Manly but can be seen swimming all along the Harbour – penguins have been sighted as far down the Harbour as Balmain."

"Volunteer community penguin wardens provide public education about the population every night around Manly Wharf between May and February," Mr Baird said.

North Shore MP Jillian Skinner said the students are also helping with a beach clean-up to remove plastic and other debris washed up from the Harbour to ensure it doesn't harm the birds as they make their way up from the beach to their nests every night.

"The success of the recovery program is testament to the strong partnership involving the local community, Taronga Zoo, The Foundation for National Parks and Wildlife, Landcare Australia, Manly Council and the NSW Government," Mrs Skinner said.

National Parks and Wildlife Service ranger Melanie Tyas said the population is now stable after numbers plummeted dramatically until the 1980s.

"The 2013/14 monitoring report showed last season's numbers were high, with 70 breeding pairs, 174 eggs laid and 146 fledglings, compared to a five year average of 59 breeding pairs, 134 laid eggs and 112 fledglings," Ms Tyas said.

"The birds are increasingly nesting in the safety of the Critical Habitat area and national park, rather than urban areas where they are far more vulnerable.

In the declared Critical Habitat it is illegal to:

- Approach a penguin, disturb a nest box or take dogs into the area at any time; and
- Fish between sunset and sunrise between 1 July to 28 February.

For more information about Manly's endangered Little Penguin colony:

<http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/threatenedspeciesapp/profile.aspx?id=10321>