

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Goat Island is a place of National, State and local significance that contains natural and built heritage, natural and cultural landscapes, Aboriginal associations and a colonial and industrial legacy that has had significant impacts on the natural form of the island. A number of elements, especially those relating to the landscape features of the island and its early colonial history, are of exceptional significance. The range of outstanding elements from the colonial and maritime phases of use of the island separately and together contribute to its importance. This significance has been recognised in various heritage listings but the level of significance - particularly in relation to other comparable places in Australia - has not previously been recognised. Overall, the combination of elements and the very intact colonial features establish the island as one of the most significant early colonial sites in Australia.

This plan provides a comprehensive analysis and understanding of the many heritage and other values of Goat Island, compares the range of elements on the island and the island itself with comparable places, sets out the significance of the island as a whole and of each component part (element) of the island and provides policies on a broad scale down to specific policy recommendations.

The overall conclusion of this CMP is that Goat Island has the potential to become a focal point of Sydney Harbour National Park and offer experiences, interpretation opportunities and quiet enjoyment for visitors in a superb location with a fascinating history. Those elements of the island of exceptional significance, as well as the intrinsic values now associated with the island, should be conserved and protected for current and future generations of Australians to enjoy, appreciate, and gain insights into our past and our future.

Goat Island is one of the eight remaining islands of the fourteen islands that existed in Sydney Harbour in 1788. The island, located 1.2 km west of the Sydney Harbour Bridge, in the inner harbour, at the confluence of Port Jackson, Darling Harbour, and the Parramatta River, forms an outstanding visual landscape, being one of several prominent Sydney Harbour islands that contribute to the overall beauty and pattern of the harbour, and forms part of the visual backdrop of the city. The island is also viewed largely as a vegetated headland from the many foreshore areas surrounding it.

Prior to 1831, there is evidence that Goat Island had a vegetation profile typical of the naturally vegetated foreshore areas on the harbour, including Sydney Sandstone Gully Forest and Coastal Sandstone Heath. As a result of the major phases of European intervention after 1831, the natural environment of the island has been progressively modified. Today the island comprises a natural land area of approximately 5.4 hectares, with a further 1.1 hectares of landfill and wharfage built over areas originally below high tide level. The island is notable for its steep cliffs, central ridge line, rocky shoreline, remnant sandstone outcrops and indigenous vegetation, which are regarded as being of exceptional significance, as well as areas of dense vegetation regrowth.

Prior to European use, Goat Island was occupied by Aboriginal people, especially the Wangal people (who inhabited the area on the southern side of Sydney Harbour). Goat Island was known to the Wangal people as 'Memel' (various spellings known), with various meanings attributed associated with eyes or vision. Bennelong, who is believed to have been a Wangal man, claimed a special family relationship with Goat Island and was often seen with his wife Barangaroo on the island. The only remaining confirmed evidence of Aboriginal use of Goat Island is a single remnant shell midden. It is likely that Aboriginal sites were affected by the extensive quarrying, benching and construction that occurred over much of the island after 1831.

The first European use of Goat Island in 1831 was quarrying for dimension sandstone for the use of building construction in Sydney. Goat Island was further developed in 1833 when construction commenced on a military gunpowder magazine complex using convict labour. The Powder Magazine complex was located on the southern part of the island, to isolate it

from the infant settlement. The island's central location with commanding views up and down the harbour, and into Darling Harbour, resulted in the first purpose-built Water Police Station being constructed on the eastern part of the island in 1838. This was later reinforced by the siting of the Harbour Master's residence with the same views and aspect as the Water Police Station, but at a higher elevation. The Harbour Master's residence is a statement of the importance and status of the Sydney Harbour Trust in the development of the port of Sydney.

The quarrying and benching required to construct the magazine complex, along with the work to separate the Water Police Precinct through the excavation of Barney's Cut, were a major intervention into the natural form of the island and significant early convict-built public works. The magazine complex, comprising the magazine and barracks area, is one of the finest and most intact groups of early colonial buildings and structures in the State and Nation.

On its formation in 1901 for the management of the Port of Sydney, the Sydney Harbour Trust established its headquarters on Goat Island. The Trust established facilities on the island including the Harbour Masters Residence, fire fighting and dredging services, timber wharves, and in 1925 a shipyard to repair its vessels and floating plant, which encompassed the colonial magazine complex. By 1936 the Maritime Services Board (MSB) had replaced the Sydney Harbour Trust, and Goat Island continued to be an operational headquarters for its harbour based operations. Around 1942 most of the wharves were rebuilt, some extended, and new wharves constructed, radically altering the appearance of the island's edges. This was the major phase of wharf building. The island reached its peak use in the 1950s and early 1960s. However, by the late 1980s Goat Island was considered redundant to MSB needs and, in recognition of its heritage significance, was subsequently transferred to the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service and incorporated into Sydney Harbour National Park in 1995.

The overlay of the later shipyard and maritime uses over large parts of the island is one of the more complex issues, as the shipyard, with its own high level of significance and ongoing use, has had a major and arguably adverse impact on the colonial magazine complex. Goat Island is a place that requires careful balancing and consideration of heritage values in planning for the future as a number of locations of high heritage significance adversely affect places of exceptional heritage significance. For the heritage potential of the island to be optimised, changes will need to be made that remove some significant elements in order to enable the recovery of lost heritage values of exceptional or high significance.

The landscape heritage of Goat Island is also complex, with its contrast between the pre-1831 form of the island and the drastic early colonial and maritime period changes to the landform. The policy approach suggested is to work towards the overall presentation of the island, particularly when viewed from beyond the island, as a naturally vegetated form, while retaining specific cultural landscape features, in particular significant view lines from the island and the evidence of early colonial landscape modification. The policy anticipates that to recover both landscape and other heritage values, particularly those related to the Water Police Station and northern end of the island, there could be substantial change to the edge of the island where it has previously been modified, to recover significance.

The removal of wharves in several locations is already taking place to address the problem of failing structures, resulting in the recovery of some of the 'natural' edge of the island. Issues of eroding reclaimed shorelines, the potential for rising sea levels to cover much of the reclaimed area around the northern tip of the island, and the potential to recover lost significance in relation to the presentation of colonial development of the island, provide long-term policy opportunities to remove some of the less significant and visually intrusive areas of the island edge.

Goat Island has been utilised in relative isolation - for much of its history with restrictions on public access - however as part of the Sydney Harbour National Park, the island will provide for public access but not until the natural and heritage values of the place are properly protected and promoted. The policies look at uses that could take place to supplement the principal public use of the island, but all future uses must support the principal role of the island as part of Sydney Harbour National Park.

Implicit in the plan are requirements to undertake ongoing conservation and maintenance works to all aspects of the island but more obviously to the key elements of national and state significance. It is recognised that funding will be required to undertake all of the required works, consequently staging, priorities and planned programs of work are set out to ensure that the most important works take place as a priority but that no aspects of the place are overlooked.

Similarly the plan considers the overall management of the island in terms of safety, provision of amenities, equitable access and a range of other operational matters. Policies are set out to allow these works to be progressively undertaken in response to need, risk and staging so that public access to the island can be achieved as quickly as possible.

The archaeological resource of the island is also considered in detail and an outcome of the study has been the discovery of a range of new sites, several of considerable interest, relating to the colonial development of the island. An approach of low intervention and minimal disturbance is recommended for most of the potential archaeological resource of the island.

A key aspect of understanding this plan is to focus on the broad policy for the island rather than detailed policy. An outcome of this plan will be the development and adoption of a master plan to establish uses and works to the island. When this has been determined the detailed policies can be applied to those aspects of the master plan that are proceeding. There are many specific policies for individual items or areas that will apply only if those items or areas are retained or used.

A key issue that has arisen during the preparation of this plan is the current value of the island for its ability to provide for quiet enjoyment. This is a value that contrasts with much of its history where incarceration, quarrying, convict labour, industrial and maritime uses with a large workforce and a considerable resident population did not provide for any form of quiet enjoyment. It is also a value that can be an important element of Goat Island's worth as a community asset and a tourism destination, and is keeping with its natural heritage and Aboriginal history, while contrasting with its post 1830 history.

The current status of the island as part of the Sydney Harbour National Park has introduced new concepts that look to bring together its history, the significant remaining heritage and the significant landscape with its major activity or use being part of the Sydney Harbour National Park. This requires new initiatives such as public access, interpretation and conservation to be primary and key activities. These are considered in detail in the policy sections of this plan.