Managing Redundant Defence Sites – The Experience of the Sydney Harbour Federation Trust

Geoff Bailey, Executive Director, Sydney Harbour Federation Trust

SUMMARY: This paper describes the role and the experience of the Sydney Harbour Federation Trust in rehabilitating, conserving and finding new uses for eight sites around Sydney Harbour with the intention of opening them up to the general public and enriching the cultural life of the community. As former Defence sites, they have been closed off from the public for over a century and a half.

1. INTRODUCTION
The Sydney Harbour Federation Trust (the Trust) was established in 2001 by the Australian Government to plan and manage seven former Defence sites around Sydney Harbour. The objectives of the Trust are to conserve and enhance the sites’ natural and cultural heritage, clean up contaminated areas, maximise public access and weave these formerly closed-off sites back into the life of the community.

These sites occupy only a small part of the harbour, but they are representative of many parts and stages of the development of the Harbour. They range from former fortification systems and associated barracks flanking the entry to the harbour including:

- A former Artillery school on the crown of North Head where coastal sand dune heath sits atop a shear sided sandstone headland overlooking the entry to the harbour
- A string of former army bases along the plateau of Middle Head, set within the bushland above the rocky escarpment, behind the fortifications looking down at the shipping channels in the harbour
- A former Officers’ residence and Marine Biology Research Station on the southern shore at a sandy beach,
- Macquarie Lighthouse on the escarpment guiding ships to the harbour entry and providing a landmark viewed from far and wide around the harbour,

and to former maritime industrial sites further within the harbour:

- Cockatoo Island, an 18 hectare industrial complex comprising dry docks, vast halls of industry and a former convict gaol in a commanding position at the junction of three waterways
- Woolwich Dock, - a dry dock carved dramatically into the headland and associated ship repair sheds and yards on reclaimed lands enveloping the bushland Knoll, and
- Snapper Island, a small collection of sheds on a rocky outcrop near Cockatoo Island, used for naval cadet training
- HMAS Platypus, the former Submarine base at Neutral Bay is also being transferred to the Trust

Although each of the sites embody important and interesting heritage values in their own right, their significance derives in large part from their relationship to the harbour. The Trust has therefore taken the view that planning these sites should be based on an understanding of the harbour as a whole and has recently produced a comprehensive plan embracing all of its sites.

The Trust is in the unusual position of being the owner, land manager and planning agency; and unlike almost any other major planning/development initiative, there is no pre-determined development proposed. The Trust is therefore taking the approach that the future of these lands should be drawn from their heritage values and intrinsic qualities that are considered to be of most benefit to the community now and into the future.

This paper covers how the Trust is developing this approach and how this is reflected in –

- Public programs of open days, events, educational tours and cultural activities to engage a broader section of the community,
- Community consultation about the issues, values and planning outcomes associated with each site and its relationship to the harbour,
- The development of plans that provide a framework for staged implementation over the life of the Trust,
- The prioritisation and implementation of capital works ranging from repairs and conservation works, provision of service infrastructure and public access to meet today’s standards,
• The process of leasing to find the best fit in terms of the sites’ values and the sustainability of the Trust’s ongoing operations.

Although all of the sites are discussed, Cockatoo Island is used primarily as the case study and tour notes on the island are attached as an Appendix.

Figure 1. Cockatoo Island from the air

2. AN OPPORTUNITY TO INCREASE OUR UNDERSTANDING OF THE HARBOUR

Sydney Harbour is well known throughout the world for its beauty, but the harbour and the natural and cultural forces that have shaped it remain relatively unknown – even amongst Sydneysiders.

The underlying pattern of development around the Harbour is given by its geological and natural form and the earliest, common sense human response to it. For the first Europeans who occupied this land, it was a strange and wondrous place. A large, flooded river valley with its high, rocky escarpments on the coast and low, gently rounded hillsides inland – it all seemed back the front. All this, the result of millions of years of sandstone sediments, layered, warped, uplifted and eroded by streams and then flooded only 20 – 6,000 years ago at the end of the last ice age, that moved the shoreline approximately 30 kilometres inland to the next major fault line along the edge of this ancient, dry continent.

This has resulted in the first line of the natural defences of the city provided by shear sandstone cliffs. The tilted sandstone layers, the curvature of the valley and the succession of headlands and bays have provided a harbour with successive points of surveillance – the second line of defence. Due to the tilt in the sandstone layers, the land slopes gently to the southern shores of the harbour, but on the north, the shoreline is steep, and stepped with an undulating plateau along the ridge line.

Perfect places to see and not be seen, to fire onto intruders without them being able to fire back so high, nor indeed to clearly see where the shots are coming from. Hence, many of the early fortifications were located with some difficulty on the north of the harbour, remote from the first settlement of the colony which found shelter and fresh water further within the harbour, in a cove on the southern shore.

Hence the northern shores of the outer harbour were reserved or resumed for defensive purposes while the southern shores were developed. These northern shores and green headlands give Sydney its seemingly natural setting.

The value of such a defensible base in a newly claimed colony is perhaps undervalued if one only considers the role of Sydney as a convict prison. But the growing pace of exploration and trade in the Pacific by the European powers, and the recent loss of the American colony by Britain have given this new possession far greater strategic importance. The new colony in Sydney provided a defensible base to re-stock, repair or service the merchant and naval fleet.

Deep within the harbour, remote from any potential intruders, the colony created wharves, workshops, and naval shipbuilding and repair yards. These industries were carved into the sandstone headlands at the points taking advantage of the deep water access providing the flat working areas of reclaimed land and stone for many of Sydney’s civic buildings. Each industrial or maritime precinct grew around a core working area with an adjoining residential area for its workers, all encircled by the bushland. – So Sydney developed an agglomeration of waterfront villages, connected by water and a system of roads along each peninsula.

Figure 2. Woolwich Dock: a Maritime village: typical of Sydney’s industrial waterfront

While this practical adaptation of the landform did not evolve through conscious consideration of the beauty of
the harbour, it was in small, incremental steps and a finely grained scale that mirrored, rather than overwhelmed the landscape.

The tradition of opportunistically adapting and carving out the land to suit changing requirements continued. In the next round of technological changes, for example, rows of wharves became vast paved areas for shipping containers and the traffic along the narrow peninsular roads became increasingly congested while waterborne local transport became less common.

But as the redundant goods handling, defence and naval industrial sites were offered for sale since the 1980’s for redevelopmentsthat threaten to leave no trace or sense of their past, dashing hopes that were championed by community groups and earlier governments to create continuous public places and waterfront access, controversy escalated. As residential development replaces and erases the traces of many former maritime industries, the remaining sites, including those of the Trust gain in their strategic importance, to provide the diversity needed by a vibrant city on the water. Sydney Trust sites potentially hold the key to enriching the cultural life of Sydney, as a great maritime city.

A relatively young city, in a country inhabited by people with different cultures and traditions from all over the world, the lifestyle and culture is evolving in response to an unfamiliar land and climate. Life in the public realm was, until recently, limited within a largely suburban city. Civil places, places to hold ceremonies, outdoor dining, promenading, places for festivals and large social gatherings are now in greater demand. The Trust sites potentially hold the key to enriching the cultural life of Sydney, as a great maritime city.

2.1 The role of the Sydney Harbour Federation Trust

It is in this context that the Sydney Harbour Federation Trust was established by the Commonwealth Government, in response to community concern about the further loss of public land around the harbour and the type of development that would ensue.

The establishment of the Trust is one of a number of approaches responding to the most recent, dramatic stage in our evolving culture world-wide: – the technological changes that have made our previous defence, transport, industrial and goods handling sites redundant. Our challenge is to find the most appropriate way to bring these sites back into the life of the community in a meaningful way.

3. THE CONSULTATION AND PLANNING PROCESS

3.1 The role of Consultation

The high level of interest and concern by many community groups about the fate of harbour front sites was one of the major reasons for the establishment of the Trust by the Commonwealth. Consultation with the community was therefore one of the initial tasks undertaken by the Interim Trust - before the finalisation of the legislation which established the Trust.

Many in the community had been involved in issues relating to these former Defence sites. It was therefore decided that instead of the usual procedure of presentation to the public and seeking feedback, we should commence the planning and consultation process by organising briefing sessions where the key community stakeholders presented their views to the Interim Trust staff and Board members. Successive meetings were held site by site and then consultative committees were formed, as foreshadowed by the draft Act. These committees were, and still are used as reference groups that provided input both about the plans as well as the process of consultation.

The Trust planners, in turn, responded to the input from the community members and with additional research, site investigation and analysis, produced “Reflections on a Maritime City, an appreciation of the Trust lands on Sydney harbour”, and an exhibition of planning ideas called “Sites Unseen”, at Customs House - in a central, accessible location. The purpose was to engage the community in informed debate, which required an atmosphere where the inherent suspicion and mistrust of government agencies was dispelled and replaced by mutual respect. This way, important issues could be debated – such as the question of retaining, and using buildings of seemingly lower heritage value – Is heritage only that which is “attractive”? Can’t “ugly” saw-tooth roofed sheds be demolished and replaced by parkland?

The commonly held view that the Trust should not lease commercially, - ie there should only be community uses was also a hot issue. Our response – that we should find the use that was the best fit to the heritage values, the location, the setting, the character of the place, the local planning context – and sometimes, such as with maritime activity – that might well be commercial.

The consultation mainly focused (and focuses) on issues and values regarding each site and the harbour as a whole. Opening up the sites for public visitation therefore became a high priority: Public access was not merely an end product of the planning process, it needed to be a part of it, so that the people could contribute ideas in a meaningful way. Although many people knew the localities, the sites were off limits, unknown and mysterious to most.
It also became apparent, that the return of these lands to the life of the community was not a clean slate “make-over”. It needed a gradual process of understanding the sites and what they contained. Repair, remediation, and public access had to be provided to meet contemporary standards, while keeping the unusual and idiosyncratic character of each area – gentle intervention, and yet a dramatic impact on the cultural life of the city. This had to be a gradual process. So “the Plan” had to be a framework to guide implementation in stages.

3.2 The Planning Approach

The Trust is in the unusual position of being the owner, land manager and planning agency. It therefore has greater control and flexibility to implement the plan than what is usually the case in Australia. It has a vested interest in the success of the plan and can align its business goals with its social and environmental goals, unlike the more common adversarial relationship between a planning agency and the property developers (and between planning agencies and local communities). Unlike almost any other major planning/development initiative, there is no predetermined development proposed where the primary objectives of the planning is to make the new proposal fit in and minimise adverse impacts.

Unlike many other redevelopments, where only the buildings with significant heritage value are retained within a new development for a new purpose, the Trust has chosen to keep many of the buildings and structures that may have been thought to have little heritage value in past studies. All of the buildings and structures represent human effort and may possess opportunities for people to come and use the sites and appreciate the setting in a manner that would otherwise not be possible. Some of these buildings lend themselves to alteration in a manner that may be inappropriate to more significant heritage items. The relationship between the buildings, - their layout, the access network, and their relationship to the context that helps to explain their purpose and helps to enrich our understanding of our city on the harbour.

The military/institutional settlement pattern and the large industrial spaces that characterise the Trust lands stand in contrast to the prevailing suburban pattern, providing opportunities for cultural, civic and entertainment places by the harbour, that are scarce in Sydney.

Beyond simply restoring the heritage items and adapting to potentially a wide range of unrelated uses, the Trust has taken the view that the future of these lands should be drawn from their heritage values and intrinsic qualities that are considered to be of most benefit to the community now and into the future. It is, as if the sites are allowed to call forth their future use and form.

For example, North Head, a dramatic landform commanding the entry to the harbour, is a tied island with relatively intact and rare flora and fauna. It lends itself to being managed as some form of ecological Sanctuary.

At Middle Head, the fortifications dotted along key vantage points of the escarpment provide an ever-changing sequence of broad vistas and framed views, like a journey through a vast Chinese garden. The associated barracks form a sequence of village like clusters. The land filling, clearing and alteration in drainage brought about by the construction of these bases above the “natural” slopes of the harbour requires rehabilitation, regeneration and expansion of the bushland to conserve and enhance indigenous habitat. The sheltering cove used formerly by the sub mariners’ mining depot is flushed by the incoming tide, rich in marine life including sea horses – just 6 kilometres from the city centre. It is an ideal place for smaller boats, kayaks, snorkelling and scuba diving that would suit the scale of the fine 19th century workshops and terraces.

Cockatoo Island was first developed as a convict gaol in the 1830’s, then using convict labour, the first ship yards and workshops were constructed and expanded dramatically in the first half of the 20th century. It is a place of maritime industrial achievement and provides an opportunity for on-going maritime industry for the increasing numbers of recreational tourist vessels, coupled with cultural and recreational activities that show case our maritime heritage.

The development of these ideas poses a number of interesting dilemmas: How should the World War II additions to the fine, convict workshops and prison on Cockatoo Island be handled?
How can the requirements to preserve the integrity of the fortifications, with clear sight lines be reconciled with bush regeneration and requirements for natural habitat?
How can we maintain the character of military and industrial institutions while opening them up to the general public as new, civic places? (It is the heritage and character of these sites that give them their unique character, if they are made too soft and comfortable, they may become rather ordinary).

These and many other central ideas are being developed in the detailed planning, the design for public places, the leasing process for adaptive re-use and cultural event programmes. All of these streams of activity conducted by the Trust work together to facilitate the interpretation of the various strands of the sites’ heritage and to gain a finer appreciation of this maritime city.

3. THE ROLE OF EVENTS AND OPEN DAYS
Cultural, educational and recreational events are an integral part of opening up the sites, engaging a broader section of the community than the ones that usually participate in planning consultation. They can help to show-case the sites, or particular features or themes and help to bring them into the everyday life of the community. The big band day at North Head, opened the site up, brought life to the grand parade ground, and it resonated with the 30’s military character of the former Artillery School.

The Cockatoo Island Festival worked with the village-like grouping of sheds and warehouses on the hill complimented by the grand hall of the Turbine Shop, to provide diversity in a way that enabled people to explore the myriad spaces brought by the island’s piecemeal development from convict gaol to industrial shipyard. It also served to demonstrate that the seemingly difficult transport to and from an island was resolvable.

One cannot rely solely on large scale events and so the Trust has developed a comprehensive programme of open days, tours and facilities for school group visits.

4. REMEDIATION AND CAPITAL WORKS
One of the major issues faced by the Trust is that the sites had been seen to be redundant for some time. Consequently, the usual maintenance regime had been gradually wound down. Many of the buildings and services were therefore in need of substantial repair. Furthermore, they were not built to contemporary standards with public access and a broad range of uses in mind. Contaminated areas from the decades, or in some cases, over a century and a half of industrial activity also have to be remediated. All of this is being carried out in a staged program, subsequent to the development of more detailed management plans, gradually building on the areas that we have opened up first. We start with a pathway and gateway (eg the path from Chowder Bay to Georges Heights), flanked by weed clearing and bush regeneration after site remediation (eg at Lower Georges Heights in Mosman, and zone by zone on Cockatoo Island). We repair or provide services infrastructure, roads and wharves (eg the high voltage ring main at Cockatoo Island, repairs to the Parramatta Wharf, road and stormwater improvements at George Heights and Chowder Bay). We repair, or indeed restore some buildings in readiness for leasing (eg the former 30 Terminal base at Lower Georges Heights), which will add diversity and interest for the passing public (eg the artist precinct at Lower Georges Heights).

All of this is incremental. Because we are not starting from a clean slate, each site or precinct has to be assessed in its own terms to achieve a considered balance between the heritage values, accessibility, quality or standard of servicing and finishes etc.

5. SEEKING NEW USES
Adaptive re-use is necessary to enable these heritage places to be rehabilitated, maintained and to become a
part of the community in meaningful ways. The leasing process for each site seeks to identify tenants that:

- are consistent with the Trust’s plans and objectives (such as heritage, public access and environmental considerations)
- create a range of uses and activities that individually and collectively help people to understand, appreciate and enjoy the sites and the harbour,
- generate revenue for the Trust’s work.

Generally, buildings are being leased at market rent, but we offer some buildings for community users at subsidised rent where their objectives and activities help to further the Trust’s objectives.

The process has to be transparent, accountable, fair and offer value for money. It is usually a three stage process. The first is a call for Expressions of Interest, to help promote awareness about the site, enable the Trust to put together a compatible mix of mutually supportive uses as well as shortlist viable contenders.

The next step is a request for proposals from the shortlisted applicants, and finally, negotiations with preferred tenderers.

**6. CONCLUSION**

The Trust is in the unusual position of planning, rehabilitating and managing the sites, and to do so in a manner that enriches peoples’ experience of the harbour and in particular, the former Defence sites. The heritage of these sites enables us to achieve a broader understanding of how this city evolved through natural processes and the cultural responses to that setting. The success of this endeavour relies on the co-ordination, and indeed the integration of

- the planning,
- the consultation,
- the communications, publications, events and tours
- the staged implementation of capital works improvements,
- the leasing for adaptive re-use, and
- the estate management of each site

![Figure 5. Cockatoo Island at its heyday, 1943](image-url)

**6. APPENDIX**

Cockatoo Island Tour notes (attached)
Appendix

Engineering Heritage Conference

Notes for the Cockatoo Island Tour 22 September 2005

Cockatoo Island is the largest island in Sydney Harbour (approximately 18 hectares). It is located at the meeting of three waterways (Parramatta and Lane Cove Rivers and Iron Cove) known to the Aboriginals as ‘Moocooboola’. Cockatoo Island is one of a group of three islands (with Snapper and Spectacle) named in the 1820’s the ‘Hen and Chickens’.

The island is characterised by a diversity derived from its incremental development over a long period of time. The island accommodates a range of industrial buildings, concrete pads from demolished buildings, cranes, dry docks and maritime related structures. However, many buildings and wharves were demolished after the closure of the island in 1992. This has resulted in large open areas on the northern and eastern foreshores. Some areas also contain contamination and industrial hazards resulting from over a century of shipbuilding.

The Trust’s Plan for Cockatoo Island

Cockatoo Island will be revitalised as an active part of Sydney’s cultural life that is open to general public access. While becoming more integrated with the city, the valued characteristics and qualities that make the island distinct from the surrounding urban landscape will be protected.

The island will accommodate a broad range of mutually supportive uses and activities of varying scales aimed at broadening the island’s appeal and ensuring the island’s viability. Maritime and related industry will be re-established, while new uses such as cultural events, studios, workshops for creative industries and visitor accommodation will be introduced. Balancing this activity, there will be a diversity of public open spaces, vantage points and quiet places for reflection.

In keeping with tradition existing buildings and structures will be adaptively reused, and heritage sites will be conserved and interpreted as an important element of the island’s attractions. While the revitalisation of the island will draw from the past phases of its history, a distinctly new phase will be created, characterised by the island’s openness to, and occupation by, the public, to which it has been closed for the last 165 years.

Main Phases of use and Occupation:

Aboriginal Period:

- Little evidence of Aboriginal occupation appears to exist due to the high degree of interference since 1840, but further research is required.

The following phases of development were identified in the Conservation Management Plan by Godden Mackay in 1997 for the Department of Defence

Phase 1
Convict Prison Dockyard 1839-1864
• The island was chosen as a gaol for its isolation yet relative proximity to the authorities at Sydney. Convicts came from Goat Island and Norfolk Island.
• Convict labour was used to construct the stone buildings and silos on the plateau.
• In 1847 Gother Kerr Mann was appointed Civil Engineer of Cockatoo Island.
• Fitzroy Dock and other dock facilities such as the stone Workshop Building were undertaken under him.

Phase 2 – NSW Department of Public Works / Department of Prisons 1864 - 1913
• In 1864 the administration of the Island was split between the Department of Prisons – above the escarpment and the Public Works Department – below.

  • **Department of Prisons**
    • After the prisoners were removed to Darlinghurst Gaol, the western end of the plateau became Biloela Industrial School for Girls in 1871, which was needed to help address Sydney’s social problems.
    • The training ship Vernon was also anchored off Cockatoo in 1871 as a home for orphaned boys. They were given a garden and later (1890) a recreation area at the eastern end of the Island.
    • The Sobraon replaced the Vernon in 1890 and was used by the boys until 1911.
    • The girls left in 1888 and the deteriorating buildings were again used as a gaol.
    • The buildings were condemned as unsuitable for prison use in 1899.

  • **Department of Public Works**
    • Fitzroy Dock was enlarged and a new Sutherland Dock completed in 1890 with new service buildings and wharves built to increase its capabilities.
    • The apron areas were extended again with fill from the dock
    • The No. 1 Slipway constructed.
    • In 1909 Cockatoo became the State Dockyard.

Phase 3 – Commonwealth Dockyard 1913-1933
• In 1913 dockyard was acquired by Commonwealth and prison function ceased.
• Dockyard buildings immediately built above escarpment and prison buildings taken over for administration purposes.
• This period saw the largest construction boom of the Island’s history. Structures were mostly metal framed, corrugated iron sheds that could be quickly erected
• Three pairs of residences, in the Federation style, were also erected for staff members and their families.
• HMAS Huon, first modern warship wholly built in Australia, was completed in 1916
• The floating crane Titan was assembled in 1917 and the Sutherland Dock extended in 1928.

Phase 4 – Cockatoo Docks and Engineering 1933-1948
• A private consortium registered as Cockatoo Docks and Engineering Co. Ltd leased the Island. The line of the escarpment radically changed, large areas of land reclaimed, stone was cannibalised from some of the early penal buildings and new roads were built. However the pattern of development begun in the first decade of the century was followed.
• WW2 provided the island’s busiest period building naval vessels, converting merchant ships to troop carriers and repairing damaged ships. It was the major repair centre for the western Pacific.
• During WWII 3,200 men were employed on the Island.
• This period is often seen as Cockatoo’s golden age.
Phase 5 – Vickers Cockatoo 1948-1986

- In 1947 the majority of shares in Cockatoo Docks and Engineering Co. Ltd were taken up by Vickers Ltd. London.
- Most of the old structures were maintained and used during this period including the original Fitzroy Dock workshop and the prisoner’s Barracks.
- More sophisticated shipbuilding technology was introduced with the building of the fully welded destroyers Voyager and Vampire.
- The submarine refits of Royal Navy T Class submarines started in 1960 and in the late 1960s modernization was undertaken for the refit program of O class submarines.
- In 1984 HMAS Success was launched, the last ship to be built at Cockatoo and Vickers merged with Commonwealth Steel Co Ltd to form Comsteel Vickers Ltd.
- As the dockyard had grown, it’s inadequacies, such as restricted space, aging facilities, difficulty of supply from the mainland and the loading and unloading on the island resulting in higher overheads, had become apparent. The dockyard was decommissioned in 1992.

Location 1  Entry Precinct / North East Apron

History in Brief

- At the time of the convict gaol, the North East Apron was the site of the Free Officers Quarters and the Warders House. Later large workshops were built including the Boiler Shops, Fabrication shops, and Plumbers shops.
- Northern part of the eastern apron has been cleared of buildings by Defence, leaving the now isolated Administration Building, Muster Station and Fire Station.
- Many of the cranes and wharves have disappeared as have much of the machinery and infrastructure that supported the dockyard.

Outcomes Proposed

Entry Precinct

- Parramatta Wharf has been upgraded recently. It will be retained as the primary public entry to the Island. Wharf shelter proposed.
- Administration Building currently contains classroom facilities, future possible uses include visitor information, café at ground floor.
- The entry area will be repaved, interpretation material installed and disability access will be provided to the Administration Building.
- Temporary toilets will be relocated (within existing buildings).

North East Apron

- Possible visitor boat berthing.
- Landscape treatments will also interpret previous convict and maritime industrial uses.
- It will be used for large scale events such as concerts, outdoor theatre or markets. Possible hardstand storage of large boats.
- Formalisation of hierarchy of paths with vehicular access being along cliff edge, and continuous pedestrian access available across the apron and along the eastern waters edge.
- Conservation and interpretation of cranes.
- Possible future building in place of former industrial buildings.
**Location 2**

**Northern Apron**

**History in Brief**
- The northern side of the Island was the last side to be extended by reclamation.
- Slipway No.1 was started in 1912 for the building of *HMAS Brisbane*, the first cruiser to be built in the Commonwealth.
- In 1960s the No. 1 Slipway was upgraded and a second slipway constructed beside it (Slipway No. 2)
- The Old and New Plate Shops, the Furnace Shop and the Pipe cleaning shop were removed by Department of Defence.
- The main No 1 Stores tunnel was cut through the Island in 1915 to link the slipway area with the dock area and is 113.3 metres long. It was modified for use as an air raid shelter in WW2 when Burma Road was built to gain access to the island plateau.
- Contamination in this area is a significant issue due to the poor quality of the fill of the north-western extension of the apron.

**Outcomes proposed**
- Completion of remediation of contamination of area.
- Open parkland area landscaped to interpret past uses. Landscaped to retain openness and enable emergency helicopter landing area.
- Upgrade Slipway No. 2 as one of two roll-on roll-off ramps to allow barge access to Island and formalise paths for vehicle movements to and from roll-on roll-off ramps
- Potential for open air boat repair and maintenance near Slipway No. 2.
- Potential to use landscaping techniques for on-site waste water treatment.

**Location 3**

**Convict Precinct**

**History in Brief**
- These are the oldest buildings on Cockatoo and this compound with the Guard Room 1842 and the Prisoners Barracks (Mess Hall) 1847-51, the wings of the Barracks (1839-42) still evoke the atmosphere of the original convict gaol.
- The Military Officer’s Quarters, 1845-57 between the Mess Hall and the Guard Room, has been much added to over the years and has been a residence for the Superintendent of the Girl's Industrial School, the Gaol Governor and the Dockyard Engineering Superintendent. It typifies how these convict buildings have been used through all the different phases of the Island’s history since the 1840s.
- The cell block and prisoners garden disappeared with the excavation of the southern side of the cliff to accommodate the Sutherland Dock.
- Extensions on either side of the Mess Hall (1893 and 1896) created an enclosed courtyard.
- The northern wing of the Prisoners Barracks was converted into an air-raid shelter during WW2.

**Outcomes proposed**
- Restoration, conservation and interpretation of the convict related spaces and buildings. Possible use for functions.
- Restoration and conservation works to residence - reinstate gardens
- Reveal terraces within the garden and embankment
• Continued research and archaeological investigation – particularly underground isolation cells and within courtyard
• Maintain courtyard as open space between the convict buildings
• Reinstall terraced convict gardens

**Location 4**

**Plateau Workshop Precinct**

**History in Brief**

- The group of five industrial buildings were erected between 1911 and 1918 (Mould Loft, Drawing Offices, Joiners Shop, Polishing Shop, and Electrical Shop). The Electrical Shop was built over the convict hewn stone water tanks.
- These were large buildings enclosing space in the most economical way and had a major impact on the plateau and skyline of the island.
- A two storey timber storage and seasoning shed clad with vertical timber battens was built in 1916-17.
- The concrete water tower, a significant feature of the skyline of Cockatoo Island was built after WW 2.
- In 1929 the RAAF Experimental Station under Wing-Commander L J Wackett was moved to Cockatoo Island utilising the Drawing offices and the Electrical shop. Aircraft repairs and maintenance were carried out plus speedboat and ferry design to create more work. Union demarcation stopped this diversification and the section closed **down in 1934**.

**Outcomes Proposed**

- Repair workshops for adaptive re-use as possible studios, workshops or offices, education and training, with some exhibition/interpretation of past uses.
- Convict circuit walk along the plateau would reveal/explain archaeological remains in this area of the Convict period
- Adaptive re-use of timber drying shed as possible demonstration / performance space
- Improve stormwater management and access to buildings
- Investigate existing water infrastructure for potential water re-use and recycling
- Possible viewing platform at the top of the water tower
- Possible return of overhead crane outside Mould loft to Convict Workshop
- Provision of public toilets and improved access between the apron and the plateau

**Location 5**

**Residential Precinct**

**History in Brief**

- The eastern part of the plateau was the site of five residences for the Superintendent c.1841, the Clerk of Petty Sessions (1845-1850), the Assistant Superintendent, the Resident Engineer and the Foreman of Mechanics. Only the first two have survived with the cutting back of the plateau and other changes.
- The original houses were set within a walled garden complex. They have been in continuous residential use.
- The Superintendent’s house was enlarged in 1860 for the Superintendent and Engineer in Chief, Gother Kerr Mann and his 12 children.
- The grid of silos cut into the sandstone plateau were ordered by Governor Gipps to help stabilise the supply and price of grain for the colony. However in 1841 he was instructed
from London to sell the stored grain at auction as its retention would interfere with free market forces. Later they were used for water storage.

- The two stone houses have been joined by three “new” residences in the Federation style, built for dockyard staff circa 1916 (Blgs. 21, 23 and 24).

**Outcomes Proposed**

- Adaptive re-use of the house for overnight accommodation, studios or live-in training
- Gardens restored and ‘subdivision pattern’ retained. Gates will be located to connect an internal path for tours and open days
- Preservation of significant cultural plantings
- A cliff top walk will be provided beyond the gardens with a lookout to cantilever over cliff edge
- Potential for open space events on the existing tennis court
- Interpretation of convict built wheat storage silos, including possible extension of boardwalk around the cut silos of the cliff face
- Establish park spaces (sheltered beneath existing mature trees)
- Weed removal and restoration of vegetation to embankment

---

**Location 6  Southern Dock**

**History in Brief**

The southern apron is one of the most exciting areas on the island with the dramatic axis created by the two dry docks.

**Fitzroy Dock**

- Fitzroy is the oldest surviving dry dock in Australia and one of the largest surviving public works from the convict era in Sydney
- Governor Gipps reported his intention to build a dry dock to the British Government in 1846. It was commenced in 1851 with the keystone laid by Governor Fitzroy in 1853.
- The dock design and construction supervision was carried out by Captain Gother Kerr Mann using mainly convict labour and was completed in 1857.
- One of his skills was using controlled charges to remove the sandstone cliff so the stone could still be quarried for use on the dock.
- All British naval vessels as well as visiting vessels from other navies were serviced and repaired in the Dock.
- Note the naval cannon bollards around the Dock.
- The supporting Workshop Building was also convict built

**Sutherland Dock**

- The NSW Parliament, in the same year, 1880, as the final extension to Fitzroy Dock, decided that a larger dock should be constructed.
- Ships were increasing in size with the *Great Eastern* (680 feet) being the largest and the *Orient*, built in 1879 specifically for a regular Australian service, the second largest (460 feet long, 5400 gross tons).
- Work commenced on Sutherland Dock towards the end of 1882 with the excavated material used to create reclaimed land to the south of the dock.
The dock was designed by J B Mackenzie. The main contract was awarded to Mr Louis Samuel a 23 year old civil engineer. On completion in March 1890, it was for a short time the largest dock in the world at 638 feet maximum length (increased in 1928 to 680 feet).

Circa 1911 the dock was widened to accommodate the new flagship of the Navy HMAS Australia.

During the 1880s and 1890s new buildings were erected to house aspects of the changing shipbuilding technology associated with steel construction and cater for the additional work resulting from the new dock.

Southern Apron

The southern edge of the apron contains a collection of wharves and patent slipways. The buildings range from mostly from the WW2 era with the exception of the 1909 boatshed and the buildings from the late 1960s modernisation for the submarine refit program.

The Weapons Workshop building in the south-eastern corner of the apron included ultrasonic cleaning facilities, test rooms and electronic workshops plus accommodation for stand-by ships crews.

Two steam powered Travelling Portal Jib cranes (1893) have high heritage significance are amongst the oldest of their type in Australia and are associated with the operation of both dry docks.

Outcomes Proposed

- Maritime industrial activity is being sought. Potential for additions to existing buildings (adjacent to Sutherland Wharf) or new buildings that assist in the reuse of the Southern Apron
- Repair and restoration of paved areas for management of environmental impacts
- Restricted public access within the working environment
- Conservation and Interpretation of the 2 dry docks
- Potential to reinstate the Sutherland Dock as a working dock
- Potential for Fitzroy Dock to be used for visiting ship berthing, display of historic ships or access to workshops for boat repairs.
- Environmental controls for dewatering of the dock.
- Corrosion repairs to the Sutherland Wharf to upgrade for maritime use (loading and unloading from barges)
- Restoration of Shipwrights shed and associated infrastructure
- Reinstatement of Camber Wharf to be suitable for ferries and assisted disabled access. Primary access for workers and alternate access for ferries.
- Repairs to the Timber Bay and installation of pontoons to accommodate smaller vessels. Primary purpose will be for transporting workers to the island.
- Upgrade ramp east of Camber Wharf to provide a roll-on roll-off facility for barge access.
- Potential to refit concrete framed Weapons Workshop building or potential for new building in this location for maritime or some other use

Location 7                           Powerhouse

History in Brief

- During the 1880s and 1890s new buildings were erected for the changing shipbuilding technology associated with steel construction and cater for the additional work resulting
from the new dock. The existing power supply was inadequate. Differences of opinion over
diesel or steam held up approval for the new powerhouse.

- The steam-powered complex was finally completed in 1918 with the construction of the
circular brick chimney.
- This new powerhouse replaced the smaller steam pump house dating from 1884.
- The power was supplied at 240 volts DC from two steam driven generators. Steam was
supplied by boilers located in a boiler house attached to the north side of the Powerhouse.
- The Powerhouse holds one of the most significant collections of collections of early pumps,
air compressors and electric motors in NSW, an almost complete set of early 20th century
power supply facilities.

Outcomes Proposed
Retain, conserve and interpret pumphouse / power house.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location 8</th>
<th>Convict Workshops</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

History in Brief

- The stone 1850s Workshops Building were built at the time of the convict gaol period to
service ships in Fitzroy Dock.
- The walls of this fine building can still be seen amongst later additions.
- The alignment of this building determined that of the later buildings with a central street
containing a rail line formed along the length of the apron.
- The extensive demolitions to the northern part of the apron have dramatically changed the
nature of the central street but there is clear evidence of its alignment on the ground.
- The collection of Machine shops erected on the western side of the central street in the
1890s and early 1900s are impressive, large spaces backing onto the original stone
Workshop building. They contain some historically important machinery that gives some
idea of the scale works required in shipbuilding such as the Double bed Centre Lathe and a
large Planing Machine.
- Overhead cranes remain in many of the sheds. The largest shed, the Turbine shed was built
in 1942 necessitating the excavation of more cliff face. This has resulted in the exposure of
the outline of one of the grain silos in the new cliff face.
- The eastern side of the central street has two stores buildings from the early 1900s and
facilities relating to the Submarine Refit Program, the main one being the Electrical
Assembly Workshop adjacent to the Bolt Wharf at the south-eastern end of the street.
- In addition to mechanical assembly shops, electrical production, assembly shops, cleaning
bays and test rooms there was also amenities for 1000 workmen.

Outcomes Proposed

- Enhance street-like appearance. Potential uses adjacent to the street should have a public
focus
- Possible removal of whole or part of roofs to form inner courtyard and the Apprentice
workshop over the Convict workshop
- Retain and interpret machinery in workshops. Allow public access to machines.
- Potential to remove last shed to reveal views to the Convict workshop from harbour
- Long-term potential new building in southern corner
- Conserve cranes and rail lines
- Corrosion repairs to the Bolt Shop Wharf. Potential to use wharf as delivery point for barges, for visiting ships and large ferries for special events.
- Reinstate wharf edges (southern corner) or possible small boat berthing
- Possible reinstatement of Ruby Wharf and steps for island access
- Select uses for workshop buildings befitting grand scale. Interim uses could include special events, TV / film studios or maritime related industries