

## **A bold, state of the art renewal for Hyde Park Barracks Museum**

Sydney Living Museums announces a major renewal of Hyde Park Barracks Museum that will see the UNESCO World Heritage listed site transformed with a rich new, immersive visitor experience like no other in Australia.

Bringing history to life, the Hyde Park Barracks Museum renewal project centres on telling a significant part of Australia's convict story, its impact on First Nations people and the site's early contribution to immigration.

"The reinterpretation of such an iconic heritage site marks the site's 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary and promises a bold, new look at the complex, challenging and inspiring stories of Sydney's early history," said The Hon. Don Harwin MLC, Minister for the Arts.

"The completely revitalised Hyde Park Barracks Museum experience will be an anchor for what the government is planning for the historic Macquarie Street East Precinct on the eastern fringe of the CBD, offering an even more vibrant place for locals and tourists to enjoy."

Sydney Living Museums is working with internationally-acclaimed exhibit and media design specialists *Local Projects* to develop a realistic exhibition experience, featuring an engaging narrative and employing contemporary interpretative techniques, immersive installations and unconventional interactive elements.

"This \$18 million renewal project reflects the best in contemporary museum design. It will bring the personal stories to life in a truly authentic, emotional way that is relevant to people's lives today," said Mark Goggin, Executive Director, Sydney Living Museums.

At the heart of the new visitor experience is a collection of over 4000 original objects on display, many of them artefacts from the internationally-recognised Hyde Park Barracks Archaeology Collection.

"The vision is to create a world class, experiential museum that delivers an outstanding visitor experience at one of the most iconic heritage sites in Australia."

Hyde Park Barracks Museum will be closed to the public from 29 January and will re-open in late 2019.

## The Hyde Park Barracks, 1819–2019

The Hyde Park Barracks is a striking colonial site in the historic heart of Sydney, Australia's oldest city. Built as a symbol of authority and control, it has its own austere beauty, with warm orange bricks and tall, elegant windows beneath an imposing roof. Today, as a museum and one of 11 Australian Convict Sites on the UNESCO World Heritage list, the barracks offers visitors an extraordinary living record of early Australia, and a glimpse into the daily lives of convicts and immigrant women in the 19th century.

### History

When the Hyde Park Barracks was built, the colony of New South Wales was 30 years old. It was a penal colony, a place for Britain to send its criminals. Sydney was also, for tens of thousands of years, the home of the Gadigal people. Like all the surrounding country, and everywhere beyond, the prominent ridgeline where the barracks now stands was etched with Aboriginal meaning, interconnected by ceremony and song.

In 1817, an ambitious governor, Lachlan Macquarie, working with a talented convict architect, Francis Greenway, issued orders to build a large, three-storey dormitory next to the convict hospital. The Hyde Park Barracks, constructed in just two years, was as remarkable then as it is now. Most people think of a barracks as a residence for soldiers, but this place was built to house – and control – male prisoners. These men had enjoyed the run of the town: their freedom was now over. During the next 30 years, the barracks became the centre of the penal system in NSW - where new arrivals were inspected and assigned, where re-offending convicts were tried and punished and where the Principal Superintendent of Convicts controlled the lives of convicts across NSW – the site came to represent the horrors and drudgery of convict life.

In 1848, after Britain stopped sending convicts to New South Wales, the main building became temporary accommodation and a hiring office for thousands of young immigrant women seeking a new life in the colony. From the 1860s it was also a place of care and refuge in the flourishing city for older, sick and poor women. Once a place of control, fear and brutality, the barracks had become a place of hope.

### An intimate collection

About 100,000 people – convicts, immigrants and asylum inmates – passed through the Hyde Park Barracks between 1819 and 1887. They left behind thousands of discarded items and personal possessions: coins, keys, sewing tools, soup bones, scraps of leather and fabric, whole garments, gaming tokens, bottles and tobacco pipes. Between 1979 and 1984, archaeologists uncovered this treasure trove of over 120,000 artefacts that had been trapped beneath the floors and below the ground for up to 160 years. Internationally renowned, this collection brings history to life in intimate ways, revealing previously unknown details of daily life in this 19th-century institution.

## A national legacy

The Hyde Park Barracks shaped the lives of many thousands of people who, whether by force or by choice, journeyed across the world and found themselves in this place. Today their descendants number over a million people.

The story of the Hyde Park Barracks also reaches far beyond its walls. The barracks enabled the rapid spread of the colony, with profound effects on Aboriginal land, culture and communities far beyond Sydney. Officials at the barracks oversaw every convict in the colony, and later, every immigrant, sending thousands of people deeper and deeper into Aboriginal country. Amid violence, dispossession and loss, convicts and new immigrants were also the people most likely to work, trade and form relationships with the surviving Aboriginal people. Theirs is a complex and interwoven historical legacy, and the changes brought by the convict system and waves of 19th-century immigration are still felt today.

## A World Heritage site

In 2010, the Hyde Park Barracks, along with ten other Australian convict places, was recognised as a UNESCO World Heritage site. Together they tell a story unique to Australia: of 166,000 convicts transported far across the seas between 1788 and 1868, who experienced an extraordinary range of systems of punishment and reform. Australia was the only colony that began as a convict camp and evolved into a relatively free and prosperous nation. The Hyde Park Barracks is central to this remarkable national story. It is an important, even treasured place, filled with significance for people across society.

Today, 200 years after the first convicts moved in, the Hyde Park Barracks is a timeless monument amid the colour and clamour of modern Sydney, the city it helped to shape and build. Drawing together key threads of convict life, Aboriginal resilience and free immigration, the story of the barracks is the story of Australia's modern beginnings.

Ends.