



NSW NATIONAL PARKS & WILDLIFE SERVICE

Sydney Harbour National Park Plan of Management Amendment

Sustainable Visitor Use

**Clark Island, Shark Island – Boowambillee,
Rodd Island and
Fort Denison – Muddawahnyuh**



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Why amend the plan?

The Sydney Harbour National Park Plan of Management was adopted in 2012.

A key goal of the plan of management is to increase opportunities for the public to enjoy and appreciate Sydney Harbour National Park and enrich the visitor experience through the revitalisation of key visitor destinations in the park. The plan provides strategies to achieve this aim and National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) has been undertaking the detailed planning necessary to deliver the improvements to visitor precincts. This planning identified that some of the detail in the plan of management is unnecessarily restricting opportunities to provide enhanced visitor experiences, including events on the Sydney Harbour Islands and a lease for Fort Denison – Muddawahnyuh.

Under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974* (NPW Act), operations and activities undertaken in a park must be consistent with the plan of management. NPWS is amending the plan of management to support the continued provision of a range of sustainable visitor opportunities in the park. NPWS remains committed to the park vision, guiding principles and intent of the plan of management.

How to read the amendment

This amendment changes the Sydney Harbour National Park Plan of Management adopted in December 2012.

Plans of management are available on the Department of Planning and Environment website.

Page number references in this amendment relate to the numbering used within the pages of the plan adopted in 2012.

What needs to change in the plan?

Harbour island events and activities

The current plan of management promotes opportunities for visitors to enjoy and appreciate the national park. The plan encourages the continuation of traditional passive recreation opportunities and supports enriched and new tourism experiences including use of the harbour islands for special events such as New Year’s Eve, Sydney Festival and Vivid.

The plan of management identifies the following visitor number limits for the harbour islands:

Shark Island – Boowambillee	800 at any one time
Clark Island	250 at any one time
Fort Denison – Muddawahnyuh	200 at any one time, and 20 persons in the Martello Tower
Rodd Island	250 at any one time

The limits were included in the plan as a means of ensuring that visitor access and events on the islands would be controlled and sustainable and, in the case of the Martello Tower on Fort Denison – Muddawahnyuh, to ensure visitor safety. Implementation of the plan of management has shown that these visitor number limits do not reflect the actual capacity of the harbour islands.

NPWS considered changing the visitor number limits to reflect the actual capacity of the islands but recognised that to determine the potential impact of an event a greater range of factors needed to be considered and assessed. Impacts of events depend on a range of factors including: the type of event; the required infrastructure; hours of operation; frequency of events; waste management; and noise. Events with small numbers can have unacceptable impacts, while larger events may have acceptable and manageable impacts. Using only visitor number limits to determine event size does not provide an effective way to assess, manage and limit the impacts of events.

This amendment removes visitor number limits from the plan and provides for a risk assessment approach in managing guided activities in the Martello Tower. The number of visitors will be determined through the evaluation of risks to park values and the environment, including visitors and neighbours, and managed by the application of existing policies, procedures and approvals. In addition to this, specific *NPWS Events Management Guidelines* have been developed and will be applied.

Fort Denison – Muddawahnyuh leases and licences

The 2012 plan of management supports the lease of Fort Denison – Muddawahnyuh for visitor uses, specifically mentioning lease of the barracks and forecourt.

This amendment broadens the wording around leasing and licensing to include other buildings and areas of Fort Denison – Muddawahnyuh. This amendment provides further opportunities to develop a range of visitor experiences while maintaining public access and protecting the significant heritage values.

The 2012 plan of management also permits the construction of storage facilities in the yard to support operations of a restaurant or similar. Precinct planning processes for Fort Denison – Muddawahnyuh have recognised that other types of facilities may be required to support sustainable visitor use for lease or licence arrangements as well as NPWS operations.

The amendment allows additional facilities to be constructed that meet operational needs of NPWS or lessees after heritage and environmental impact assessment and application of the *Sustainability assessment criteria for visitor use and tourism in NSW national parks*.

Procedures to ensure the protection of values are already in place. All proposals are subject to assessment of heritage and environmental impacts and must be consistent with any relevant conservation management plan. Leases and licences issued under section 151 of the NPW Act are also assessed against the sustainability assessment criteria.

How does NPWS ensure that events and lease arrangements continue to support sustainable visitor use of the national park?

Events, licences and lease arrangements in national parks are subject to provisions in legislation, the plan of management, NPWS policy and approval processes. NPWS has existing policy, assessment guidelines and environmental impact assessment procedures that support sustainable visitor use of the park, including events and lease arrangements. In addition, new *Events Management Guidelines* have been developed that will guide sustainable visitor use of the Sydney Harbour Islands.

Legislation and policy

Proposals for events and any activities requiring a lease or licence are subject to the NPW Act, the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* (EPA Act), the *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016* (BC Act) and other acts dependent on the proposal.

The NPW Act defines sustainable in relation to visitor or tourist use and enjoyment of land to mean sustainable within the meaning of the principles of ecologically sustainable development, which is a broad, all-encompassing approach that addresses environmental, economic and social considerations in decision-making processes.

NPWS determines the sustainability of events and leasing arrangements using a combination of existing policy and sustainability assessment, including:

- *Events, functions and venues policy*
- *Sustainability assessment criteria for visitor use and tourism in New South Wales national parks*
- *Sustainability guidelines for visitor use and tourism in NSW national parks.*

The sustainability guidelines support implementation of the sustainability assessment criteria and incorporate requirements for an appropriate level of environmental impact assessment under the EPA Act. The BC Act applies to the protection of threatened species.

Plan of management provisions

Provisions in the plan of management that support sustainable visitor use include the guiding principles and management strategies that ensure that the national park continues to be protected during the operation of events. The strategies for event management include:

- Continuing to work with stakeholders in the development and implementation of guidelines for visitor events in the park.
- Ensuring that any event that requires a lease or licence under section 151 of the NPW Act meets the Sustainability assessment criteria adopted by the Director General of the Department of Premier and Cabinet. These criteria are designed to ensure that lease and licence operations do not have an adverse impact on park values and meet best practice standards for environmental performance.
- Preparing event management plans for all events involving more than 400 people.
- Adopting waste separation and minimisation practices in the management of events in the park.

Assessment of events

The *NPWS Events Management Guidelines* outline the existing sustainability and environmental impact assessment processes for events. The guidelines will be applied to all event applications and establish processes to determine maximum visitor capacity for the harbour islands, including upper limits to visitor numbers where needed. Capacity will be determined by environmental impact assessment, application of Australian industry standards and best practice for crowd densities, consideration of the nature of events, transport limitations, emergency evacuation requirements and any other relevant factors. The guidelines also establish limits on frequency and duration of events, noise levels and hours of operation.

The environmental impact assessment process includes either a Review of Environmental Factors (REF) or a Conservation Risk Assessment (CRA). The REF is a higher level of assessment and is required for large events, exclusive-use events and events requiring temporary infrastructure.

Under the REF process, the environmental, social and community impacts of an event or an activity is assessed. Considerations include site capacity, applicable visitor numbers, frequency and types of events, emergency response and visitor safety risk analysis, hours of operation, noise levels and waste management. A determination is then made to either a) proceed with the event or activity with conditions to manage any impacts to park values and neighbouring areas, or b) not allow the event if the impacts to neighbours or park values are unacceptable or unmanageable.

If the outcome of the REF process is a determination to proceed with the event or activity, NPWS may issue an approval with conditions for the operation of events. The conditions may impose limits on the duration of events, maximum number of patrons and noise levels as well as waste management requirements. The approval process ensures that events are sustainable and that provisions for mitigating impacts are implemented.

Sydney Harbour National Park Plan of Management amendment: sustainable visitor use (Clark Island, Shark Island – Boowambillee, Rodd Island and Fort Denison – Muddawahnyuh)

This section details the changes to the Sydney Harbour National Park Plan of Management as adopted in 2012. The amendments are written to replace specific existing text with new text. The amendments are to be read in conjunction with the plan adopted in 2012 (page numbers detailed below refer the 2012 plan adopted).

1. Visitor events and activities

All Precincts: Common Issues (page 52)

Outcome 4. Provide enriching and memorable experiences in the park

Special activities and events

Replace the following text at point 2:

- >> Utilise the park for events including those that are part of major Sydney festivals. Any event requiring a lease or licence under s.151 of the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974* (NPW Act) must meet the Sustainability Assessment Criteria.

With:

- >> Promote and utilise the park as a location for events or activities including those that are part of major Sydney festivals. Events and activities must satisfy *NPWS Events Management Guidelines* and current legislation including the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974* (NPW Act). Events and activities may be subject to environmental impact assessment under the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979*. Any event requiring a lease or licence under s.151 of the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974* must meet the Sustainability assessment criteria for visitor use and tourism.

Replace the following text at point 1 and 5:

- >> NPWS will continue to work with stakeholders in the development of protocols for the implementation of events across SHNP consistent with the NPWS Sustainability assessment guidelines.
- >> Continue to work with stakeholders in the development of guidelines for the organisation and implementation of events across the park. These guidelines will be regularly monitored to ensure sustainable outcomes for park visitors and neighbours.

With:

- >> NPWS will continue to work with stakeholders in developing and applying guidelines for the implementation of events across SHNP consistent with the NPWS

Sustainability assessment criteria for visitor use and tourism in NSW national parks.
The event guidelines will be regularly monitored to ensure sustainable outcomes for park visitors and neighbours.

Precinct 08 – Shark Island – Boowambillee (page 151)

Outcome 4 – Providing enriching and memorable experiences in the park

What we are going to do

Replace the following text at point 1:

Promote the island as a venue for functions and events, including major cultural events such as the Sydney Festival, with numbers limited to a maximum of 800 persons on the island at any one time.

With:

Promote the island as a location for events and activities, including major and special events, and manage events consistent with *NPWS Events Management Guidelines*. Events and activities may be approved on application, must be consistent with the plan of management and consider the *Sustainability assessment criteria for visitor use and tourism*. Events and activities may be subject to environmental impact assessment under the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979*.

Precinct 09 – Clark Island (page 161)

Outcome 4 – Providing enriching and memorable experiences in the park

What we are going to do

Delete the following text at point 2:

Continue to promote the island as a venue for functions, with numbers limited to a maximum of 250 persons on the island at any one time.

Replace the following text at point 5:

Continue the use of Clark Island for special events such as New Year's Eve, Sydney Festival, Crave, Vivacity, Vivid, Sydney Writers' Festival, Biennale and Sydney Film Festival.

With:

Promote the island as a location for events and activities, including major and special events, and manage events consistent with the *NPWS Events Management Guidelines*. Events and activities may be approved on application, must be consistent with the plan of management and consider the *Sustainability assessment criteria for visitor use and tourism*. Events and activities may be subject to environmental impact assessment under the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979*.

Precinct 10 – Fort Denison – Muddawahnyuh (page 171)

Outcome 4 – Providing enriching and memorable experiences in the park

What we are going to do

Replace text at point 5:

Ensure visitor safety and comfort by limiting numbers to no more than 200 visitors at any one time.

With:

Events and activities must be consistent with the plan of management and consider the *Sustainability assessment criteria for visitor use and tourism* and be managed consistent with the *NPWS Events Management Guidelines*. Events and activities may be subject to environmental impact assessment under the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979*.

Replace text at point 6:

Ensure visitor safety and comfort by limiting the number of visitors in the Martello Tower to a maximum of 20 per guided group.

With:

Undertake risk assessment for guided group activities in the Martello Tower to ensure visitor safety and comfort.

Precinct 12 – Rodd Island (page 197)

Outcome 4 – Providing enriching and memorable experiences in the park

What we are going to do

Replace the following text at point 6:

Limit total numbers of island visitors to 250 persons at any one time, with a preference for use by smaller groups.

With:

Promote the island as a location for events and activities and manage events consistent with the *NPWS Events Management Guidelines*. Events and activities may be approved on application, must be consistent with the plan of management and consider the *Sustainability assessment criteria for visitor use and tourism*. Events and activities may be subject to environmental impact assessment under the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979*.

2. Leasing of Fort Denison – Muddawahnyuh

Precinct 10 – Fort Denison – Muddawahnyuh (page 171)

Outcome 4 – Providing enriching and memorable experiences in the park

What we are going to do

Replace the following text at point 1:

Continue to lease the Fort Denison Barracks and forecourt for the purpose of café, restaurant and function centre. In the event that the current lease comes to an end, new adaptive uses will be considered to support sustainable visitor and tourist use and enjoyment.

With:

Allow for the continued lease of Fort Denison – Muddawahnyuh for provision of visitor facilities and services including guided tours, a café, restaurant or function centre, subject to heritage, environmental and sustainability assessment of any lease or licence proposal.

Replace the following text at point 8:

Permit construction of storage sheds in the yard, and other discrete well-designed storage facilities for the operation of the restaurant or similar use, if approved after heritage and environmental assessment and consideration of alternative options.

With:

Permit construction of additional facilities to meet the operational needs of NPWS and/or lessees subject to heritage, environmental and sustainability assessment and consistent with the *Heritage Act 1977* and Fort Denison Conservation Management Plan.

3. Implementation table

Make the above changes in the implementation table (pages 203-231).