

Placemaking NSW



# Ballast Point Park Management Plan

Draft for Public Exhibition



April 2025

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## Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge Wan and Gadi Countries, their lands, seas and sky, we acknowledge custodians, their kin the Bidjigal, Cabrogal, and Cammeraygal who often visited this Country to connect and share. We offer our respect to their Elders both past and present.

We advise this resource may contain images, or names of deceased persons in photographs or historical content.

Ballast Point Park Management Plan

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All imagery by Brett Boardman, unless otherwise stated.

### More information

The Ballast Point Park Plan was prepared by Placemaking NSW in collaboration with the following consultant teams:

JOC Consulting, Rowena Welsh-Jarrett, Colleen Morris, Kingfisher Urban Ecology and Wetlands, illustrations by Peita Blythe, and photography by Brett Boardman.

It also acknowledges the many consultants who have worked on the site previously including Anton James Design, CAB Consulting, Context, Deuce Design, and McGregor Coxall.

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## Nagganbi

Traditionally, this Country all-encompassing of sea, rivers, creeks, land, and skies were cared for and occupied by the Wangal Clan. More broadly by the multiple clans of Coastal Sydney whom I am a descendant of. My people moved about following fishing seasons in this very Bay, the neighboring harbours, and all surrounding rivers.

It is important to acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of Ballast Point, the Wangal clan. We acknowledge their kinship, trade, moiety, and connections to the broader landscape of Coastal Sydney. The connectivity and intricate webs of environmental knowledge, the cultural systems and ancient knowledges and stories that governed interactions with people, place, and environment.

We acknowledge the Ancestors, Elders past and present and their continuous connections to Country and culture. We acknowledge their resilience and strength and pay tribute to the Elders who role modelled self-determination and a continuation of cultural pride. When we acknowledge Country, we acknowledge that culturally its definition is all-encompassing of the land, water, skies, rivers, creeks, and our Ancestors.

The surrounding rock shelters, springs and remnants of our campsites and prominent natural features within the landscape are a tangible reminder of how ancient this place is and its connection to the people who come from it. Most of all, our Ancestral beings who shaped and formed it. We still proudly continue to live on our Country and care for it. We will always be connected to this place. We will always have a cultural responsibility to this place and each other. We assert our cultural philosophies that it is Country that sustains us and on behalf of our Ancestors, the knowledges passed down to us and the bloodlines within us, we welcome you to this place. This land is, always was and always will be – Aboriginal Land.

### Rowena Welsh-Jarrett

Descendant of multiple Sydney Clan groups | Dharawal and Gumbaynggirr woman | Cultural and Heritage Advisor



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# 1

## Executive Summary

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## Ballast Point Park Management Plan

This Management Plan establishes a vision, objectives and actions to ensure that Ballast Point Park continues to thrive for generations to come. It offers an opportunity to reflect on the progress made since the NSW Government first acquired the site in 2002 and the Park's opening in 2009 and identifies what Placemaking NSW can do to continue to strengthen what has become a much-loved park for so many people.

The Park is an important part of the network of headlands forming the 'green necklace' across Sydney Harbour. The layered history of the Park - where the deep ongoing history of Aboriginal people intersects with colonial and industrial eras, and the creation of the park - gives the place a gritty, urban feel and makes it an accessible, living showcase of stories and celebration of cultural heritage.

Over the past 15 years, the Park has matured as a living landscape and in parallel the approach to understanding and managing places where nature, people and history converge has also evolved. The focus of this Plan is to acknowledge these changes and plan for the future by prioritising a Country-centred approach and systems thinking to the ongoing management of the Park.



Figure 1: Tank 101 artwork.

The development of this Plan has been informed by deep engagement with the community and a broad range of stakeholders. In total, more than 500 people participated in community consultation over 12 weeks from 2023 to early 2024. The community shared feedback, ideas and values that resonated consistently and strongly throughout the consultation period. While the majority of park users are satisfied with the Park's current operations and management, there are always improvements that can be made and opportunities to explore. Placemaking NSW is committed to continuous improvement and has listened to the many ideas shared by the community, as well being informed by the research undertaken to inform this Plan.

The generous feedback from community and stakeholders has informed the vision, objectives and actions for Ballast Point Park. The objectives and actions, summarised on the following page, respond to key opportunities for the Park but also the need to balance competing needs to ensure the Park remains a thriving open space for years to come.

This Plan provides further detail on the research undertaken and community feedback collated to identify a range of actions that contribute to achieving these objectives and the Park's vision.

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# Ballast Point Park Management Plan in summary

## Vision

Ballast Point Park is Wangal Country, deeply connected to the Harbour and the rich layers of culture and heritage that define this unique place. It is a resilient park to be cared for and enjoyed by all.

	Key actions
<p><b>Objective 1</b> Preserve and interpret cultural heritage values</p>	<p>We will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engage with Aboriginal and local communities to integrate cultural knowledge into park management and create meaningful opportunities for involvement and decision-making.</li> <li>Conduct heritage assessments to enhance existing interpretation to highlight Aboriginal, industrial and European history.</li> <li>Sensitively manage vegetation to celebrate and preserve the Park's unique heritage.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Objective 2</b> Encourage stewardship and ecological awareness</p>	<p>We will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adopt a bushland regeneration approach that cares for Country to support wildlife and ecological health.</li> <li>Explore opportunities to enhance the connection to Mort Bay Park.</li> <li>Explore succession planting and replace trees nearing end-of-life with species that enhance the Park's natural landscape character.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Objective 3</b> Create a welcoming place for all</p>	<p>We will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Introduce improved arrangements for dog walking and new wildlife protection areas to support both dogs and biodiversity.</li> <li>We will provide more diverse seating options including picnic tables, drinking fountains, and bins, and review toilet operating hours.</li> <li>Ensure the Park remains a place for passive recreation.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Objective 4</b> Foster a sustainable and resilient future</p>	<p>We will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Upgrade lighting and explore opportunities to generate power on site to improve the Park's energy efficiency.</li> <li>Review waste management practises.</li> <li>Enhance access to information online and within the Park.</li> <li>Strengthen partnerships to enhance good governance.</li> </ul>

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# 2

## Introduction

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## Ballast Point Park is Country

It is a part of a broader cultural landscape existing within a broader cultural area. This place holds importance and interrelated connectivity of the clusters of bays and islands that make up our beautiful Harbour.

Gahdu (the Sea), Dharagang (the rivers and Harbour) Island views are distinct natural features of Ballast Point Park and are a timeless reminder that we are a part of coastal communities. Having the privilege of living, working and visiting beautiful coastal Country should evoke in everyone a sense of awe, a sense of inspiration and curiosity that could be visually prompted to acknowledge layers of Country, a respect for conservation, belonging and sustainability spanning back thousands of years that continues to current times.

### A Park of Sydney Harbour

Ballast Point Park is an important part of the network of headlands across Sydney Harbour. Alongside Balls Head Reserve and Me-Mel (Goat Island), Ballast Point Park forms part of the series of green gateways that signal the entrance to Parramatta River, collectively referred to as the 'green necklace'. Additional headlands in this network include Manns Point and Barangaroo Reserve, as well as various green edges and open spaces along the Balmain Peninsula and around Balls Head Bay.

Sydney Harbour, and its tributaries like Parramatta River, play a vital role in the life and commerce of Sydney. The Harbour is a busy hub of activity, from recreational uses and transport services to the important strategic sites that support maritime, defence and tourism industries. These places continue to hold significant cultural and heritage value. Ballast Point Park is where land and sea Country meet, where sea water turns to fresh river water and where people co-exist with flora and fauna.

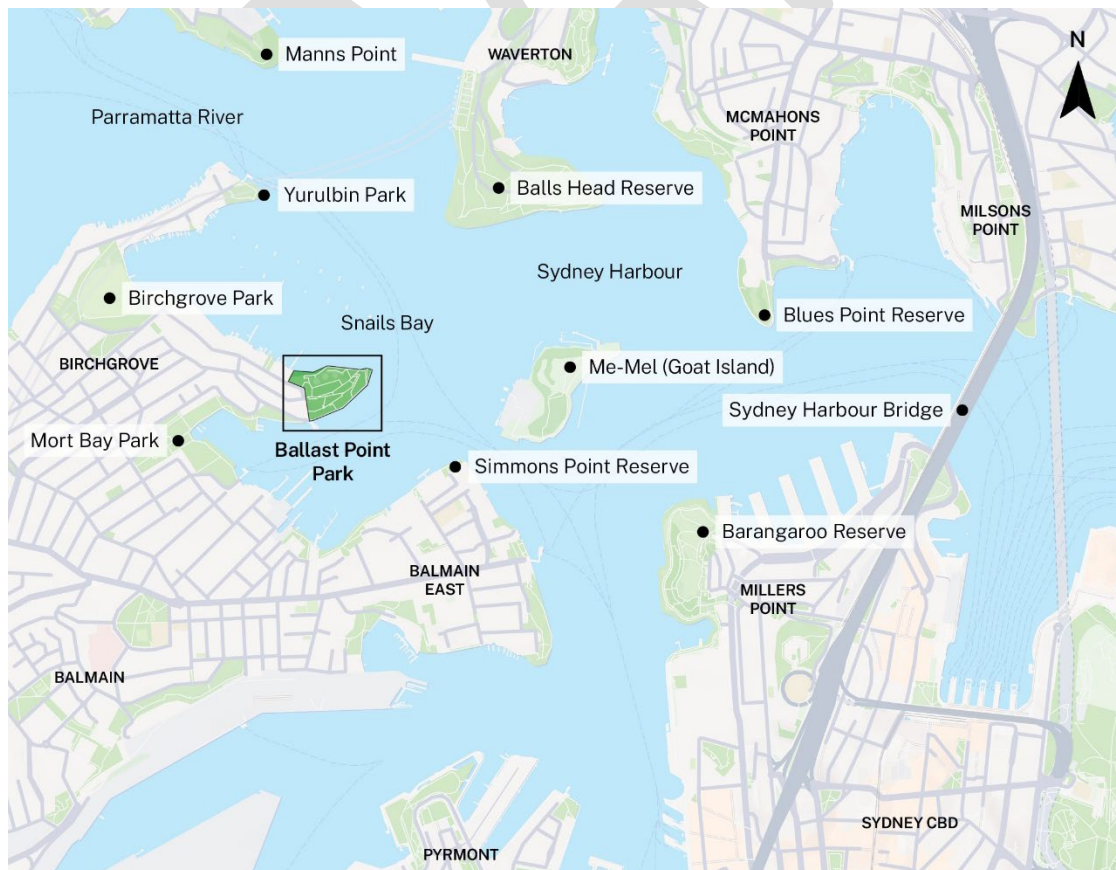


Figure 2: The Sydney Harbour context. (Source: Peita Blythe).

## Local Context

Ballast Point Park is located at the end of Ballast Point Road, Birchgrove. Comprising 2.6ha of parkland across a series of topographical levels, it is bound by Mort Bay to the south and Snails Bay to the north-west. Ronald Street runs along the western boundary, connecting Ballast Point and Wharf Roads. Yeend Street connects the lower south-western corner of the site to the adjacent Mort Bay Park.

Mort Bay Park provides a vital connection to Ballast Point Park, creating a significant foreshore walk and recreational link. Cared for by Inner West Council, Mort Bay Park is an important regional open space with numerous open grassed areas, an all-abilities playground and designated areas for dog on and off-leash activity.

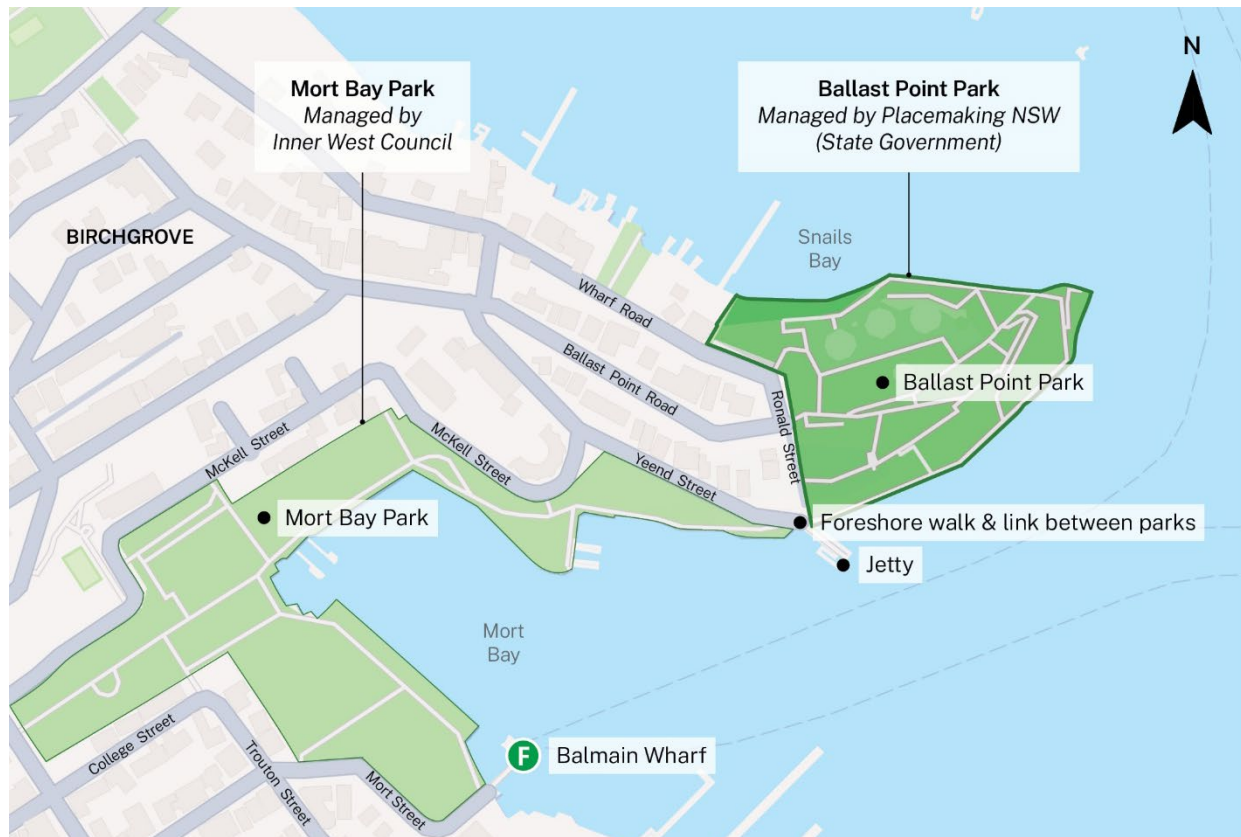


Figure 3: The local Park context. (Source: Peita Blythe).

## A Snapshot of Ballast Point Park

Address	Wangal Country 4 Ballast Point Road, Birchgrove 2041 Primarily Lot 1 DP 115939
Size	2.6 hectares
Primary function	Passive recreation and environmental preservation
Uses	Picnicking, walking along the foreshore, on-leash and off-leash dog walking, fishing, exercise, filming and photography, learning about history, observing artworks and enjoying the views, low-impact ceremonies like weddings, one-off larger scale events like New Years Eve
Toilets	Two amenities blocks including accessible toilets, baby change table and unisex toilet facilities
Parking	Street parking on Yeend Street and Wharf Road

## Purpose of this Plan

The purpose of this Plan is to establish a vision, objectives and actions to ensure the Park's management aligns with community values and best practice.

This Plan offers an opportunity to reflect on the evolution of the Park since opening in 2009 and identify what Placemaking NSW can do to strengthen what has become a much-loved place for many people.

This Plan ensures the environmental, recreational, heritage, cultural and social values shared by the community and park users will be preserved and enhanced for generations to come.

## Caring for Ballast Point Park

Placemaking NSW cares for Ballast Point Park and, through this Plan, will continue to engage with Aboriginal communities to listen, learn and act. Placemaking NSW will embed Aboriginal knowledge and storytelling in the Park to help surface layered histories, celebrate ongoing connection and highlight special qualities of the Park - *'If we care for Country, Country will care for us'*.

The NSW Government acquired the site in 2002 and is responsible for its ongoing care and management, including protection and enhancement of natural and cultural heritage, under the Place Management NSW Act 1998.

In some instances, a Plan of Management is required under the NSW Local Government Act 1993 for 'community land' or under the National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974 (NSW) after a park has been classified as 'reserved'. Neither classification applies to Ballast Point Park given its management under the Place Management NSW Act 1998, however this Plan performs a similar purpose to provide strategic planning, clarify use and governance direction.



Figure 4: Walkers enjoying the Park surrounds and views.

## The Process to Inform this Plan

The process undertaken to prepare this Plan was informed by existing management practices, specialist input, extensive consultation with the community and stakeholders, site analysis and research into the site’s history and ecology.

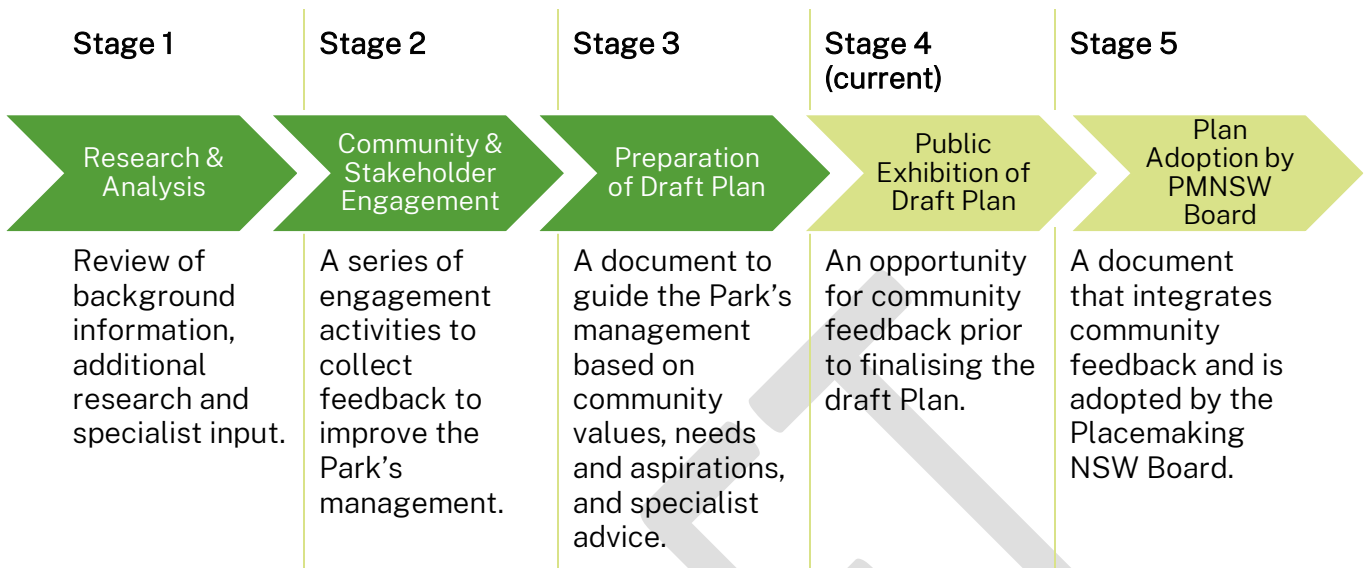


Figure 5: Steps taken to prepare this Plan. (Source: JOC Consulting).

## Document structure

Section	Description
1	<b>Executive Summary:</b> Outlines the purpose and overarching objectives of this Plan.
2	<b>Background Information:</b> Provides context to understand how this Plan was developed.
3	<b>Understanding the Park:</b> Introduces the site, its history, context and evolution into a much-loved urban parkland.
4	<b>Management Approach:</b> Details the vision and objectives and what actions are needed to make it happen.
5	<b>Conclusion:</b> Outlines the next steps to deliver this Plan and ongoing commitment by Placemaking NSW to care for Ballast Point Park.



Figure 6: Children playing before Tank 101 artwork.

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# 3

## Understanding the Park

# The Park's Historic Layers

## 3.1 Always was, and always will be, Wangal land

The impact of industry on the Park and the broader Harbour landscape has been immense - it's been both additive and extractive. Harbour has been filled in, islands aggregated with land, with marine and land ecology severely eradicated. The stress on Country has been vast. The focus on rebalancing and regeneration aims to counter this enormous impact. Restoring, revealing and regenerating the power of this place and this Country is at the heart of our approach. Reinstating cultural practices and storytelling informed by local knowledge holders will progress the restoration and rebalancing of Wangal Country. Aboriginal culture is resilient; it has adapted to the vast and dramatic impacts over the last 200 years. Aboriginal culture is also innovative and adaptable - this is the approach that will contribute to the rebalancing of Country.

Archaeological deposits, comprising Aboriginal cultural objects or tangible evidence of Aboriginal use of the area, are likely present within the Park. Understanding and considering the cultural landscape and the identified sites in adjacent parts of the Harbour, shows the continued connections to the area, highlighting Aboriginal participation in local industry and historical places<sup>1</sup>.



Figure 7: Recorded Aboriginal Sites located near Ballast Point Park. (Source: Coast History and Heritage).

<sup>1</sup> Rowena Welsh-Jarrett, 2024

### 3.2 Understanding the layered history of Ballast Point Park

The site, today known as Ballast Point Park, has undergone significant transformation over time. While its role and functions have changed, at its core, it has always been a place of significant cultural value. By understanding what has shaped the Park we see today, we understand that it is the links and connections between these moments in time that shape the user experience, contributes to the uniqueness of place and strongly informs the future management directions of this Plan.

The fabric of the Park as we see it today reflects the ongoing relationships and legacy of the people and practices throughout the site’s history.

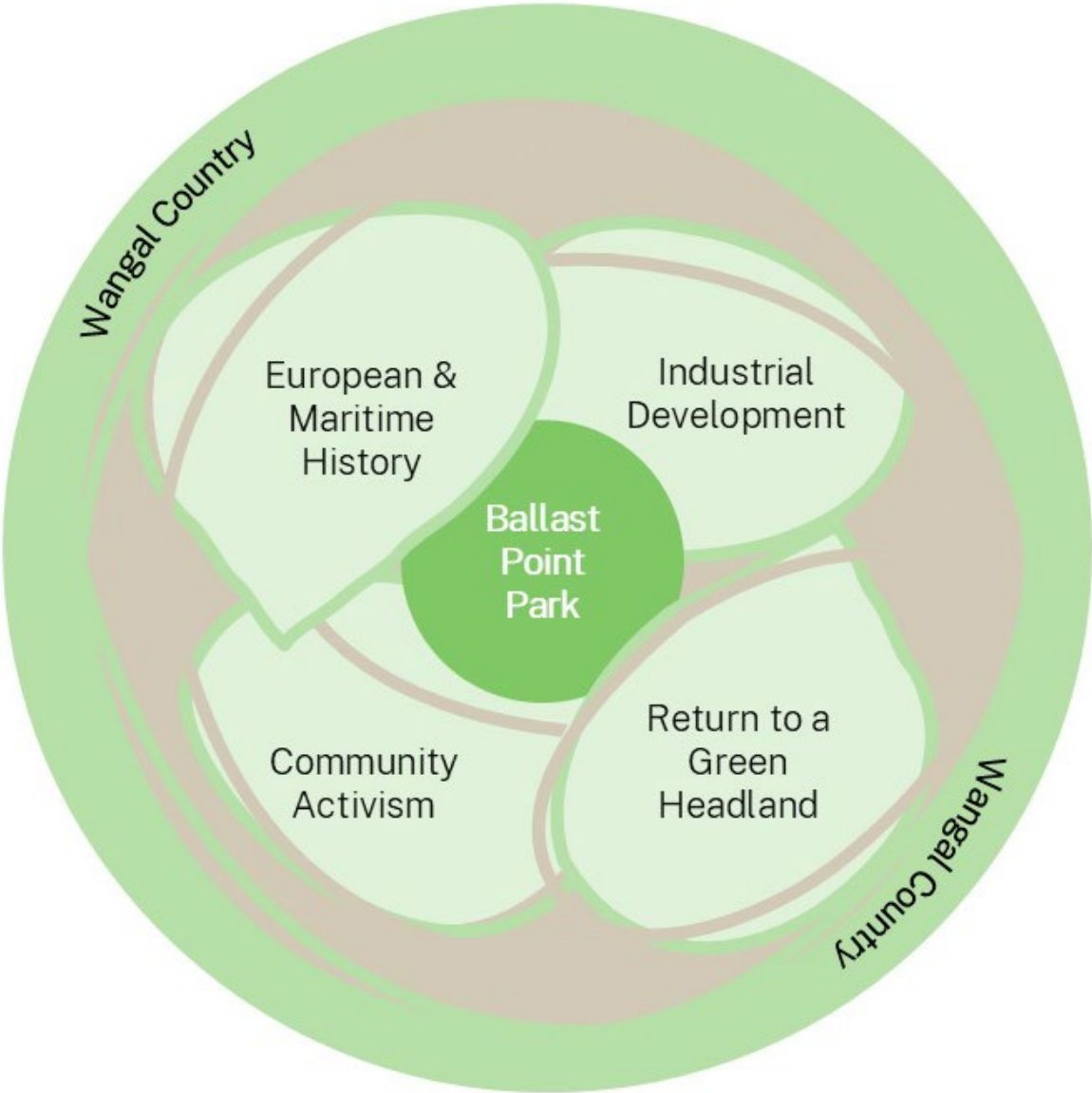


Figure 8: The layered histories of Ballast Point Park. (Source: JOC Consulting).

### 3.3 European and Maritime History

Aboriginal people did not leave Sydney after European arrival. They stayed on Country and in some cases established mutually beneficial relationships with the colonists<sup>2</sup> and other neighbouring clans.

Sydney's rivers and waterways have always been and remain today important to Aboriginal people as a source of food and spiritual connection, and a place for gathering and cultural practices. The water surrounding Ballast Point Park was similarly used by colonists for fishing and recreation, and the movements of materials, practices that continue into the present day<sup>3</sup>.

Over time, the use of the site intensified which led to a dramatic transformation of its natural landscape character. It became an important part of Sydney's maritime history as a place for the quarrying or offloading of stone that was used as ballast for ships, from which Ballast Point Park gets its name. By the mid 1800s, the land was recognisable as a typical harbour estate of its time with a manicured landscape and the 'Menevia' marine villa sitting proudly along the ridgeline overlooking the harbour<sup>4</sup>.

The deep water frontage and proximity to markets encouraged maritime and industrial growth around the Balmain peninsula throughout the 1800s, with boat building and docks emerging and altering the natural harbour foreshore area. At its height, the foreshore of Balmain and by extension, Birchgrove, was the highest employer of workers in Australia<sup>5</sup>. The workforce was diverse and it is likely Aboriginal people worked alongside European and Asian people, all contributing to the area's economic success<sup>6</sup>.

While the land around Ballast Point Park changed and evolved, the significant views across the harbour to the headlands along its northern banks remained, as they are today, a source of awe and beauty for all.



Figure 9: Snails Bay and Menevia. (Source: The Royal Australian Historical Society).

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<sup>2</sup> Hidden in Plain View, Paul Irish, 2017

<sup>3</sup> AILA NSW Landscape Heritage Report, 2018

<sup>4</sup> Ballast Point Park Master Plan 2004, Context Landscape Design, Anton James Design and CAB Consulting for the Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority

<sup>5</sup> Ballast Point Management & Maintenance Plan, Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority, 2009

<sup>6</sup> Hidden in Plain View, Paul Irish, 2017

### 3.4 Industrial Development

In the decades following the end of the First World War, the headlands and bays of western Sydney Harbour saw increased industrial development and continued cross cultural relationships between Aboriginal people and Sydney's increasingly diverse demographic.

Despite efforts to have the Menevia estate resumed for public reserve, the site was bought in 1928 by the Texan Oil company, later known as Caltex<sup>7</sup>.

In the years following, the Menevia villa was demolished and the entire site was reworked with excavation and construction including the carving of cliffs and creation of a seaboard terminal<sup>8</sup>. This transformation was reflective of changes across the wider Sydney Harbour frontage at the time, with industrial or petrochemical industries present from the eastern mouth of the Harbour to the western end of Parramatta River.



Figure 10: Caltex operations at Ballast Point. (Source: Ballast Point Park Master Plan 2004).

### 3.5 Community Activism

In the mid-1980s, Caltex proposed a 120 unit residential subdivision for the site, sparking community activism to preserve it for public use and restore its natural landscape.

In the following years, Leichhardt Council formed the Ballast Point Campaign Committee to advocate for the site's rezoning as "Passive Open Space". Local lawyer and Councillor, Helen Styles, established the Ballast Point Campaign Trust with financial and activist support from locals including actors, artists, lawyers and politicians. These efforts were assisted by former Federal politicians, the Honourable Paul Keating, and the Honourable Tom Uren AC, a local resident.

Ballast Point Park was returned to public ownership under the NSW State Government in 2002. The tireless efforts of the community continue to be reflected in their connection and pride in the site.



Figure 11: Tom Uren addressing activist group. (Source: Fergus Fricke).

<sup>7</sup> Ballast Point Park Masterplan 2004, Context Landscape Design, Anton James Design and CAB Consulting for the Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority

<sup>8</sup> Ballast Point Park Management and Maintenance Plan 2006, Ballast Point Master Plan 2004

### 3.6 Return to a Green Headland

The NSW State Government charged the then Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority, now Placemaking NSW, with the responsibility of transforming the site from its industrial state to public open space, returning it to a green headland for the whole community to enjoy.

The master plan for Ballast Point Park, approved in 2005, established a vision for the new park that has helped guide its design and development, and the park we see today:

‘... to create an appealing and valued harbourside park.... that optimises the potential of its rich layers of history, its unique setting, and its intriguing topography, as well as satisfying a wide variety of social and recreational opportunities. It will have a strong sense of place that is engaging, contemporary and culturally relevant’<sup>9</sup>

To all who know the Park, it is clear that this vision, illustrated in the design concept at Figure 12, has largely been achieved in Ballast Point Park as we experience it today. The conceptualisation of the Park was guided by community values and the overarching principles of sustainability, recognising historic layers, and interpretation and expression of the site’s unique history, natural and cultural heritage.

Following extensive design development, the construction and remediation works commenced in 2007 and Ballast Point Park was opened to the public in 2009.



Figure 12: Ballast Point Park Master Plan 2004.  
(Source: NSW Government prepared by Context Landscape Design, Anton James Design, CAB Consulting).

<sup>9</sup> Ballast Point Park Masterplan 2004, Context Landscape Design, Anton James Design and CAB Consulting for the Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority

### 3.7 Landscape Evolution

Since opening, the Park has matured as an important part of the green headlands of Sydney Harbour. The Park has transformed from an industrial area covered in buildings and oil tanks to a thriving natural ecosystem for all to enjoy – human and animal kin alike. Trees have grown and patterns of activity, use and access have emerged. At its core, the Park is a living landscape that will continue to change over time.

This Plan acknowledges the considerable change that has occurred across the site and outlines an approach for what this thriving, urban parkland and its circular network of integrated relationships requires today.

1822

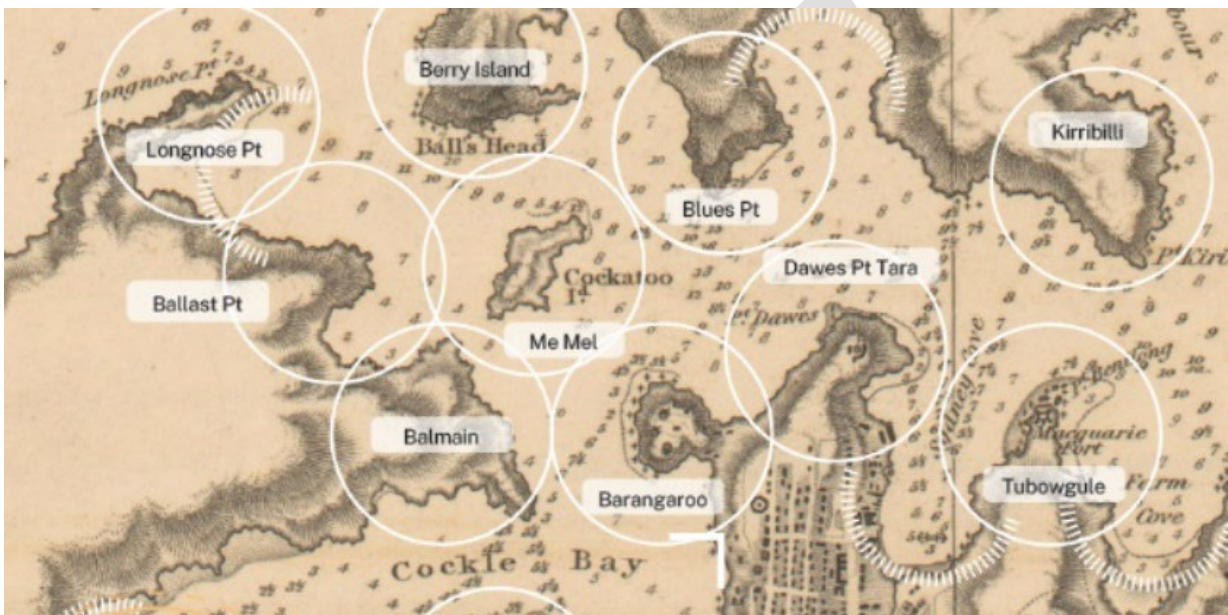


Figure 13: Sydney Harbour Survey (Source: Turf Design Studio)

1870s



Figure 14: Panorama across Balls Head to Birchgrove c. 1870-1875 (Source: © State Library of New South Wales)

1930



Figure 15: Ballast Point Park 1930. (Source: NSW Government)

1943



Figure 16: Ballast Point Park 1943. (Source: SIX Maps)

2009



Figure 17: Ballast Point Park 2009. (Source: Nearmap)

2024



Figure 18: Ballast Point Park 2024. (Source: Nearmap)

# The Park Today

This section provides context around the Park’s current role and how it balances evolving needs to preserve and enhance natural and cultural values.

### 3.8 Governance Context

Placemaking NSW cares for Ballast Point Park and engages with other Local and State Government stakeholders who manage land and sea parcels directly adjacent to the Park. The waterfront areas to the south are under the jurisdiction of Transport for New South Wales (Maritime) who also lease the Jetty to Inner West Council (refer to Figure 19). Inner West Council governs the surrounding residential and recreation land, including Mort Bay Park.



Figure 19: Ownership and management of the Park and surrounds. (Source: Pieta Blythe).

### 3.9 Strategic and Statutory Context

The Park’s management is guided by a framework of strategic plans and statutory obligations. These include both state-level policies and local government plans that work together help to ensure the Park remains a healthy and beautiful space for public recreation.

State Government	
What is the document?	How does it influence the Plan?
<p><b>Place Management NSW Act 1998</b>  <b>Place Management NSW Regulation 2022</b></p> <p><i>An Act to constitute Place Management NSW and to specify its functions.</i></p>	<p>Placemaking NSW is the trading name of Place Management NSW. These documents guide how Placemaking NSW cares for and manages the Park, ensuring the ongoing protection and enhancement of its natural and cultural heritage. It also establishes guiding principles for the Park’s use, safeguarding this valued public recreational space for future generations.</p>
<p><b>Reconciliation Action Plan</b>            Placemaking NSW</p> <p><i>A framework to support the national reconciliation movement.</i></p>	<p>Informs how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage, stories, and cultures and the principles of Reconciliation can be embedded and celebrated in the Park’s future. Intended to sit with Country, it guides approaches to designing with and caring for Country at Ballast Point Park.</p>
<p><b>Connecting with Country Framework</b>            Government Architect New South Wales 2023</p> <p><i>A guide to help planners, designers and the community engage with Country.</i></p>	<p>Sets out a guide for good practice to help respond to Country in future planning and design decisions for the Park. Central to this is the understanding of Country as a circular and relational network, rather than the historically favoured human-centred approach (see Figure 20).</p>
<p><b>Public Open Space Strategy for NSW</b>            Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure 2022</p> <p><i>A plan for government agencies to plan, invest and deliver public open space.</i></p>	<p>Provides an overarching vision and objectives for thriving and resilient open spaces across NSW, with stronger Aboriginal peoples involvement, coordinated governance, and high-quality, well connected open spaces. As a valued urban parkland, Ballast Point Park plays a role in achieving the open space vision.</p>
<p><b>Greener Places</b>            Government Architect New South Wales 2020</p> <p><i>A framework to guide the planning, design, and delivery of green infrastructure in urban areas.</i></p>	<p>Establishes principles for designing green infrastructure, like parks, to create a healthier, more sustainable urban environment. It reinforces the important role of green spaces in urban areas and the value of public involvement in their ongoing management.</p>

What is the document?

**Sydney Green Grid**

Government Architect New South Wales 2017

*A framework to connect places across Sydney to support recreation, biodiversity and waterway health.*

How does it influence the Plan?

Identifies Ballast Point Park's role in the wider grid network of green spaces in Sydney and considers how connections to other spaces, such as the Tom Uren Trail from Balmain East, can be improved and integrated with other recreational, hydrological and ecological grid networks.

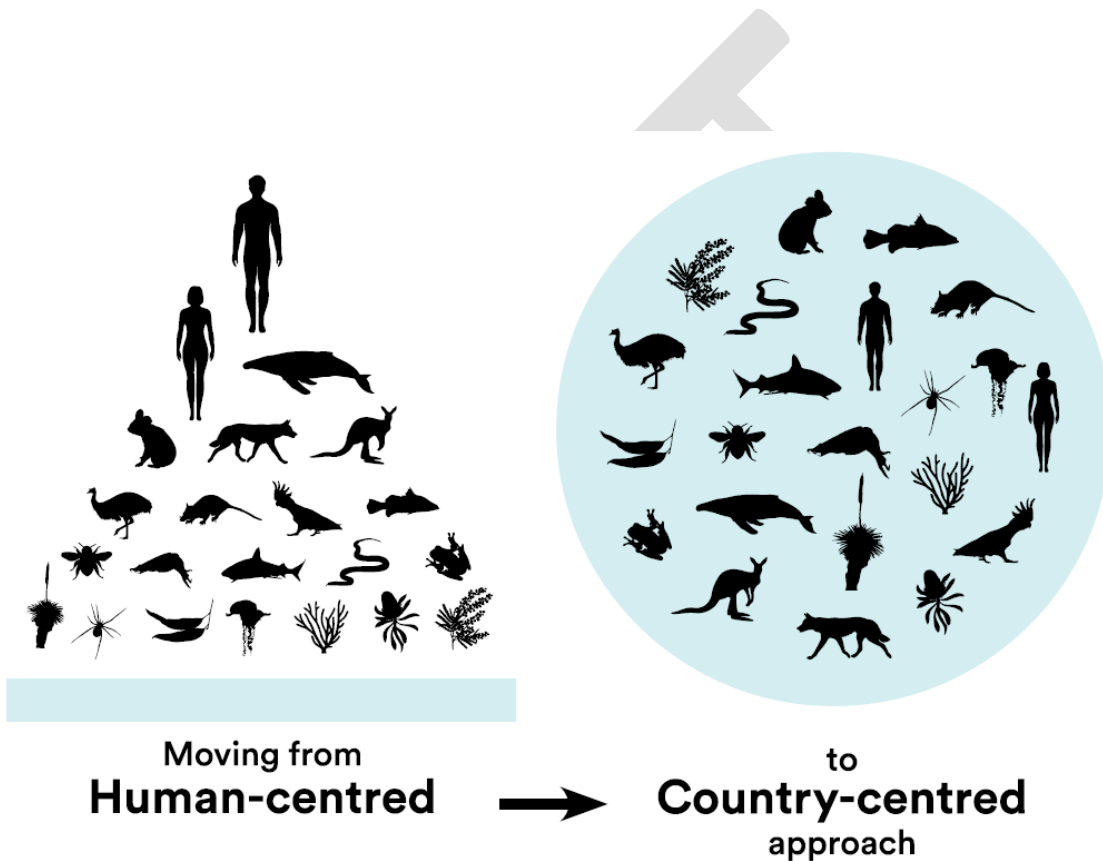


Figure 20: A circular network of integrated relationships. (Source: Government Architect NSW, Connecting with Country Framework).

Inner West Council manages the adjoining residential areas and Mort Bay Park, an important open space link with the Park. The future management of the Park will consider and seek to align with the priorities identified by Inner West Council for the local community.

Local Government	
What is the document?	How does it influence the Plan?
<p><b>Inner West Local Environmental Plan</b> Inner West Council 2022</p> <p><i>A statutory document that manages the way land is used within a Local Government Area.</i></p>	<p>Recognises Ballast Point as a place of local heritage significance and appropriately zones the Park as RE1 Public Recreation which prioritises biodiversity, the natural environment and recreational use.</p>
<p><b>Mort Bay Park Plan of Management</b> Inner West Council 2004</p> <p><i>A plan to guide decision making and open space enhancements.</i></p>	<p>Provides a strategic framework for the care, use and enhancement of Mort Bay Park. It includes opportunities to improve the connection and access between Mort Bay Park and Ballast Point Park, which is supported in this Plan.</p>
<p><b>Recreation Strategy and Action Plan</b> Inner West Council 2023</p> <p><i>A strategy to encourage recreation and address key deficiencies and gaps in recreation and open space provision.</i></p>	<p>Sets out the strategic priorities for providing access to quality open space in the Inner West. Ballast Point Park, while not managed by Inner West Council, contributes to the network of recreation spaces within the local government area.</p>
<p><b>Blue-Green Grid Strategy</b> Inner West Council 2023</p> <p><i>A plan to connect public spaces across the Local Government Area.</i></p>	<p>Supports Ballast Point Park’s role as a key green link along the Harbour, enhancing connectivity with other parks and recreational spaces within the Inner West local government area.</p>

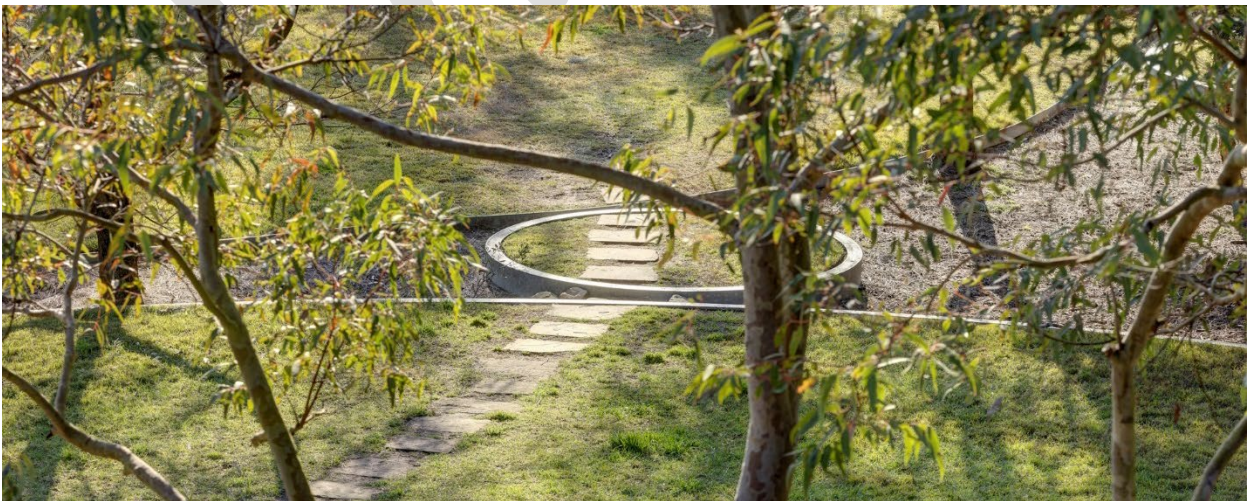


Figure 21: Filtered light through the trees on the lower level of the Park.

### 3.10 Heritage Significance

The heritage significance of the Park, especially its transformation from private industry to public park, is a strong part of why it is so well loved. Its significance is recognised by Inner West Council as a Local Heritage Item within Schedule 5 of the *Inner West Local Environmental Plan 2022*.

At the time of writing, a nomination for State Heritage Register listing of the Park is being considered by the NSW Heritage Council. The proposed listing attributes the Park’s potential significance primarily to the ability to evidence its transformation, the role of community activism in realising the Park, its place in the cultural landscape of Sydney Harbour, and its notable design. A State Heritage Listing would complement the intent of this Plan and, along with a future Conservation Management Plan, would work together to preserve the Park and align future activities with the site’s cultural and heritage values.

The site’s retained heritage layer is one of its most unique assets. The Park’s landscape features have mainly preserved the Caltex and Menevia remains on site and its history brought to life through heritage interpretation, signage and public art such as Tank 101, Delicate Balance, the gabion walls and circular grassed elements. However, there are more stories to tell and interest from the community in sharing these stories.

The Park’s ongoing connection to Country, its water story and historic role in Sydney Harbour within the ‘green necklace’, along with the memories created since the Park’s opening, all complement the physical features of the Park but require more weight in acknowledgment, communication and celebration.

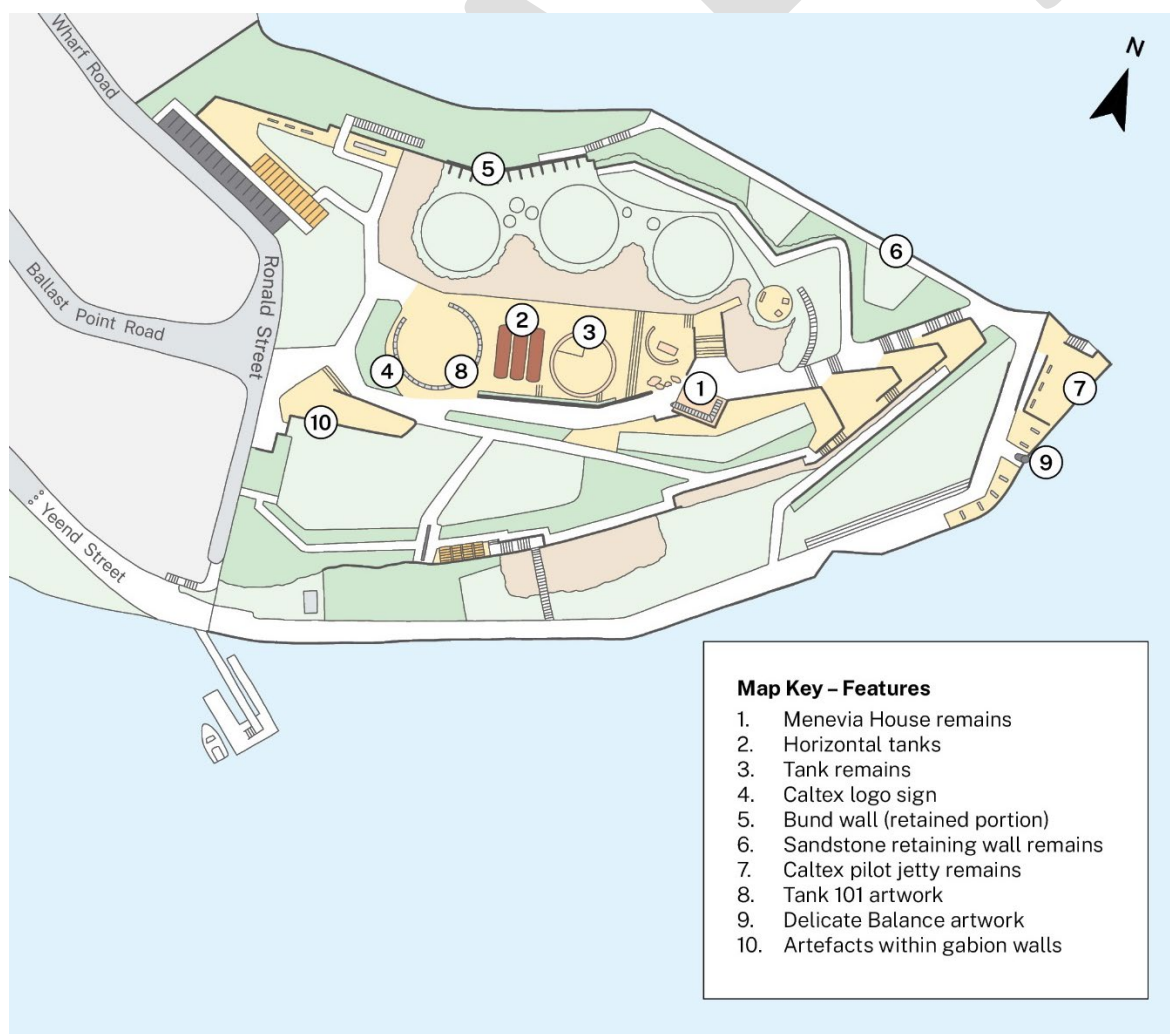


Figure 22: Key historic items throughout the Park. (Source: Peita Blythe).



1 Menevia House Remains



2 Horizontal Tanks



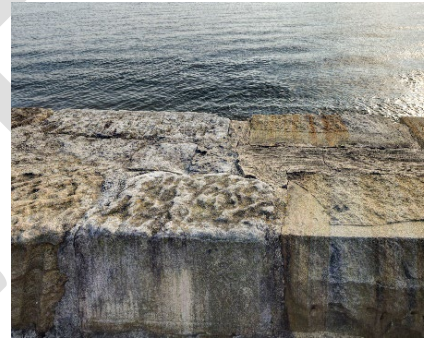
3 Tank Remains



4 Caltex Logo Sign



5 Bund Wall (retained portion)



6 Sandstone retaining wall remains



7 Caltex Pilot Jetty remains



8 Tank 101 Artwork



9 Delicate Balance Artwork



10 Artefacts within gabion walls

### 3.11 Sustainability, Resilience and Circularity

Ballast Point Park is integral to Sydney's Green Grid network. It is a multifunctional ecosystem that contributes to the NSW Government's sustainability objectives by:

- Providing green space including 21% tree canopy cover, 35% vegetation cover and large grassed areas to mitigate heat and carbon emissions<sup>10</sup>
- Enhancing biodiversity and ecology through areas for diverse habitat creation
- Managing stormwater run-off and improving water quality through planting and vegetation management
- Providing passive recreation space that fosters community connection and resilience.

Sustainability was central to the Park's original design and continues to be an important value shared by community and implemented through daily management practices.

Initially, the Park was designed with recycled materials and technology that achieved sustainability outcomes and were innovative for their time such as the gabion walls, recycled timber for seating and aggregate for drainage. These features set a benchmark for circularity on site and the reuse of Park resources to reduce waste. The significant retention and re-use of heritage and industrial elements was also a significant innovation at the time.

Feedback from Park users, along with the maturing ecosystem across the site, highlights an opportunity to further regenerate natural systems with greater consideration for the water cycle and surrounding sea Country. The Park's bioswales are an exemplar of nature-based solutions that naturally filter run off before entering Sydney Harbour.

Some initiatives have not been as successful as originally envisaged, such as the wind turbines, with an opportunity to explore more current and alternative technology to pursue on-site energy generation. This Plan commits to sustainable outcomes with consideration for reuse of organic material, improved water quality, smart energy systems including potential solar panels, lighting upgrades, and adopting practices that will preserve the Park for future generations to enjoy.

The Park plays a vital role in supporting Placemaking NSW's Net Zero targets of:

- **Net Zero by 2035** for Scope 1 emissions (e.g. direct emissions generated by the consumption of fuels to maintain the Park) and Scope 2 emissions (e.g. indirect emissions from consumption of electricity in the Park).
- **Net Zero by 2050** for Scope 3 emissions (indirect emissions, such as those from waste disposal).



Figure 23: Promoting sustainability by using recycled materials in the Park's gabion walls.

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<sup>10</sup> Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure, LandIQ 2024

### 3.12 Environment and Habitat Creation

The Park's creation sought to recognise the site's historical and industrial elements and integrate sustainability principles into a complex natural environment to be enjoyed by people and wildlife alike. Since 2009, the Park's living layer has matured to create an urban bushland that is able to provide habitat for a range of flora and fauna.

#### Geology and Soils

The Park's underlying geology, like much of Sydney Harbour, is Hawkesbury Sandstone underlain by clay<sup>11</sup>. Soils derived from sandstone generally form a sandy, shallow soil of low fertility<sup>12</sup> influencing the health of fauna species, and in turn wildlife. The highest part of the site includes an area of clay influenced soils<sup>13</sup> and is much better for supporting tree and plant growth.

Over millennia, the area surrounding and including the site, has seen sea level rise resulting in the inundation of the river valley and potential Aboriginal sites. The Park is connected to Sea Country with water runoff affecting marine habitat health.

Some areas of the Park, particularly those with steep topography, are prone to erosion where hard surfaces or development has increased water runoff. Retaining walls, regular maintenance, and green infrastructure like permeable surfaces, bioswales, or rain gardens help to manage this runoff<sup>14</sup>.



Figure 24: Erosion and run-off affected ridge-top.

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<sup>11</sup> Colleen Morris, Heritage Advisor, 2024

<sup>12</sup> AILA NSW Landscape Heritage Report, 2018

<sup>13</sup> Urban Ecology Advice for Ballast Point Park, Kingfisher Urban Ecology and Wetlands, January 2025

<sup>14</sup> Urban Ecology Advice for Ballast Point Park, Kingfisher Urban Ecology and Wetlands, January 2025

## Habitat and Vegetation

Habitats and microclimates on site are influenced by many factors including soil type, along with sea levels, saline conditions, breezes and orientation.

The Park is vegetated with a range of native species including some endemic, to create a green headland consistent with others in Sydney Harbour<sup>15</sup>. While some areas of the Park are thriving, there are also challenges for habitat health including impacts by park users, regular spraying, bioswale conditions and stress-affected Eucalyptus trees<sup>16</sup>. The Park also includes invasive plant species, such as African Olive, Asparagus Fern, Prickly Pear, that affect habitat diversity and resilience. In some areas of the Park these have become the dominant species, performing a bank stabilisation role that will require careful consideration and management.

The Park also supports more traditional ‘park’ areas of managed turf that are important zones for passive recreation as well as being well-used by dogs and their owners. The definition between these turfed areas and planted bushland zones is generally well established through built elements such as walls and edges.

## Urban Wildlife

The ‘green necklace’ of Sydney Harbour is important for habitat and species diversity. It effectively provides a network of urban bushland that can support a range of endemic flora and fauna species. Ballast Point Park plays an important role in this network, as part of a larger ‘home range’ for species in the region. In doing so, the Park supports a variety of fauna species including birds such as Australian Raven, Crested Pigeon, Rock Dove, invertebrates such as Orchard Butterfly and bees, reptiles, and possums. Turtles also feed on nearby seagrass meadows within intertidal zones.

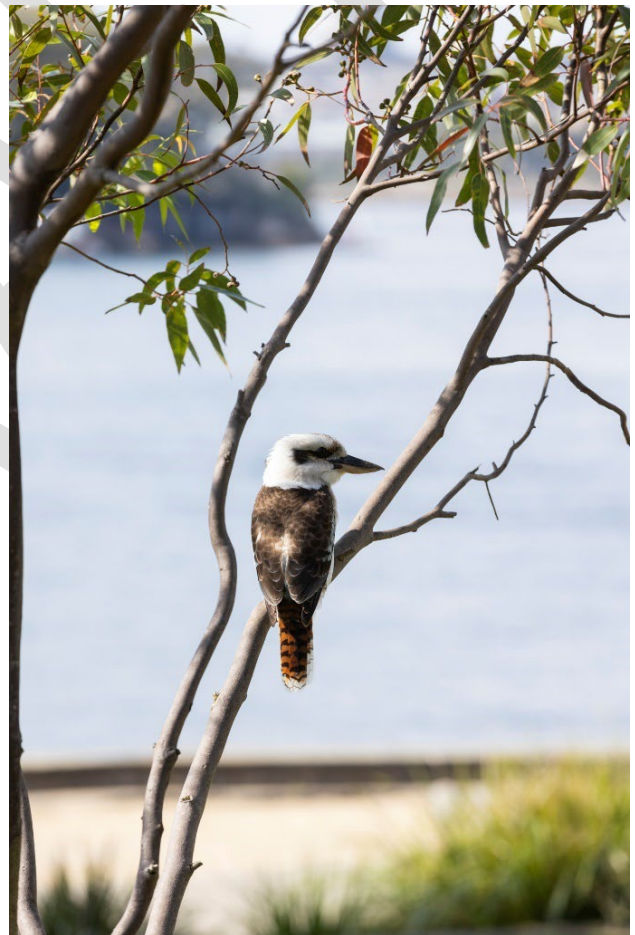


Figure 25: Kookaburras are among a range of birds that can be found in the Park.

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<sup>15</sup> Ballast Point Park Book, 2009

<sup>16</sup> Urban Ecology Advice for Ballast Point Park, Kingfisher Urban Ecology and Wetlands, January 2025

## Native fauna and dogs

In order to balance the ecological and recreation functions of the Park, a carefully considered approach to the management of both wildlife and dogs must be developed. Tree-dwelling birds are able to more easily adapt to on and off-leash dogs being nearby, as opposed to ground birds or reptiles which are at greater risk<sup>17</sup>. Habitat features like nest boxes, dreys and logs can encourage fauna to settle safely out of dogs' reach and also provide an opportunity to sustainably reuse fallen trees or other park materials.

To ensure zones are clearly defined and can be managed effectively, it is generally considered best practice that habitat priority zones be located away from dog on and off-leash areas where possible. In some cases, these areas may overlap with off-leash zones and other high-activity areas but where possible, areas that prioritise wildlife should be identified and managed.



Figure 26: A balanced approach is required to manage wildlife and dogs.

## Contamination

The transformation of the site from its earlier industrial use included an extensive program of remediation to ensure it was suitable for its ultimate park use. When the site was handed over to the then Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority, two localised areas of residual contamination remained. Both areas contain contaminants related to tar or bitumen, which is immobile and therefore not at risk of leaching to ground or surface water. In these areas the identified contamination has been effectively capped and there are no management implications unless there are works required that disturb the capping layer. Any works in these areas must be undertaken in accordance with the Environmental Management Plan (Parsons Brinckerhoff Australia Pty Ltd, 2007).

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<sup>17</sup> Urban Ecology Advice for Ballast Point Park, Kingfisher Urban Ecology and Wetlands, January 2025

### 3.13 Landscape Character

The character of a place is made up of a combination of factors such as vegetation, the quality of design and materials, its use, context, visual connections and intrinsically how it makes people feel. For Ballast Point Park, the maturing of the landscape since 2009 has firmly ingrained an urban bushland character and aesthetic. The strength of the Park's original design is still clear as is its place within Sydney Harbour supported by the magnificent views and visual connections to the adjacent headlands.

The Park's spaces are defined by the changes in topography and retaining walls (both natural and built) that hold it all in place. The materials used across the Park, its maturing parkland setting, tree canopy and variety of microclimates also positively impact the user experience and define its character.

The Park's geometry is strengthened through terraces, gabion and concrete walls, sandstone cliffs and entrances to stairs cut out of bund wall remains. The stairs, bridges and ramps encourage exploration but can make accessibility challenging in some areas. These topographical elements and remaining Caltex relics define and divide the site, creating a consistent look and feel that delivers unique spaces and experiences. The gabion walls filled with rubble from the construction phase of the Park also include broken pieces of pottery and artefacts excavated from the site and mementos from construction worker. Since the Park's opening, park users and community members have also added their own items to the gabion walls, contributing to its evolving character<sup>18</sup>.

The Park's north facing spaces are more likely to be exposed to wind and sun with shaded and protected areas facing east and south towards Balmain. As such, a park user might note changes in vegetation, wildlife and temperature depending on their location, level and aspect. These different levels and headland feature give rise to more intimate and hidden spaces that are contrasted to the openness of the foreshore area and exposed ridge-top.

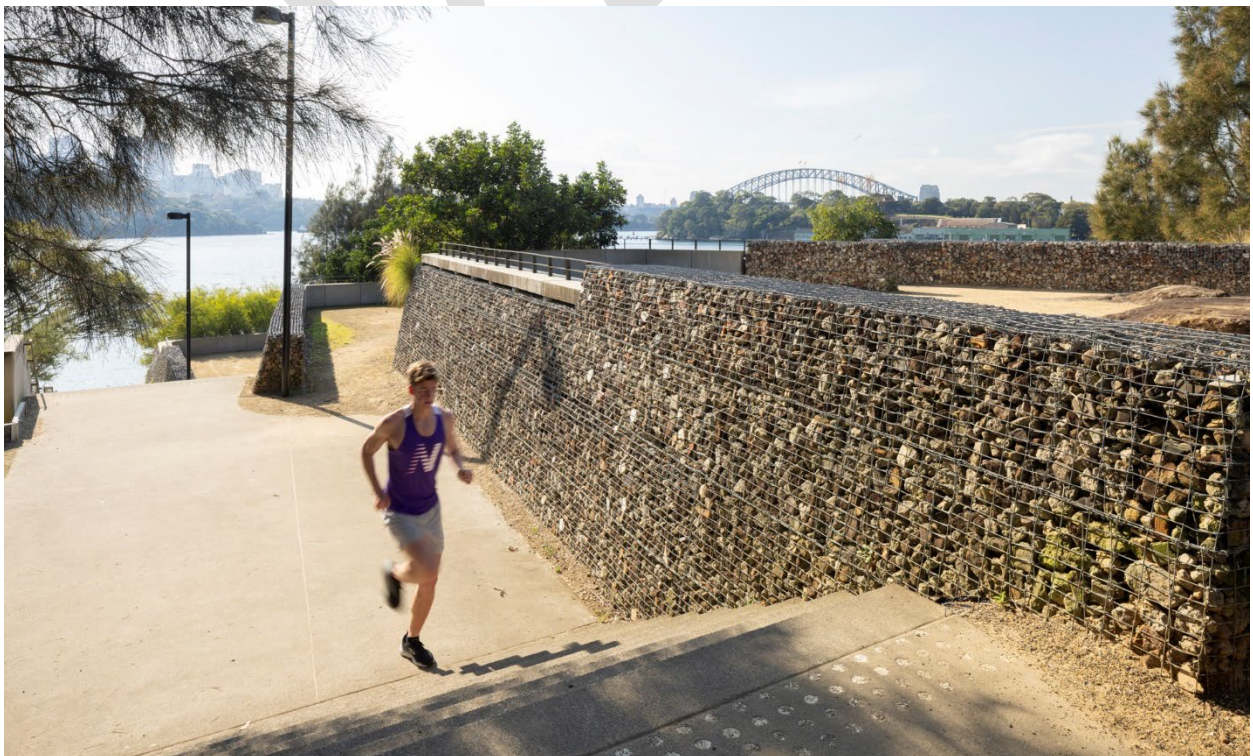


Figure 27: Gabion walls are a core contributor to the character of the Park.

<sup>18</sup> Colleen Morris, Heritage Advisor, 2024

### 3.14 Access and Facilities

A number of facilities and amenities support visitor use and enjoyment of the Park. Complementing these facilities are a range of heritage remnants and interpretive devices that help tell the stories of this place. These include physical relics of the site's past uses, interpretive signage and public artworks.

#### Getting to the Park

Given the Park's headland location within the greater Balmain and Birchgrove peninsula, locating the park can be a challenge for visitors outside the local area. The nearby Balmain Wharf provides ferry services that link back to Circular Quay and further up the Parramatta River however the timetable for these services is somewhat limited compared to other Harbour locations.

The majority of park visitors are from the immediate local area and generally walk to the Park. Cycling access is limited due to its location and steep topography.

Dedicated parking at Wharf Road is untimed and includes two accessible parking spaces at the park entry in this location. Some informal on-street parking is also available in the streets surrounding the park.

#### Accessibility

The main entrances to the Park are at the end of Ballast Point Road, Wharf Road and Yeend Street. The Park is open sunrise to sunset but is not secured outside of these hours and does not have open toilets or extensive lighting after dark<sup>19</sup>.

The Park's accessibility is affected by its topography and geometric layout. The upper levels, which include a barbecue area, children's playground, Menevia heritage precinct, and belvedere viewing platform, are accessible via parking spaces, including disabled parking, on Wharf Road. The lower level along the foreshore area is also accessible with parking provided at Yeend Street. The steep terrain between the upper and lower levels limits accessibility for all but is a key part of its unique character.



Figure 28: The significant topography of the site makes access challenging in some areas.

<sup>19</sup> Ballast Point Park Management and Maintenance Plan, Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority, 2009

## Amenities

The Park contains two public toilet facilities that service the upper and lower levels: off Wharf Road and at the connection from Mort Bay Park off Yeend Street. These include accessible toilets and baby change tables and are generally well used.

The roofing elements of these structures includes strapping that has deteriorated over time.

There have been some reports that the lack of open toilets in the early morning or later in the evening has created a toileting issue especially in being able to support recreational fishing.



Figure 29: Toilets at the lower park entry.

## Recreation Facilities

A small barbeque area at the upper-level entry area off Wharf Road includes a large picnic table setting which is popular with groups and families. Notably this area contains the only formal picnic tables within the Park. There is a diverse range of other seating options across the Park including seats with backs, armrests, platform seat elements and informal seating such as walls or landscape elements.

There are currently limited drinking fountains and no provision of dog bowls.

A small nature play area near Wharf Road has become overgrown, and its design use and intent is no longer clear.



Figure 30: Barbeque area with picnic tables.

## Wayfinding

The Park includes a range of signage with some wayfinding elements and interpretive signage. The existing mapping captures the key features and access paths, however the community has expressed concern that it is difficult to understand and that additional signage locations may better support visitor use.



Figure 31: A combination of wayfinding and interpretive signage at the lower park entry.

## Bins and Waste Management

There are limited bin locations and the bin at the lower park entry off Yeend Street regularly receives excessive amounts of commercial rubbish from boat operators utilising the adjacent jetty (managed by Inner West Council). Safe disposal of fishing waste (such as hooks and lines in particular) has also been identified as an issue.



Figure 32: Ballast Point Park key facilities and amenities (Source: Peita Blythe).

### 3.15 Significant Views

The views to and from Ballast Point, and the physical and visual connections to the broader Harbour have been part of the experience and use of the site for millennia<sup>20</sup>. Views of the Sydney Harbour Bridge, the city skyline and ‘green necklace’ headlands such as Balls Head, Me Mel, Barangaroo, Balmain and Yurulbin can be seen from informal and formal lookout positions across the Park. The views and connection to the Harbour are a key drawcard that bring people to use and enjoy the Park.

Park views vary with elevation, aspect, and tree canopy cover. As the Park continues to evolve, trees will help frame views but may also reduce visibility especially in areas where tree species have self-seeded. It is important that new trees are planted with consideration of significant views and that existing trees are managed in a sensitive way to protect views while supporting the site’s ecology and vegetation health.



Figure 33: Significant views across Sydney Harbour. (Map source: Peita Blythe. Image source: Brett Boardman).

<sup>20</sup> Rowena Welsh-Jarrett, 2024

### 3.16 Park Use

The Park is an important public space for all of Sydney and visitors wanting to learn more about Sydney Harbour's history and cultural values.

It is a popular urban backyard for the local community, particularly those residents living in walking distance and surrounding suburbs that are densely populated. It's an important passive recreation space with park users enjoying the site's unique landscape multiple times a day for walking, dog walking, jogging, cycling, children's play and fitness activities.

The Park also serves as a venue for informal gatherings such as picnics, barbecues, photography lessons and pétanque, but also larger events like wedding ceremonies and New Years Eve. Spaces within the Park, including permits for photography and filming, are available to hire from Placemaking NSW.

The Park's topography, infrastructure and cultural heritage makes it difficult to facilitate larger scale events. The community has expressed interest in formalising dog walking arrangements and additional activities like bushcare that seek to improve the Park's ecology. All future events and passive recreational activities undertaken across the site will align with the objectives of this Plan and in keeping with the Sydney Green Grid and Inner West Council's Blue-Green Grid.



Figure 34: People enjoying a bike ride and views across the Harbour.

## Dog Walking

The Park is a popular place for pet owners needing space for dogs to walk and socialise, particularly given the Park's high-density, inner-city location. At the same time, the Park has an increasing tree canopy and urban forest that attracts and supports wildlife important to the site and greater Sydney region.

The *NSW Companion Animals Act 1998* governs the effective and responsible care and management of companion animals across NSW including dogs. The Act sets out responsibilities for dog owners while their dog is in a public place which largely relate to the need for dogs to be under effective control at all times. It also identifies the ability to declare off-leash areas to allow for dog exercise and socialisation while establishing key areas where dogs are prohibited to balance community needs. Most notably for Ballast Point Park these prohibited areas include:

- Children's play areas;
- Food preparation / consumption areas; and
- Wildlife protection areas.

The Park is currently an on-leash area with adjacent Mort Bay Park available for off-leash exercise under the management and enforcement of Inner West Council<sup>21</sup>. Figure 35 below identifies the existing on and off-leash arrangements across the area.



Figure 35: Existing dog walking arrangements at Ballast Point Park and neighbouring Mort Bay Park (Source: Peita Blythe)

There is very strong community demand to extend the existing off-leash arrangements from Mort Bay Park into Ballast Point Park. Equally there is a shared aspiration that the biodiversity and habitat potential of the Park be elevated to a level appropriate to its urban bushland role.

<sup>21</sup> Ballast Point Park Management and Maintenance Plan, Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority, 2009

# Community feedback

This Plan is informed by deep engagement with the community and stakeholders. By understanding the community’s needs, we ensure this Plan responds to priorities that matter most to the people who use the Park regularly and contribute to its legacy.

In total, more than 500 people participated in community consultation for Ballast Point Park over 12 weeks in late 2023 and early 2024. The project engaged with the community through a range of communication and engagement activities that asked for ideas and feedback to improve the Park. These activities including local pop-up booths, a community workshop and online survey.

Throughout the consultation period, many participants mentioned high levels of satisfaction with the Park’s current state and stressed they’d like to see the Park preserved and maintained rather than changed.

**“I love Ballast Point Park as it is and would like to see it maintained and only enhanced.”**

– Survey participant

The insights gathered through community engagement reflect a collective desire to balance preservation with innovation, ensuring that the Park continues to thrive as a vibrant and resilient public space. For further detail of the engagement undertaken refer to Appendix A.



Figure 36: Local pop-up booths at the Park. (Source: JOC Consulting).

### 3.17 What We Heard

The following insights summarise what the community said are key strengths and areas for improvement across the Park.

#### Key strengths

- Strong connection to land and sea Country
- Community sense of pride and advocacy
- Unique identity and industrial history
- High levels of satisfaction with the park's current state
- Space for dog walkers and owners
- A passive recreational space
- Biodiversity throughout the park
- Community connection and socialising.

#### Areas for improvement

- Strengthening the connection to Country
- Supporting wildlife habitats
- Clarifying dog walking arrangements
- Encouraging educational opportunities
- Reviewing wayfinding and signage
- Improving amenities and site accessibility
- Promoting the Park online
- Enhancing the connection to Mort Bay Park.

#### Balancing everyone's needs

Survey participants who use the Park for dog walking rated 'protecting and enhancing biodiversity' as a top priority, demonstrating a strong shared value in the community around nature regardless of pet ownership status. However, survey participants also rated the current dog walking arrangement as being the lowest of any feature in the Park, and a key area for improvement.

The community were largely familiar with the dog walking arrangements at Mort Bay Park and felt alignment between the two parks was logical given many dog owners would walk between them, and signs at Ballast Point Park were seen to be ineffective.

Looking to the future, the community generally agreed that dog walking arrangements need to be carefully managed to balance amenity and ecology needs.

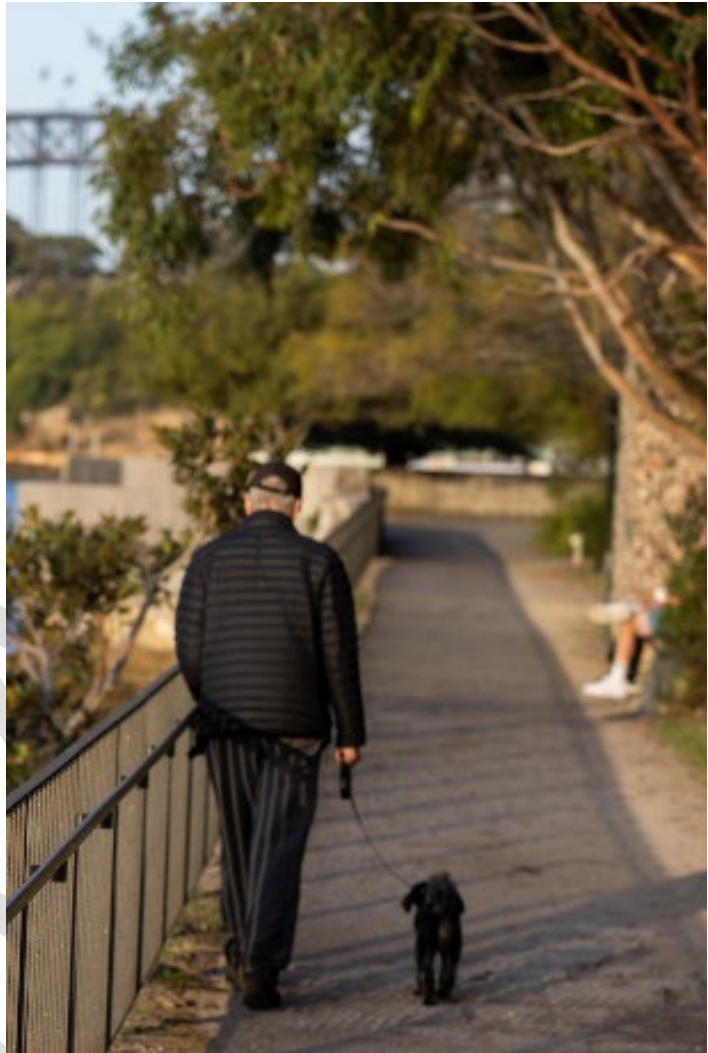


Figure 37: Dog walking at Ballast Point Park.

### 3.18 Community Values and Priorities

The following values reflect the community's feedback on what they love most about the Park, its current management and aspirations for the future:

- **Sustainability and Environmental Awareness:** The community demonstrated significant knowledge of environmental practices and showed a deep commitment to preserving the Park's flora and fauna. Creating and maintaining wildlife habitats and ecosystems emerged as top priorities, with some participants showing interest in being actively involved in the Park's upkeep.
- **Community Connection and Socialising:** The Park is valued as a vital community hub. It serves as an important place where people meet every day, underscoring the Park's role in bringing people together. The community emphasised the importance of maintaining the Park as a place for authentic, local and place-based connections. They use the Park for a variety of activities and like the small, temporary activations over large-scale events.
- **History and Culture:** The community takes pride in the Park's unique industrial heritage and expressed a desire to explore and celebrate other aspects of its history including Aboriginal cultural heritage. Feedback indicated a strong interest in educating visitors about the Park's rich heritage, ensuring that its story is preserved for future generations.
- **Character and Legacy:** Preserving the Park's unique and innovative landscape character was a top priority for community members. They stressed the importance of careful management and thoughtful enhancements that honour the Park's past while addressing future needs, ensuring that any future plans respect these core values.

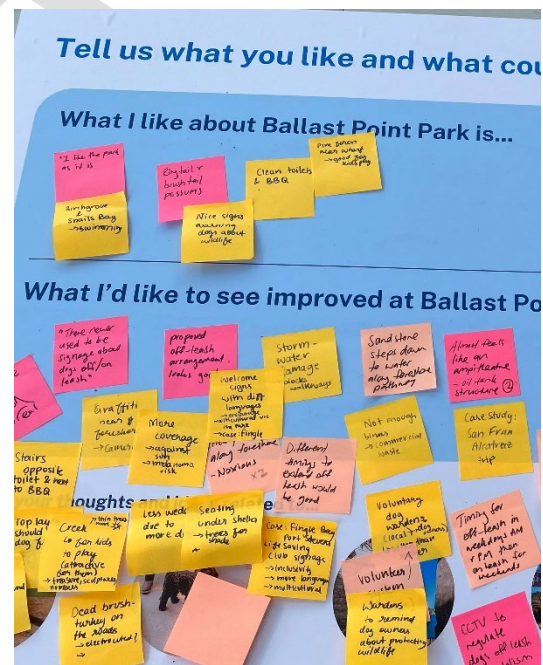


Figure 38: Local pop-up booths and brainstorming feedback shared by the community. (Source: JOC Consulting).

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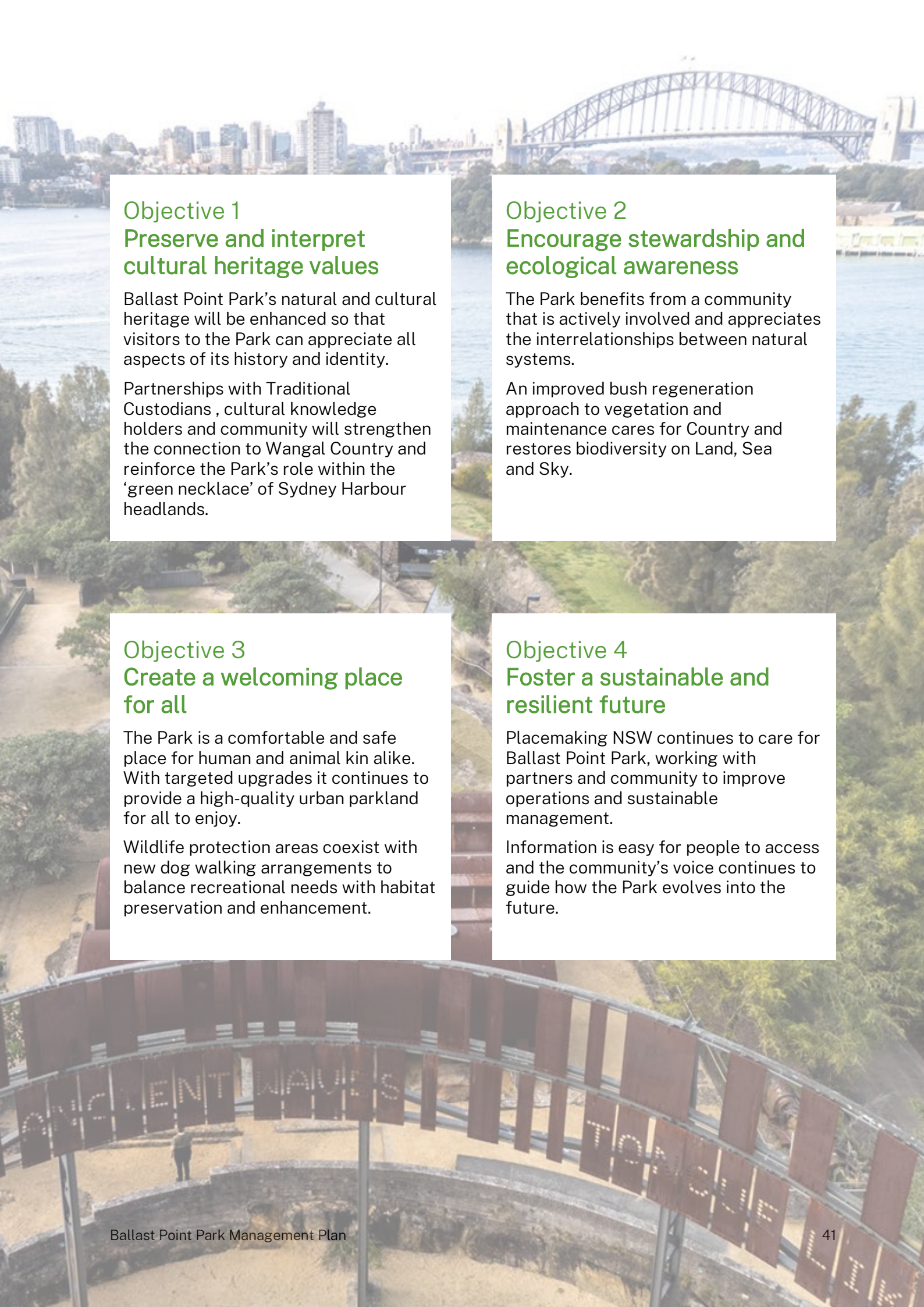
# 4

## Management Approach

An aerial photograph of Ballast Point Park in Sydney, Australia. The park is situated on a hillside overlooking the Sydney Harbour. In the foreground, a curved metal railing is visible, with a sign that reads "STATUES OF ANCIENT WAU". Below the railing, there is a dirt path and some trees. In the middle ground, there is a large, curved stone wall or structure. In the background, the Sydney Harbour is visible, with several sailboats on the water. The city skyline is visible in the distance, with many high-rise buildings. The overall scene is a mix of natural and urban elements.

Vision for Ballast Point Park

**Ballast Point Park is Wangal Country, deeply connected to the Harbour and the rich layers of culture and heritage that define this unique place. It is a resilient park to be cared for and enjoyed by all.**



### Objective 1 Preserve and interpret cultural heritage values

Ballast Point Park's natural and cultural heritage will be enhanced so that visitors to the Park can appreciate all aspects of its history and identity.

Partnerships with Traditional Custodians, cultural knowledge holders and community will strengthen the connection to Wangal Country and reinforce the Park's role within the 'green necklace' of Sydney Harbour headlands.

### Objective 2 Encourage stewardship and ecological awareness

The Park benefits from a community that is actively involved and appreciates the interrelationships between natural systems.

An improved bush regeneration approach to vegetation and maintenance cares for Country and restores biodiversity on Land, Sea and Sky.

### Objective 3 Create a welcoming place for all

The Park is a comfortable and safe place for human and animal kin alike. With targeted upgrades it continues to provide a high-quality urban parkland for all to enjoy.

Wildlife protection areas coexist with new dog walking arrangements to balance recreational needs with habitat preservation and enhancement.

### Objective 4 Foster a sustainable and resilient future

Placemaking NSW continues to care for Ballast Point Park, working with partners and community to improve operations and sustainable management.

Information is easy for people to access and the community's voice continues to guide how the Park evolves into the future.

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## Objective 1 - Preserve and interpret cultural heritage values

Park users continue to discover more about the layered cultural and historical narratives, where the deep ongoing history of the Wan people intersects with colonial and industrial eras. The Park's design thoughtfully preserves these historical elements, weaving together the stories of Aboriginal heritage and European occupation.

Through thoughtful management and the preservation of its cultural heritage, the Park remains a vital part of Sydney's network of green headlands, offering a meaningful connection to the past while looking to the future.

### What we heard

- The continuous connection of Aboriginal peoples to this place now known as Ballast Point Park can be strengthened with engagement to guide cultural heritage matters and management.
- There is a strong community desire to better understand and celebrate Aboriginal cultural heritage.
- Further investigation is required around Aboriginal cultural heritage including potential for items of significance in and surrounding the Park.
- The Park is a rare cultural landscape that captivates people's imaginations. Enhancing cultural heritage features and celebrating community activism will help educate park users about the Park's cultural and social heritage.
- The Park is a prominent harbour headland, forming part of the 'green necklace' of Sydney Harbour. Views should be maintained and enhanced to reinforce the Park's position and role in Sydney Harbour.

- The Park's heritage items, artefacts and relics are well maintained and prominent across the site. A review of previous interpretation efforts and identification of opportunities to enhance these features is needed to maintain, update and share cultural stories.
- A series of artworks and interpretations help Park users engage with cultural heritage. Ongoing partnerships with Inner West Council at Mort Bay Park and promotion of cultural heritage across the site will help drive engagement with these artworks.
- The Park as a living showcase of history and cultural heritage values. It will focus on maintaining and enhancing the cultural heritage across the Park with further research required in targeted areas.

**“Link together the rich narratives of Aboriginal culture, Caltex, Community fight”**

- Workshop participant

### Priorities for this objective include:

- 1.1 Engage with Traditional Custodians, cultural knowledge holders and Aboriginal community to actively participate in the ongoing care and management of the Park.
- 1.2 Protect and enhance the Park's natural and cultural heritage values.
- 1.3 Improve the Park's natural landscape qualities and relationship to the water and headlands of Sydney Harbour.

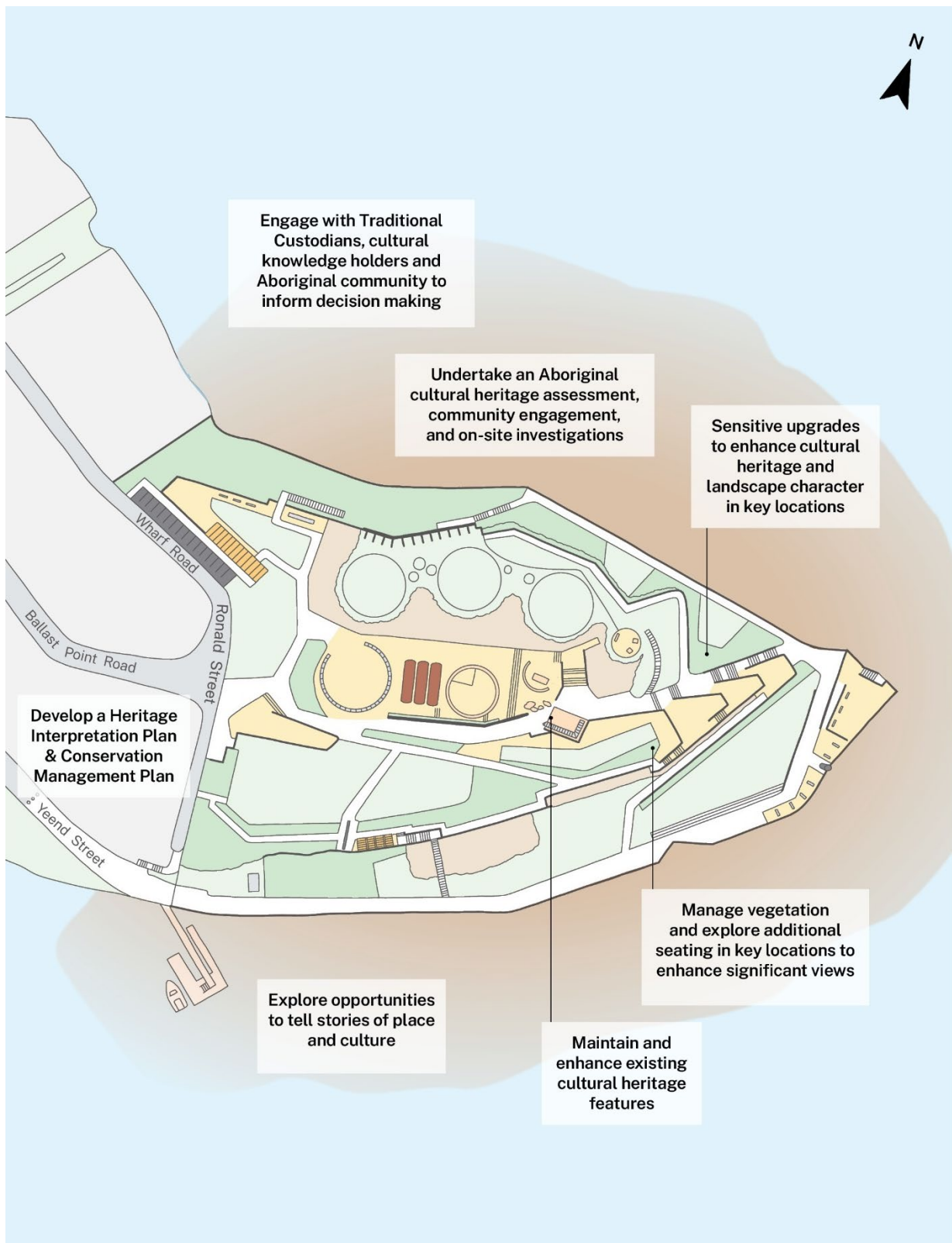


Figure 39: Opportunities to preserve and interpret cultural heritage values. (Source: Peita Blythe).

We will preserve and interpret cultural heritage values through the following priorities and actions:

No.	Priorities	Actions	Rationale
1.1	Engage with Traditional Custodians, cultural knowledge holders and Aboriginal community to actively participate in the ongoing care and management of the Park.	<p>a. Engage with Traditional Custodians and Aboriginal community to establish opportunities to be involved in the Park’s care and management.</p> <p>b. Involve Aboriginal communities in future decision making to support self-determination and cultural autonomy, incorporate cultural knowledge in sustainable management, and ensure balanced outcomes for Country and community.</p> <p>c. Actively seek opportunities to procure services from Aboriginal businesses, consistent with Banga budyari mudjin (Make Good Relations), the Placemaking NSW Reconciliation Action Plan.</p>	<p>The Park is on Wangal Country.</p> <p>Placemaking NSW recognises that robust understanding and truth-telling of Country involves a multi-disciplinary approach to deepen the knowledge needed for Connecting with Country. This approach is governed by appropriate Cultural Protocol, community participation, and Cultural Governance<sup>22</sup>.</p> <p>The community also values cultural heritage and would like see initiatives that educate and raise awareness for park users. This begins with listening and learning from Aboriginal people.</p>
1.2	Protect and enhance the Park’s natural and cultural heritage values.	<p>a. Undertake a detailed Aboriginal cultural heritage assessment including on-site investigations to identify potential Aboriginal sites and cultural values.</p>	<p><i>Opportunities to learn more about the site’s Aboriginal culture and heritage was voted as the second highest priority by survey participants for what they would like to see more of in the Park (following</i></p>

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<sup>22</sup> Rowena Welsh-Jarrett, 2024

No.	Priorities	Actions	Rationale
1.2	Protect and enhance the Park's natural and cultural heritage values.	<p>b. Undertake a detailed program of Aboriginal community engagement to identify stories of place and connection that are appropriate to this place and in the context of the stories across Sydney Harbour.</p> <p>c. Develop and implement a Heritage Interpretation Plan, encompassing Land, Sea and Sky Country, in accordance with Burra Charter principles to improve oral, physical and digital storytelling and education. Include a critical review of existing interpretation elements and opportunities to improve their function and engagement especially Menevia House.</p> <p>d. Maintain and enhance existing cultural heritage features, such as relics, remains, artefacts and artworks, to promote opportunities for learning and appreciation of the Park's history.</p> <p>e. Develop and implement a Conservation Management Plan to support the preservation and protection of physical and intangible heritage values and consider the Park's potential state heritage significance.</p>	<p>designated off-leash dog areas as the first priority).</p> <p>The community is also proud of its own contribution to the Park's ongoing legacy and wants to see stories of the past told in various ways.</p> <p>The enhancement and ongoing maintenance of existing cultural heritage features should be prioritised along with new opportunities that will improve the overall experience of the Park.</p> <p>The Park plays an important role in preserving cultural heritage for current and future generations. The community suggested physical installations and digital storytelling as ways to make cultural heritage more accessible and visible.</p>

No.	Priorities	Actions	Rationale
		f. Partner with other agencies including Inner West Council, Museums of History etc to develop a program of low impact activations that can celebrate and promote the Park's cultural heritage values such as walking tours and site workshops.	
1.3	Improve the Park's natural landscape qualities and relationship to the water and headlands of Sydney Harbour	<p>a. Sensitively plan upgrades and improvements to enhance cultural heritage and landscape character.</p> <p>b. Explore opportunities to tell stories of place and culture at Ballast Point that connect to Country</p> <p>c. Manage vegetation to protect identified key views to Sydney Harbour and nearby headlands.</p> <p>d. Enhance existing viewing points with additional or improved seating opportunities and shade where appropriate.</p>	The Park's unique urban headland setting and the opportunity to view and connect with other headlands around Sydney Harbour is fundamental to its use and enjoyment. The important visual curtilage of the Park has been enjoyed by people for millennia. Alongside Balls Head Reserve and Me-Mel (Goat Island), Ballast Point Park forms part of the series of green gateways that signal the entrance to Parramatta River.

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## Objective 2 - Encourage stewardship and ecological awareness

The Park is a thriving ecosystem that supports wildlife through habitat creation and a healthy, living soil layer.

Natural systems have become more resilient as inter-relationships between all living things are better understood and appreciated. Habitat features and regeneration areas help to prioritise wildlife in key areas of the Park, and seasonal changes are celebrated with the arrival of migratory birds and pollinators.

Park users engage with nature and learn about preserving green spaces and vital role of soils in rejuvenating habitat. By sharing knowledge and closely monitoring the Park's ecosystem, the community are more connected, as visible results have inspired greater participation.

### What we heard

- Recognise the importance of the interconnectedness of Aboriginal culture, knowledge, people and place.
  - The Park's ecosystem and landscape will continue to evolve over time. Management practices should consider the changing and evolving nature of Country and the ways in which local communities and ecologies have responded and adapted to these changes throughout time
  - On-leash and off-leash areas need to be carefully designed and managed.
- The creation of habitat features, such as rocks and logs, and areas that prioritise wildlife can help boost species across the Park.
  - Management practices such as low herbicide use, lighting considerations, precise watering devices, and no mow areas all contribute to improved ecological health.
  - The community have a strong desire to understand how the Park is being managed and cared for.

### The priorities for this objective include:

- 2.1 Embed cultural management strategies to care for Country.
- 2.2 Enhance flora and fauna management to improve natural systems.
- 2.3 Improve infrastructure and maintenance practices to increase biodiversity and ecological health.

**“When doing ecological planning, we’re actually planning for the next 50 years and implementing best practice in a changed, and changing environment.”**

- Elaway, Ecological Advisor

## Creating a Vision for Biodiversity

The following ecological vision statement has been provided as a realistic outcome on the site with the mixed use of nature, passive recreation and responsible use with dogs.

Ballast Point Park is a mosaic of landscapes from nature focused to open turf. People move through and enjoy the Park knowing they are within an urban habitat area with a focus on nature combined with ample open areas for respectful use include areas where dogs can be on or off lead.

Community is involved in nature-based activities on-site. Community, Placemaking NSW and others implement actions that enhance the ecological value of Ballast Point Park and surrounds through expanding nature-positive actions in the surrounding areas.

Soils are healthy, native plant diversity is high, habitats are present for terrestrial, flying and intertidal native flora and fauna.

Management is appropriate and area specific. Areas where nature is priority are undisturbed and maintained through bush regeneration.

Across the nature and landscape areas pollinators thrive, invertebrates are common, small birds and lizards can feast, shelter and reproduce. Ring-tail Possums flourish and move easily between the park and residential areas. Raptors sit high on constructed roosts while migratory birds including black-faced Cuckoo Shrikes announce the start of Spring. Off the Parks edge the intertidal area has a high abundance and diversity of marine invertebrates and use by species that move throughout the Harbour.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Urban Ecology Advice for Ballast Point Park, Kingfisher Urban Ecology and Wetlands, January 2025

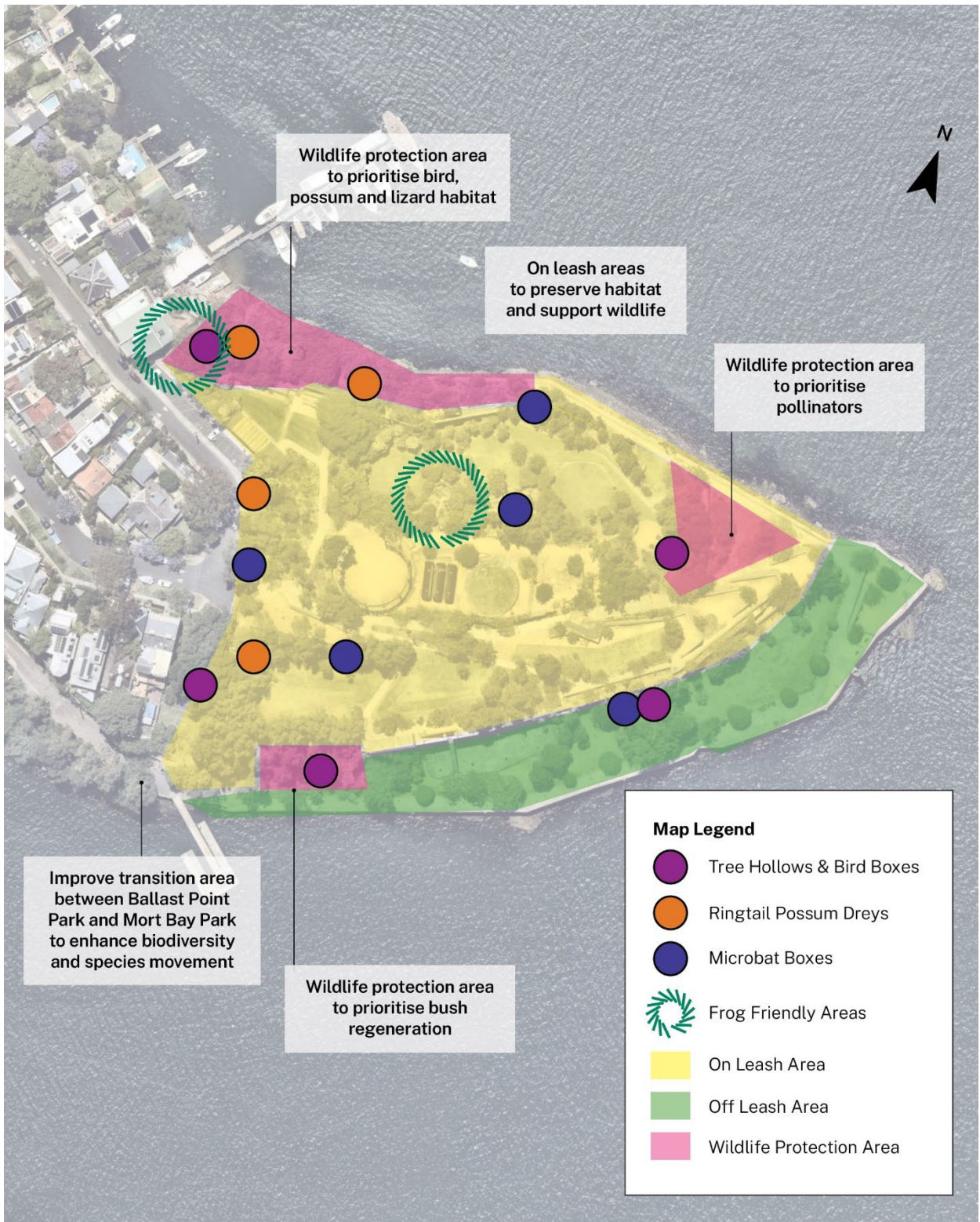


Figure 40: Opportunities for fauna across the Park. (Source: Peita Blythe).



Figure 41: Opportunities to improve ecology and biodiversity. (Source: Peita Blythe).

We will encourage stewardship and ecological awareness through the following priorities and actions:

No.	Priorities	Actions	Rationale
2.1	Embed cultural management strategies to care for Country.	a. Work collaboratively with Aboriginal businesses, on ecological management of both Land and Sea Country, habitat restoration, and cultural heritage management.	Aboriginal people have developed cultural management practices over thousands of years (including cool burning techniques, seasonal calendars and fish traps) <sup>24</sup> .  It is important to incorporate cultural practices and knowledge into a sustainable future, taking a balanced approach to sustainable management that draws on best practice, local community knowledge and expertise to ensure positive outcomes for Country and people <sup>25</sup> .
		b. Identify project opportunities to restore habitats on Land and Sea Country in keeping with Aboriginal principles and Connecting with Country frameworks including potential partnerships with other agencies or specialist organisations.	
2.2	Enhance flora and fauna management to improve natural systems.	a. Adapt the landscape maintenance approach for the Park to include the principles of bushland regeneration.	<i>Biodiversity (animals and plants) and bush care</i> were voted second highest by survey participants when thinking about which elements of the Park needed the most improvement.
		b. Regenerate habitats with consideration for soils, microclimates and targeted planting based on suitability of endemic flora species and ability to provide wildlife habitat.	
		c. Partner with the Botanic Gardens of Sydney to improve biodiversity and identify climate resilient native species for the Park.	

<sup>24</sup> Connecting with Country Framework, NSW Government

<sup>25</sup> Rowena Welsh-Jarrett, 2024

No.	Priorities	Actions	Rationale
2.2	Enhance flora and fauna management to improve natural systems.	<p>d. Incorporate wildlife infrastructure and habitat creation features for fauna in on-leash and less disturbed areas of the Park including rocks, logs, boxes and reefs.</p> <p>e. Support local wildlife care networks such as WIRES by enabling foraging of vegetation to provide food options for rescued animals.</p> <p>f. Develop natural vegetation borders in key habitat areas to deter dogs and people and focus on regenerating groundcover through targeted restoration efforts.</p> <p>g. Partner with Inner West Council to enhance the green corridor connection between Ballast Point Park and Mort Bay Park.</p> <p>h. Encourage community participation in the restoration of habitats through Bushcare groups in collaboration with Inner West Council.</p> <p>i. Develop and implement a Tree Management Plan to consider habitat needs, opportunities to increase tree canopy, end-of-life and succession planning.</p>	

No.	Priorities	Actions	Rationale
2.3	Improve infrastructure and maintenance practices to increase biodiversity and ecological health	<p>a. Review the condition and location of vegetation and retaining walls to reduce sediment, nutrient and pollutant runoff into marine habitats.</p> <p>b. Improve existing regenerative maintenance practices, implementing a bush-regeneration approach to support wildlife and vegetation health.</p> <p>c. Provide timely information and education to Park users about significant maintenance and upgrade projects, including the benefits of regenerative practices.</p> <p>d. Undertake a Lighting Audit to assess efficiency of lighting, perceptions of safety and the impact on fauna and flora.</p>	<p>The Park is integral to Sydney's Green Grid network and currently manages stormwater runoff to improve the water quality of Sydney Harbour. However, improvements can be made, and erosion is visible in some areas of the Park with compacted aggregate contributing to faster water flow across the site.</p> <p>The Park's existing management currently follows regenerative maintenance practices such as manual weed removal, limited use of herbicides and no mow areas. This Plan encourages the continual adoption of these practices and where possible, the reuse of materials on site.</p> <p>Artificial lighting has the potential to impact natural systems but is also important for community safety. While this Plan is not encouraging extensive use of the Park after dark, and continues existing public access arrangements, it also acknowledges improvements could be made particularly as new technology becomes available.</p>

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## Objective 3 – Create a welcoming place for all

The community's pride in the Park continues and new visitors discover and enjoy this special place.

The Park's primary function as a passive recreation space supports community wellbeing and social connection.

Designated areas for dog on-leash and off-leash activity have been established and balanced with the preservation of habitat and an increase in local and migratory wildlife.

Visitors who come to the Park are able to gather comfortably in spaces designed for reflection, stories and appreciating the beauty of their surrounds. The Park's features and amenities are modern, clean and cared for.

### What we heard

- The Park is valued as a vital community hub. It serves as an important place where people meet every day.
- The community use the Park for dog walking and socialising.
- Park users prefer the current approach of occasional small, temporary activations over medium or large-scale events.
- Dog off-leash areas were supported by many in the community, but concerns were raised around the impacts on wildlife and habitat. Designated dog on-leash and off-leash areas are needed to enhance the overall experience and protect wildlife.

- The Park has an increasing urban forest that attracts and supports wildlife but also increases the likelihood of contact between dogs and other fauna.
- Alignment with Inner West Council's dog off-leash arrangements at Mort Bay Park will improve park user experience.
- Minor enhancements to facilities and amenities would improve safety, comfort and access.

### The priorities for this objective include:

- 3.1 Improve dog walking arrangements to protect wildlife and create a safe environment for all.
- 3.2 Enhance existing facilities and amenities to be used by everyone.
- 3.3 Manage passive recreation uses to reinforce identity and respond to community expectations.

**“Dogs on-leash to protect nesting birds, picnicking families sitting on the grass. Clear signage and enforcement of arrangements.”**

- Survey participant

## Implementing a balanced approach for dogs off-leash

A new dog off-leash area is proposed to be introduced along part of the lower level of Ballast Point Park. The off-leash area has been carefully determined to provide a suitable space for dogs and their owners to enjoy while balancing opportunities for flora and fauna to thrive. It will not be fenced or enclosed.

Many community members would like to have their dogs off-leash in the Park and be able to continue walking from the existing off-leash area in neighbouring Mort Bay Park into Ballast Point Park. Given the connected nature of the two parks, the proposed approach for Ballast Point Park considers how Inner West Council's policy for *Dog Off-Leash Areas in Parks* applies to provide a continuous experience for dog walkers along the foreshore.

Alongside the desire for an off-leash area, there is strong support from both the community and Placemaking NSW to increase biodiversity and ecological health across Ballast Point Park. With careful management and governance, these two ambitions can be achieved simultaneously.

The proposed off-leash area has been defined based on the following characteristics:

- Key wildlife protection areas are separated from off-leash areas by retaining walls or dense planting, or they are a suitable distance away therefore having a low impact on existing habitat<sup>26</sup>.
- It is located away from children's play areas.
- It flows logically from the existing off-leash area in Mort Bay Park.
- It is sensitively sized and located to ensure ample quality space is available in the Park for people who would prefer to enjoy the space away from dogs off-leash.

Importantly, any future off-leash areas across the Park will remain public and open for everyone to enjoy. The plans on the following page show the existing and proposed dog walking arrangements.



Figure 42: Dog walker in the Park.

<sup>26</sup> Urban Ecology Advice for Ballast Point Park, Kingfisher Urban Ecology and Wetlands, January 2025

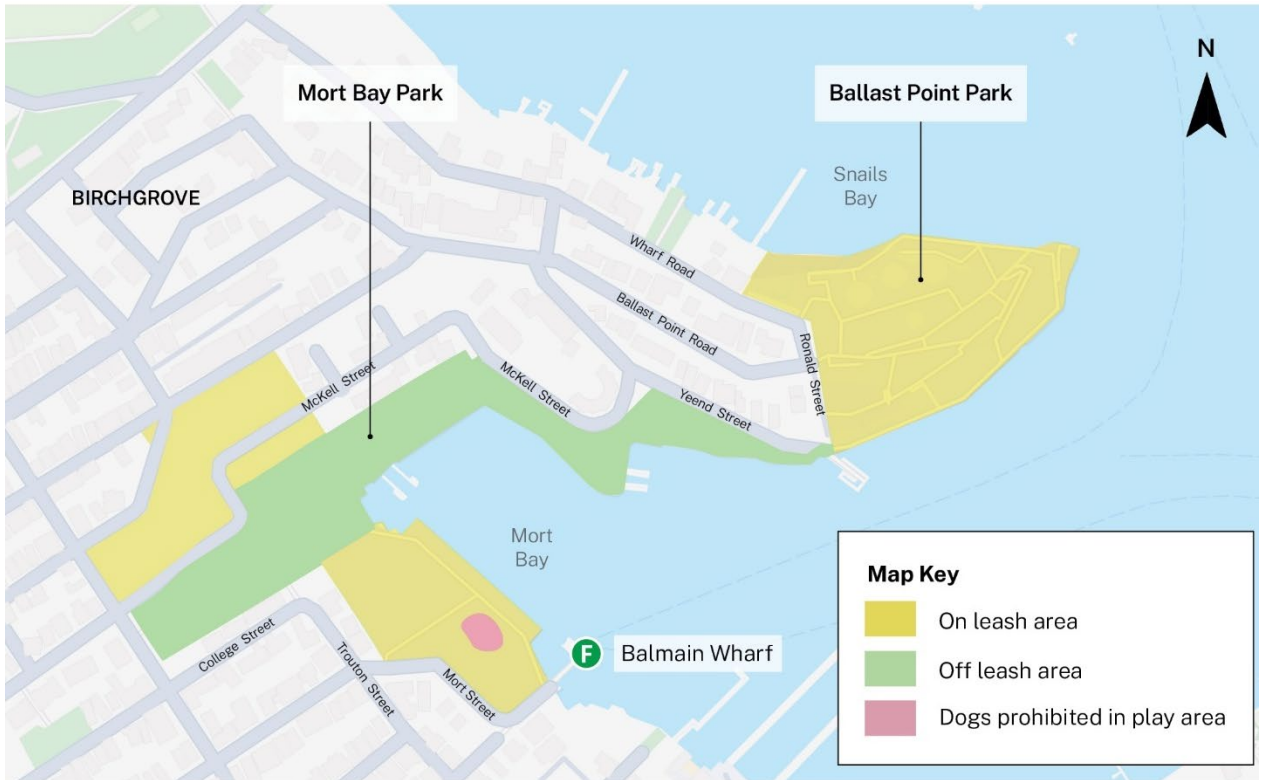


Figure 43: Existing dog walking arrangements (Source: Peita Blythe).

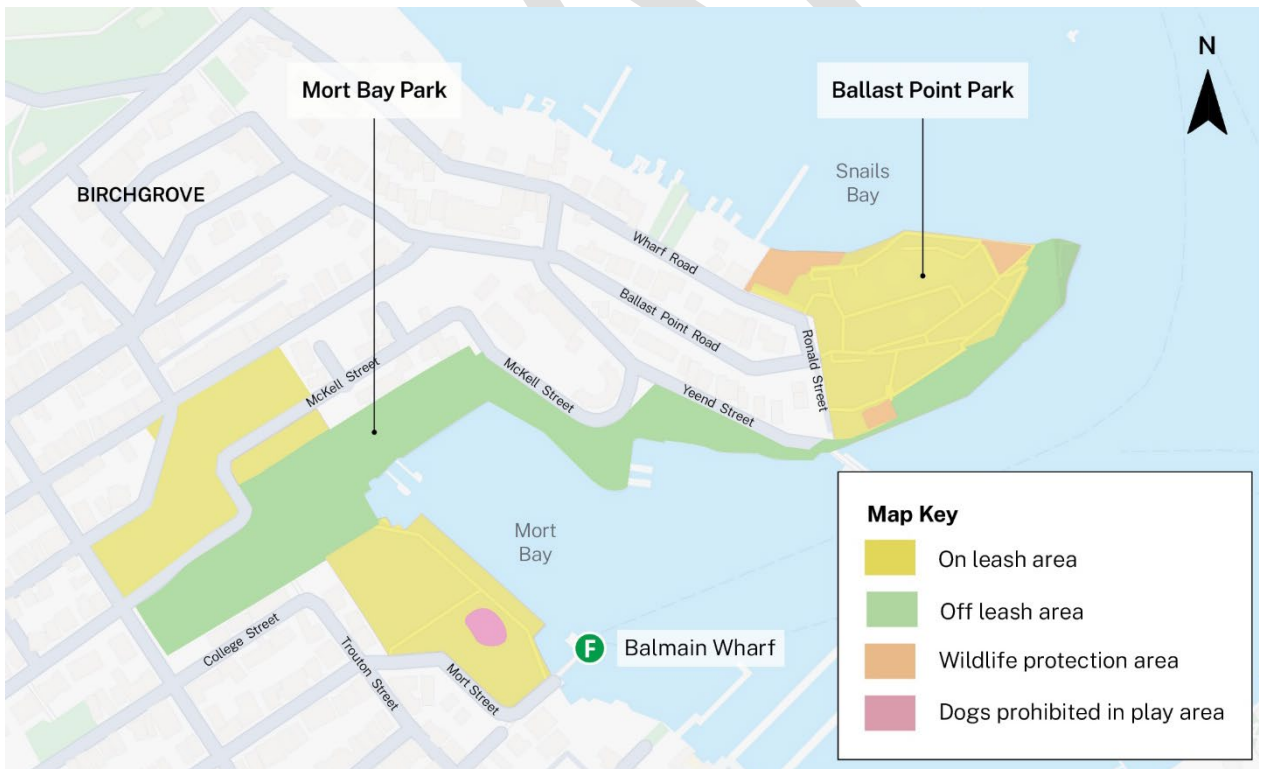


Figure 44: Proposed dog walking arrangements. (Source: Peita Blythe).

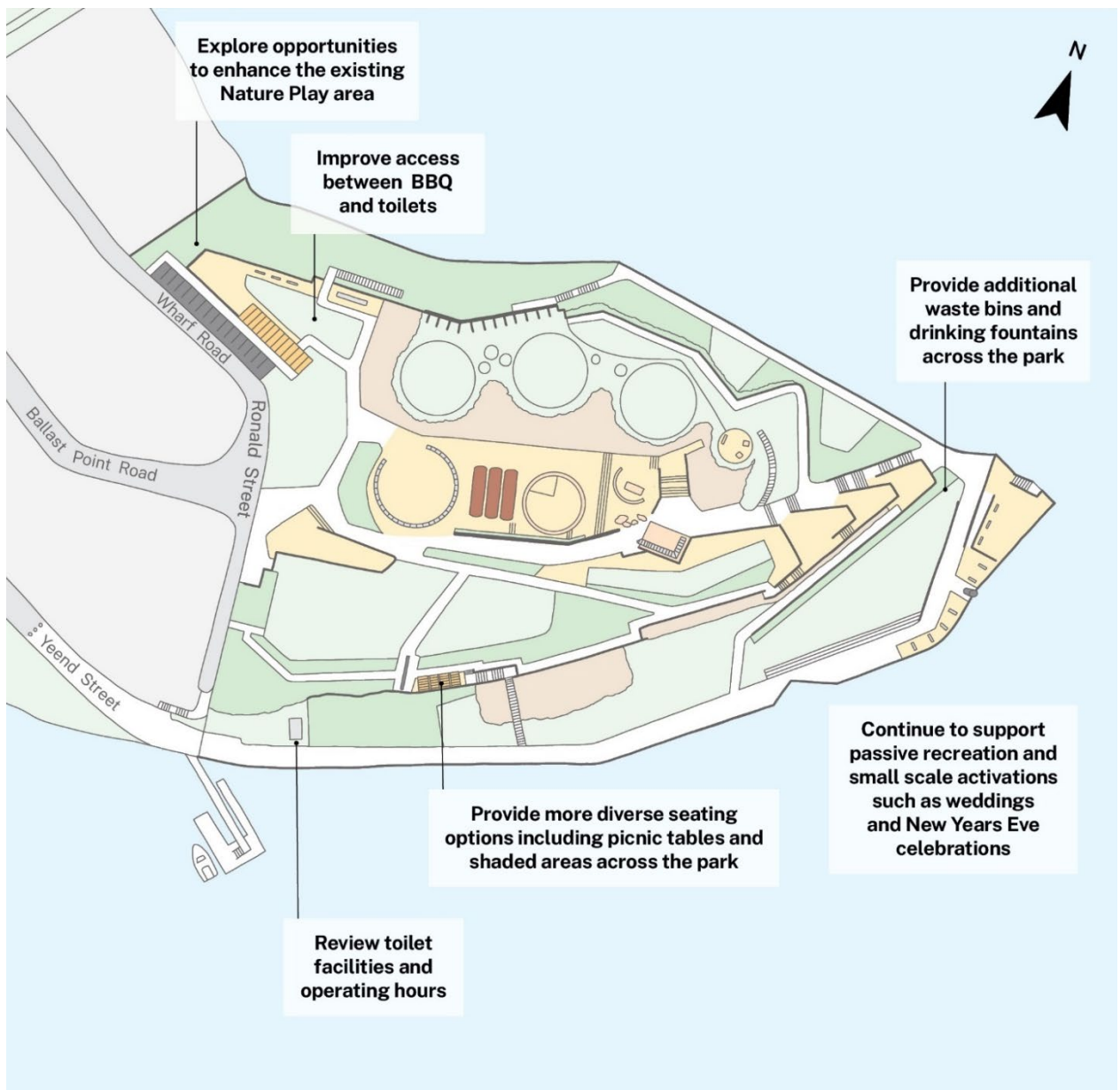


Figure 45: Passive recreation and activity opportunities. (Source: Peita Blythe).

We will create a welcoming place for all through the following priorities and actions:

No.	Priorities	Actions	Rationale
3.1	Improve dog walking arrangements to protect wildlife and create a safe environment for all.	a. Define designated dog on-leash and off-leash areas to balance wildlife protection with amenity, providing a continuous off-leash connection along the foreshore to Mort Bay Park.	<p>The community would like improvements to dog walking arrangements to enhance the overall experience for park users and to protect wildlife habitat.</p> <p>In alignment with Inner West Council's management of nearby Mort Bay Park and policy for <i>Dog Off-Leash Areas</i>, designated off-leash areas along the foreshore have been identified in this Plan. The remaining areas of the Park will be on leash.</p> <p>These areas ensure public spaces can be enjoyed by all members of the community and the upper levels of the Park are protected for wildlife.</p>
		b. Provide park signage that clearly defines off-leash areas and wildlife protection areas to support responsible dog ownership.	
		c. Coordinate with Inner West Council Ranger Services to align with PMNSW's Visitor Services team to ensure a consistent approach to education and enforcement of off-leash areas.	
3.2	Enhance existing facilities and amenities to be used by everyone.	a. Provide more diverse seating options including picnic tables and shaded seating areas to cater for diverse user groups, including families, older people, and people with mobility needs.	Overall, the community feel comfortable in the Park and support Placemaking NSW in the development of this Plan to support continuous improvement, including facilities and amenities.
		b. Ensure adequate drinking fountains are provided across the Park, including dog drinking bowls along the foreshore area.	

No.	Priorities	Actions	Rationale
3.2	Enhance existing facilities and amenities to be used by everyone.	c. Provide additional waste bins across the Park and explore partnership opportunities with other government agencies to better manage waste from chartered boats docking at the jetty.	
		d. Review toilet facilities and opening hours to improve the customer experience and ensure safety for all including potential for extended hours to support recreational fishing.	
		e. Update Park signage to clearly show accessible routes and areas across the Park.	
		f. Partner with Inner West Council to improve wayfinding to and from Mort Bay Park.	
3.3	Manage passive recreation uses to reinforce identity and respond to community expectations.	a. Continue to support passive recreation uses across the Park.	The community values the Park as a place for passive recreation.
		b. Continue to manage temporary, activations in targeted areas of the Park, such as wedding ceremonies and New Years Eve.	This Plan continues the use of the Park primarily for passive recreation but acknowledges the seasonal and temporary activations that also bring it to life on special occasions.
		c. Undertake a review of the existing nature-play area to identify opportunities for enhancement.	

“Better seating availability or terraced seating in areas with good views like the High Line NYC.”

– Survey participant

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## Objective 4 – Foster a sustainable and resilient future

The Park upholds good governance and fosters innovation through collaboration with partners, stakeholders and the community.

Importantly, working with and learning from Aboriginal businesses is helping to heal Country. These efforts support sustainability outcomes that build on the Park's legacy.

The Park's management practices evolve continually, embracing new ideas and technologies.

Ongoing maintenance and upgrades ensure that the Park continues to contribute to Placemaking NSW's net zero targets.

### What we heard

- The Park is currently perceived as being well managed, but improvements could be made to specific areas, particularly around vegetation and stormwater management.
- There are opportunities to partner with Inner West Council and other state government agencies to improve operations and management across Ballast Point Park and neighbouring Mort Bay Park.
- The ongoing management of the Park can help build economic and employment opportunities for Aboriginal people.
- Access to online information about the Park's features and amenities could be

improved with more up to date information and easier navigation.

- The ongoing management of weeds, rubbish and waste were identified as being important to community.
- Limited smart technologies are currently deployed in the Park. There is an opportunity revisit the energy systems on site and consider smarter options for a net zero outcome.
- Continued monitoring of sustainable practices for water, energy and waste is required to inform maintenance and operations.

### The priorities for this objective include:

- 4.1 Improve operations and sustainable management practices to support Placemaking NSW's Net Zero targets.
- 4.2 Improve digital accessibility to build awareness and share information.
- 4.3 Partner with stakeholders to ensure good governance.

**“Work cooperatively with Inner West Council and Transport for NSW so there is a coordinated vision for Ballast Point and Mort Bay Park plus ferry service.”**

- Survey participant

We will create a sustainable and resilient legacy through the following priorities and actions:

No.	Priorities	Actions	Rationale
4.1	Improve operations and sustainable management practices to support Placemaking NSW's Net Zero targets.	<p>a. Review existing asset management plans, maintenance and operational contracts to enhance management practices and maximise sustainability opportunities in coordination with organisation wide strategies such as the Placemaking NSW Sustainability Strategy (in progress).</p> <p>b. Improve the Park's energy efficiency by upgrading lighting and investigating opportunities to generate power onsite, including a review of the existing wind turbines and options for solar generation to existing shade structures.</p> <p>c. Review and adapt the landscape maintenance program to respond to site specific challenges or opportunities employing best practice bushcare techniques and innovative smart technology.</p> <p>d. Review waste management and green waste practices to better leverage smart technologies.</p>	<p>Overall, the community are satisfied with operations but would like to see some improvements, particularly around maintenance and other enhancements detailed in this Plan.</p> <p>Over time, natural changes and weather conditions have caused erosion or loosened walls in some areas of the Park. These areas will need to be fixed as a matter of priority to improve safety and secure habitats.</p> <p>A review of assets on site will identify opportunities to improve the Park's operations including stormwater management, structural integrity, water recycling systems and more detailed design opportunities.</p> <p>The Park's ongoing sustainability and future resilience is core to this Plan's vision and the achievement of Placemaking NSW's Net Zero targets.</p>

No.	Priorities	Actions	Rationale
4.2	Improve digital accessibility to build awareness and share information.	a. Review the existing website location and format to identify opportunities to improve content, navigation and user experience.	The community seeks easy access to information, with more resources available online. As digital placemaking evolves with new technologies, park users increasingly expect their physical experience to be enriched by online information such as virtual tours, site maps, and social media content.
4.3	Partner with stakeholders to ensure good governance.	<p>a. Continue to engage with all users of the Park to ensure that it is meeting community needs and expectations.</p> <p>b. Provide temporary signage to pre-notify park users of upcoming works.</p> <p>c. Undertake regular landscape performance monitoring and explore opportunities for citizen science projects to monitor progress especially in relation to flora and fauna regeneration.</p> <p>d. Continue partnerships with Inner West Council and State Government agencies to improve Blue-Green Grid connections and overall environmental health.</p>	<p>The community want to be informed on the Park’s management and operations expressing an interest in both the sharing of information and opportunities for active involvement, such as Bushcare groups. Other initiatives such as Clean Up Australia Day may also be of interest to the community on a yearly basis.</p> <p>The collective effort of partners, including the community, Aboriginal community and organisations, Inner West Council and State Government agencies is integral to the Park’s ongoing success.</p> <p>The Park will also benefit from regular monitoring of habitats, park user feedback and iterative improvements over time, including a future review of this Plan.</p>

“I believe Ballast Point is one of the best examples of design-based planning...”

– Survey participant

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# 5

## Implementing this Plan

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Placemaking NSW is committed to achieving the vision for Ballast Point Park to evolve as a resilient public Park, deeply connected to the Harbour and the rich layers of culture and heritage that define it.



Figure 46: Ballast Point Park

Restoring, revealing and regenerating Wangal Country is at the heart of our approach.

Placemaking NSW will lead the implementation of the actions set out in this Plan, supported by partnerships with Aboriginal advisors, State Government agencies, Inner West Council and the community.

As individual actions are progressed, Placemaking NSW will continue to consult with key stakeholders to encourage a sense of shared ownership and ensure the Park continues to meet community needs.

Thank you to everyone who has generously contributed feedback and expertise to help shape the Ballast Point Park Management Plan.

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# 6

## Appendices

Appendix A: Engagement Outcomes Report, JOC Consulting August 2024

Appendix B: Urban Ecology Advice for Ballast Point Park, Kingfisher Urban Ecology and Wetlands, January 2025

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## Placemaking NSW

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