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# BOTANY BAY NATIONAL PARK

## Heritage Conservation Area

*The area comprises an extensive stretch of dramatic coastline including several areas of remnant bushland and a number of sites of early Aboriginal and European contact. La Perouse is also the location of one of the oldest urban Aboriginal communities in Australia.*

The Botany Bay National Park Conservation Area covers the entire coastal strip facing Botany Bay and the Pacific Ocean, from Yarra Bay to Prince Henry Hospital. The conservation area consists of four precincts: Yarra Bay and Frenchmans Bay; the La Perouse Headland; Botany Bay National Park and Prince Henry Hospital.

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### What is the area's significance?

#### **Aesthetic Significance:**

The aesthetic significance of the conservation area as a whole arises from the scenic value of the natural landscape, and a number of man-made features within it. The conservation area is in a topographically prominent position in Sydney, at the entrance to Botany Bay, opposite Kurnell.

Yarra Bay and Frenchmans Bay are mostly modified natural landscapes. Some areas of original native vegetation remain. The landscape is characterised by wide sand beached in the two bays, separated by low rocky headlands, and low dunes with scrub vegetation behind. This landform contrasts with the mostly treeless hill of Botany Cemetery, dotted with rows of headstones, which forms a backdrop to the north. The Federation period Yarra Bay House is a prominent feature of the headland between Yarra Bay and Frenchmans Bay.

The La Perouse headland is part of, but physically distinct from, the remainder of Botany Bay National Park, to the east. The peninsula is bare and grassy. It has a rounded form, sloping gently to the shoreline, with some low cliffs. The fortified Bare Island juts into Botany Bay and is connected to the mainland by a wooden bridge. The other major man-made physical features of the peninsula are the Macquarie Watchtower, the Cable Station and the La Perouse Monuments.

Botany Bay National Park, to the east of the La Perouse peninsula, preserves a large area of indigenous bushland. Most of the area of the NSW Golf Course and St Michaels Golf Course is open space, though there are some remnant areas of native bushland between the fairways. An area of native bushland adjacent to Jennifer Street is also preserved in this part of the conservation area.

Prince Henry Hospital is built above the rocky foreshore of Little Bay. The hospital is set in an open landscape, and there is some surviving native vegetation. The hospital contains groupings of weatherboard and brick buildings dating from Federation period and later. The hospital cemetery is located to the south of the main group of hospital buildings, next to St Michaels Golf Course. The open space of the sea-side landscape extends to the north of the hospital site, on land which is owned by the University of New South Wales.

#### **Historic Significance:**

The conservation area was the location of some of the earliest contacts between Aboriginal people and Europeans on the east coast of Australia. The existing landscape and man-made

features provide evidence of and are associated with, numerous historical events and processes, in the intervening period of more than two centuries.

Governor Phillip first set foot on Australian soil in the vicinity of Yarra Bay, on January 18 1788. Yarra Bay was the location of Chinese market gardens from the 1860's. Some market gardens still survive in the area. In 1901 the Yarra Bay Pleasure Grounds were established.

Leisure pursuits have been a major use of the area for all of the 20th Century. Botany Cemetery was established in 1872.

The La Perouse headland represents Australia's 'front door', where the early Colony encountered the rest of the world, through the processes of exploration, settlement, defence and overseas communication.

The La Perouse Monuments are internationally significant because of their association with the La Perouse expedition of 1788. The Macquarie Watchtower, constructed c1820, is nationally significant in representing the earliest permanent occupation of the Botany Bay area by Europeans. It is the oldest building in the Randwick City area. Bare Island Fort, constructed from 1881 to 1885, is one of the finest examples in Australia of a Victorian period military fortification. The Cable Station, constructed in 1882, represents an important stage in the development of Australia's overseas communications, following establishment of cable telegraph in 1876. The Snake Pit demonstrates the history of the use of the area for tourism, which intensified after introduction of the tram service in 1902.

La Perouse is also the location of one of the oldest urban aboriginal communities in Australia, established in c1870.

Botany Bay National Park was created in 1970.

Prince Henry Hospital was established in 1881 on an isolated site at Little Bay, as a result of a smallpox epidemic. Its original name was the Coast Hospital. New development occurred in 1919 as a result of an influenza epidemic.

### **Social Significance:**

The natural and man-made landscapes of the conservation area have social significance because of their value to the community as a recreational resource. Many of the historical uses of the conservation area are remembered by groups in the community, or continue today. The La Perouse area has special significance to the aboriginal community because of its history of use before and after European contact. La Perouse headland provided access to plentiful food sources in the sea and on the land. The occupants of the area in 1788 were of either the Bidjigal or Cadigal group of Eora language speakers. Aboriginal occupation around Botany Bay continued until the early 1800's. The population was decimated by disease, disrupted lives and colonial policy.

The second phase of aboriginal occupation began as early as 1870. Aboriginal groups, primary from the South Coast, settled at La Perouse after being displaced from camps in the city. The area still suited a subsistence lifestyle, primarily fishing. Commercial income came from fishing and the sale of souvenirs to tourists.

The presence of the Aboriginal community at La Perouse was a factor in the government creating an Office for the Protector of Aborigines. The community had its status formalized by the creation of a reserve under the Aborigines Protection Board in 1883. The La Perouse aboriginal community has maintained a strong sense of identity over the intervening years.

### **Technical/Research Significance:**

There are several remnant bushland areas in the Yarra Bay area. Hill 60 is the largest. There is an area of scrub between Baragollar Avenue and Yarra Road which contains regionally rare indigenous plant species. On Yarra Point there is a significant stand of *Casuarina glauca*.

More than 95 hectares of remnant bushland is preserved in Botany Bay National Park and parts of the NSW and St Michaels Golf Courses. The bushland is regionally significant. A number of plant communities are present, including sclerophyll forest, scrub and heath and some wetland types. One plant community, Eastern Suburbs Banksia Scrub, is listed as an endangered ecological community under the Threatened Species Conservation Act (NSW) and the Threatened Species Protection Act (Commonwealth).

The site of Prince Henry Hospital and the neighbouring properties contain numerous areas, totalling almost 20 hectares, of regionally significant bushland. The bushland includes Eastern Suburbs Banksia Scrub. Two nationally rare and several regionally rare plant species are present. There are two large ponds on the University of NSW property which are a habitat for native bird species and a vulnerable bat species under the Threatened Species Conservation Act (NSW).

The Little Bay Geological Site is an area of approximately 6 hectares, to the rear of the University of NSW Sports Field. The geological site is of national significance. It is the only site containing peat of Miocene age known on the coast of NSW.

### **Themes Represented:**

The following historical themes, identified in the 1989 Randwick Heritage Study, are directly illustrated in the conservation area:

- Modifying the landscape
- Government and institutions
- Recreation, entertainment and leisure
- Transport and communications

The following theme is indirectly represented:

- Promotion of culture, religion and education

