

Coal Loader Wharf make safe and retrieval work and Vision Survey

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Frequently Asked Questions

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Bunkering depot at Balls Head Bay (courtesy Stanton Library)

Respecting the significance of the heritage listed Coal Loader Wharf and precinct, Transport for NSW (Transport) is working with stakeholders on a future use of the wharf that brings together community values and reconnects to the maritime heritage of the area.

What is the current issue at the Coal Loader Wharf?

Since being decommissioned in the early nineties, the wharf has been deteriorating and recent adverse weather events have caused parts of the wharf to collapse into the water. Transport needs to first make the area safe from navigational hazards, including floating timber and debris. This will allow the remaining structure to be safely investigated to assess its potential for re-use or re-interpretation. Due to the heritage significance of the wharf, material will be assessed and only removed where there is a risk of future collapse or threat to navigational and personal safety due to its poor condition.

Why has it taken so long for Transport to start work at the Coal Loader

In June 2021, the wharf was listed on the NSW State Heritage register, which requires additional planning provisions, assurance processes and work practices to take place on the wharf. The safety work detailed in the Review of Environmental Factors (REF) list these requirements in detail and can be found on the project website transport.nsw.gov.au/coalloaderwharf.



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Have other options been considered instead of the make safe and retrieval work?

Transport developed three options to make the site safe. We weighed up the benefits and impacts of each option to ensure the safe navigation of waterways and best manage heritage assets.

The make safe and retrieval work with ‘hold points’ was selected as the preferred option that would best meet the objectives of the proposal with the least overall impacts.

The options analysis is detailed in Section 2 (page 24) of the Review of Environmental Factors (REF). The REF is available on the project website transport.nsw.gov.au/coalloaderwharf

Why are there no future concepts now?

Further technical investigations need to occur on the remaining structure when the safety risk has been removed.

Information from these condition assessments as well as community feedback from the Vision Survey will inform the re-use and re-imagining of the remaining structure and viability of any future concepts.

Is Transport aware of the historical significance of the Coal Loader Wharf?

Transport acknowledges the lands of the Cammeraygal people and that modern New South Wales is an overlay on Aboriginal land and that many of the routes we use today follow song lines Aboriginal people have followed for tens of thousands of years. We also respect the significance of the heritage listed wharf as a major surviving element in Sydney’s working Harbour.

What is Transport doing about the heritage significance of the wharf?

The proposal to make the site safe is needed to address the safety risk posed by the poor condition of the wharf and represents active management of the fabric of the wharf before it collapses.

As this safety work is carried out, we will respect the heritage fabric of the structure and where the removal of heritage fabric cannot be avoided, it will be retrieved and assessed for its potential re-use. Reusable elements will be salvaged and stored to support the reimagining of the wharf. Structural engineers and heritage experts will be consulted through all stages of the work on the Coal Loader Wharf.

‘Hold points’ will ensure that the work is completed in a measured and controlled way and that the work does not exceed the scope to make the area safe.

The make safe and retrieval work with ‘hold points’ should take place under the guidance of a heritage specialist with experience working on heritage structures and who is either nominated by Heritage NSW or vetted by them.

An application will be made to Heritage NSW, outlining the plan for the safety work and heritage mitigation measures.

What does the safety work involve?

Transport will work with structural engineers and heritage specialists to make the area safe and retrieve key elements from the wharf only when deemed necessary for safety reasons.

Key features of the work includes the following:

- all the elements, including the steel conveyor frame, steel support structure, pump room and associated equipment, timber decking, girders, capwales, headstocks, piles and cross-bracing will be assessed for structural integrity and stability
- only elements which are in imminent danger of falling from the wharf will be removed

- ‘hold points’ will be established to assess which sections of the structure are required to be removed to make the wharf safe
- assessment and classification of retrieved materials to confirm material suitable for long term retention and potential re-use
- transportation of suitable material to long term storage.

What are hold points?

‘Hold points’ will be established in consultation with a structural engineer and heritage specialist with experience on heritage structures, to assess which sections of the structure are required to be removed to make the wharf safe.

These ‘hold points’ will act as triggers to stop and assess the work to ensure that the work does not exceed the scope to make the wharf safe.

How will the wharf fabric be retrieved?

Access points will be created within a netted area to allow a barge to access the site, erect a floating boom and/ or silt curtain around work area. All retrieval will take place from above and elements of the wharf accessed via machinery on barges. Examples of the types of equipment used will include the following:

- barges
- cranes
- punts and smaller vessels
- hand tools, such as a chainsaw
- long-reach excavators
- scaffolding, erected to assist access to the structure generators.

How will Transport assess the material?

Where the removal of fabric from the wharf cannot be avoided, we will carefully retrieve, record, relocate and store elements of heritage significance.

A Heritage Salvage Management Plan is to be prepared before the work begins to manage the assessment and storage of retrieved material. The plan will be developed by the heritage specialist and will detail the assessment criteria to grade and classify timber and steel structures to be retained and stored for structural re-use or adaptive re-use. Material deemed suitable for future structural or adaptive reuse will be salvaged and stored at an appropriate location.

The plan will include an approach to recording fabric in situ before the retrieval and documentation of fabric to be retained and stored. The plan will also document the roles, qualifications and responsibilities of the heritage specialist which will be either nominated or vetted by Heritage NSW.

What will be done with the material removed from the wharf?

Storage and maintenance requirements of the salvaged material that is suitable for future structural or adaptive re-use will be developed in the Heritage Salvage Management Plan before the work begins.

The use of the stored material will be considered as part of Transport’s investigations for the future of the wharf. The future investigations can be undertaken when the site has been made safe for technical investigations to occur on site to understand the condition of the retained structure.

When will the safety work take place?

Subject to heritage and planning approval, Transport aims to complete the work as soon as possible to address the safety risk.

Construction is expected to begin in 2023 and would take around six months to complete, weather and maritime conditions pending.

The work will take place during the day from 7am to 6pm Monday to Friday and from 8am to 1pm on Saturdays. Work will not take place on Sundays or public holidays.

While we make every effort to carry out work during standard work hours, night work is sometimes required when the water is at its calmest and there are fewer vessels using the harbour. We will notify nearby residents, businesses and organisations before any night work takes place.

Why will the work take this long to complete?

The six-month construction time period presented is not based solely on the quantity of fabric to be removed, but also the level of care which is required to remove the fabric.

To maximise the heritage salvage, a methodology which is more labour and time intensive has been proposed to retrieve these elements safely and minimise damage to the fabric.

Will work be disruptive for local residents and the Coal Loader Centre for Sustainability?

Transport acknowledges there may be some noise impacts near the Coal Loader facility during construction, however minimal noise impacts are expected elsewhere. The map below shows the anticipated noise impact area for the project.

The noisiest piece of equipment to be used on-site is considered to be a chainsaw.

We will notify nearby residents, businesses and organisations before any work outside of standard hours is carried out.

The proposed work would take place entirely from the water with no access from the land side of the Coal Loader Wharf. A Marine Traffic Management Plan will be in place and local roads will remain open and accessible during construction.

Nearby residents, businesses and organisations will be regularly kept informed of the work, and of any changes to construction activity or timing.



Map showing anticipated noise impact area for the make safe and retrieval work for the Coal Loader Wharf

What are your plans for the Coal Loader Wharf after the safety work has been completed?

Transport is investigating ways the Coal Loader Wharf can be used in the future while also celebrating and respecting the heritage significance of the wharf as a major surviving element in Sydney's working Harbour.

Transport will work with the community and key stakeholders including North Sydney Council and Heritage NSW to develop a vision for the structure that aligns with their values, meets heritage outcomes and that compliments the surrounding precinct.

How can I provide my feedback on the future plans for the Coal Loader Wharf?

Transport is now seeking feedback from the community on their vision for the future of the wharf.

The Coal Loader Vision Survey will be available on our website transport.nsw.gov.au/coalloaderwharf until **Sunday 15 January 2023**.

The feedback you provide will help us develop long-term plans for the wharf and we'll be inviting you to have your say on these future plans in 2023.