

It has been there *forever* but over the past 20 years a revitalisation has been quietly occurring. Nearly all of us will have noticed some isolated portions but few will appreciate the extent of the big picture.

It involves many Local, State, and Commonwealth Government Departments, volunteer, and community groups. We are talking about Sydney Harbour. The Harbour is one of Sydney's greatest assets. Much as we bemoan environmental and pollution problems, the Harbour has been evolving into a better place. The loss of heavy manufacturing around the Sydney Basin has seen a huge improvement to our waterways. Gone are many of the factories, from Rosehill to the 'Heads. Even the cargo ships have disappeared from our Harbour, allowing public access to many of the historic wharves.

During a Walkie Talkies hike on [Cockatoo Island](#), we discussed the [independent review](#) of The Sydney Harbour Federation Trust. The Harbour Trust is responsible for the management of Cockatoo Island, North Head Sanctuary in Manly, Headland Park in Mosman, Sub Base Platypus in Neutral Bay, Woolwich Dock and Parklands, the former Marine Biological Station at Watsons Bay, and Macquarie Light Station in Vaucluse.

The review's findings are extensive (do click on the link above). High level recommendations have been made but let us enjoy the view at ground level. Start with water quality. No, I am not about to go swimming in the Parramatta River just yet, but much of the heavy industries along the shoreline have now gone - a tremendous boost to air and water quality. Barriers for plastics and other pollutants are helping. Anywhere you go around the Harbour, you will find improved public access to the shoreline.

This is not the work of a single entity but rather the work of many different bodies and people. In our own backyard (and a shout out to Lord Mayor Bob Dwyer and Council), we now find paths and cycleways giving access from the centre of Parramatta to Rydalmere and on to Meadowbank and Kissing Point. All around the Harbour you will find similar portions of foreshore that have been linked for public access such as the Newington Armory site at Homebush where the foreshore of the river is now joined from Silverwater to Rhodes. From Rose Bay to Watsons Bay, a fragmented scramble through remnant bush and side streets, is now a pleasant walk.



How about an example of an industrial site being returned to community use? It has happened. Birchgrove! The old Caltex depot and fuel tanks is now returned to public use as Ballast Point Park ([Walama](#)). Stark architectural features acknowledge and incorporate, rather than deny, the previous use of the site.

The former defence sites, and even those still in use, have allowed improved public access. Take the ferry to Garden Island. Head to the Naval Museum and, while you are there, check out the former Port Authority's control room. Take in a view over Sydney. Until recently, it was *denied* to the public.

I sit on a log at Middle Head where I am joined by a very large Eastern Water Dragon, totally unperturbed by my presence. I am thankful that the former defence sites have provided us with well preserved remnant flora and fauna.



Check out these Harbour Trust sites on our beautiful Harbour. Go on - take your pick for a dose of history or just a picnic. Here are a few ideas:

1. Finger Wharf at Woolloomooloo
2. Timber Wharves at Hickson Road
3. Shark Island
4. [Sub Base Platypus](#) Enjoy re-development of the former submarine base at Neutral Bay.
5. [Barangaroo](#) Go ahead...walk it. Admire it.
6. Fort Denison

Don't forget to say hello to a volunteer. Not hundreds, but thousands of dedicated people are helping to run and maintain many of the facilities around OUR Harbour.