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MEDIA RELEASE

26 March, 2010

MORUYA MOVE PROTECTS MINE MACHINERY

The State Heritage Listed 'Abernethy Lathe', which turned the granite columns adorning some of Sydney's finest buildings and historic sites, is moving in the next few months from Forbes, to a new home in Moruya.

Still substantially intact, the 10 metre long Lathe, which dates from 1881, is the only moveable item of its type known to have survived in Australia.

NSW Minister for Planning, Tony Kelly, said the lathe had been accommodated for some time in a shed on private land at Forbes, but an opportunity had arisen to give it a new lease on life.

"The Moruya community, supported by Eurobodalla Shire Council, has been lobbying to obtain the lathe to add to the district's mining heritage," the Minister said.

"It will be publicly displayed and regularly maintained so I have agreed to its relocation to Moruya in the next few months.

"The lathe will be looked after by the Moruya Antique Tractor & Machinery Association and the Moruya & District Historical Society and be located adjacent to the Moruya Historical Society in Campbell Street."

Although unconfirmed, local historians claim there is a collection of photographs showing the lathe may have been situated near Louttit's Quarry at Moruya. Granite from this quarry was used in the construction of the Sydney Harbour Bridge and St Mary's Cathedral.

Known formally as the Abernethy & Co. Stonemason's Twin Bed Lathe, after its manufacturer, the lathe is originally from Aberdeen, Scotland.

After its arrival in Sydney, it was used for nearly a century, turning granite columns on many public buildings in Sydney of the late Victorian period, including Sydney's General Post Office, the Queen Victoria Building and the Pedestal for the Queen Victoria statue in Queen's Square.

Records suggest it was last used at Loveridge and Hudson's yard in Sydney in the 1960s and then donated to the Lachlan Vintage Village heritage theme park in the late 1970s.

In 1987, it was sold at auction and fears arose it might be scrapped.

Responding to representations from the National Trust's Industrial Archaeology Committee and the former NSW Public Works Department, the Heritage Council of NSW purchased the lathe.

It was protected by a Heritage Order under the NSW Heritage Act 1977 as a rare surviving piece of Victorian machinery, which demonstrated changes in technology and use of stone in public buildings. It was transferred to the State Heritage Register in 1999.

The Minister said the State Heritage listing would remain but the Title to the lathe will be transferred to Eurobodalla Shire Council.
