



Hon Tony Kelly MLC
Minister for Planning
Minister for Infrastructure
Minister for Lands
Deputy Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council
Leader of the House in the Legislative Council

MEDIA RELEASE

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ROCKS ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE STATE HERITAGE LISTED

An archaeological site at The Rocks which contains rare evidence of the area's convict past has been given the State's highest level of heritage protection.

Minister for Planning, Tony Kelly, said Cumberland Street Archaeological Site has been placed on the State Heritage Register after satisfying all seven of the NSW Heritage Council's listing criteria.

"The site contains rare physical evidence of Sydney's convict past, including the relics of 46 historic houses and two lanes," the Minister said.

"It is one of the few sites that still has a tangible connection to the era when Sydney was first settled, including the huts and scattered houses that were built on and carved into the sandstone outcrops that gave The Rocks its name.

The historical significance of the site has been recognised in the past, through events like the 1994 "Big Dig" when thousands of volunteers found 75,000 artefacts and inspired Dr Grace Karskens' book about the event, titled *Inside the Rocks*.

In 2009, a youth hostel and Big Dig education centre were constructed on the site one-storey above the ground to allow the relics to be retained in situ, while the original laneways that intersected the site were also reconstructed.

Mr Kelly said the redevelopment is an outstanding example of urban renewal sympathetic to the site's past, which also attracts visitors to see the relics.

"It has been described as one of the best examples of archaeological conservation in an urban environment anywhere in the world," the Minister said.

"For the first time, this heritage listing will give the archaeological relics beneath the buildings the individual recognition they deserve.

"While the site was previously included in the listing of the adjoining 1857 Jobbins Terrace, that listing did not specifically recognise the archaeological layer.

"Today's listing means any major works for the Cumberland Street site will be subject to a decision or advice from the Heritage Council of NSW."

The heritage listing excludes the youth hostel and all structures above the ground level and will not impact on the existing use of the site.
