

Quarantine Station Community Consultative Committee

Annual Report March 2020-February 2021

Independent Chairperson: Sandy Hoy

Co-proponent contact – National Parks and Wildlife Service – Jessica Dargan

Co-proponent contacts – Mawland Quarantine Station – Max Player, Suzanne Stanton

1 Background

A permanent Quarantine Station was established at North Head in Manly in 1838 to quarantine people arriving in Sydney by ship to prevent the spread of disease to the colony. The Quarantine Station ceased operation in 1984, after which its management was transferred to the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS).

The 27-hectare site comprises numerous historic buildings and roads, with a stunning backdrop of the native vegetation of Sydney Harbour National Park at the entrance to Sydney Harbour.

The NSW Minister for the Environment and Mawland Quarantine Station Pty Ltd (Mawland) signed a lease on 26 October 2006 for the North Head Quarantine Station Conservation and Adaptive Reuse Project. Mawland and the NSW Minister for the Environment/NPWS are co-proponents of the project to adapt the Quarantine Station site for cultural tourism purposes under a 21-year planning approval expiring in 2027, with further options for renewal.

Q Station, as it is now known, has been operating since 2008 consistent with its approved uses for accommodation, conferences and functions, restaurant, visitor centre with a museum and cafe, environmental and cultural study centre, and guided tours. Open Days for the public are regularly held. Informal access to the site by the public is encouraged.

The Conditions of Planning Approval (CoPA) require that a Quarantine Station Community Consultative Committee be established for the term of the project. 64 meetings of the QSCCC were held until November 2018 when a process for inviting expressions of interest for nomination of members for a new QSCCC for a four-year term was undertaken by NPWS in late 2018-early 2019.

Sandy Hoy was appointed by the then Department of Planning and Environment (DPE) as the Independent Chairperson of the QSCCC on 27 February 2019.

QSCCC members were selected from the nominations by the independent chairperson according to the criteria set out in the Quarantine Station Community Consultative Committee Terms of Reference, Conditions of Planning Approval (CoPA), and the DPE Guidelines for Community Consultative Committees for State Significant Developments (January 2019).

Several current QSCCC members were members of the previous committee, including the former chairperson Cathy Griffin. Their knowledge and continuity of connection to Q Station has greatly benefited the current QSCCC.

Members selected for the QSCCC signed a code of conduct and submitted a declaration of pecuniary and non-pecuniary interests.

2 Membership and attendance

The QSCCC is chaired by Independent Chairperson Sandy Hoy, and comprises the following members:

Organisation / interest	Name	May 2020	Meetings attended		
			August 2020	November 2020	February 2021
Community representatives	Cathy Griffin		✓	✓	✓
	Adele Heasman		✓	✓	✓
	Virginia Macleod		✓	apology	✓
	Doug Sewell	Meeting not held because Q Station was closed due to COVID-19	✓	✓	✓
	Jennifer Wilson		✓	✓	✓
Northern Beaches Council (elected representative)	Cr Candy Bingham		✓	✓	✓
NPWS (co-proponent)	Chad Weston		✓	✓	apology
	Jessica Dargan		✓	✓	✓
Mawland (co-proponent)	Max Player		✓	✓	✓
	Suzanne Stanton		✓	✓	✓
Independent Chairperson	Sandy Hoy		✓	✓	✓

There were no resignations from the QSCCC in 2020-21. Attendance at the quarterly meetings is consistently high, reflecting the interest and commitment of the QSCCC members. Occasional apologies are received mainly due to unavoidable prior commitments. The QSCCC sets meeting dates 12 months in advance to avoid potential diary conflicts.

There is good rapport among all QSCCC members who understand the site, the issues and their roles well. Co-proponents NPWS and Mawland are co-operative and responsive to questions, feedback and issues raised by community members.

The community members of the QSCCC have a valuable contribution as a “sounding board” for NPWS and Mawland, providing advice and feedback to NPWS and Mawland from the various perspectives of community member, local resident, site visitor, activity participant, and overnight guest. The community members also act as a conduit between NPWS and Mawland and local community groups, Northern Beaches Council, and the State Member of Parliament for Manly.

Feedback from community members about the QSCCC meetings includes that the committee is working well with good working relationships. Meetings are considered to be well run with detailed minutes provided.

All co-proponents and committee members have their own fields of interest/responsibility and strongly-held views. Issues are discussed and any disagreements are resolved amicably in a positive, supportive way and in the best interests of the site.

As of March 2021 there are two vacant positions on the QSCCC. NPWS intends to advertise for Expressions of Interest for nominations to fill the vacancies.

3 Activities of QSCCC over the past 12 months

The QSCCC operates according to the Department of Planning and Environment's Community Consultative Committee Guidelines for State Significant Projects 2019, and the CoPA. The Department of Planning, Industry and Environment (DPIE) has advised that the CoPA for QSCCC take precedence over any inconsistency with the DPE CCC Guidelines.

The scheduled 13 May 2020 meeting was not held because Q Station was closed due to COVID-19. The meeting on 19 August 2020 was held online via Zoom due to public gathering and social distancing restrictions. Meetings were held at the Quarantine Station, 1 North Head Scenic Drive at Manly, on 18 November 2020 and 10 February 2021.

Minutes are prepared after each meeting and are approved by the committee members at the following meeting with amendments if required. Following approval of the minutes a summary of the meeting minutes is placed by NPWS and Mawland on their respective websites: <https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/NPWS/AdvisoryCommittees.htm> and <https://www.qstation.com.au/our-story.html>

Due to COVID-19 restrictions, activities that QSCCC members participated in at Q Station during the year were limited to:

- ❑ the opening of *Les Sculptures Refusees* on Thursday 15 October 2020. The sculptures were on display at Q Station until 15 November.
- ❑ meeting with the Friends of Quarantine Station on Sunday 7 February 2021.

There were no joint meetings with any other CCCs.

4 Key issues

Key events which had a significant operational and financial impact on Q Station in 2020-21 were:

- ❑ closure of Q Station from 8 April to mid June due to the COVID-19 lockdown. Gates were closed with security on site.
- ❑ hotel operations resumed from Friday to Sunday only from mid June to mid August, with the site open to the public until sunset for walking, cycling etc. Security was on site at all times.
- ❑ in mid August hotel operations reopened 7 days a week, and the site was open to the public until sunset for walking, cycling etc.
- ❑ a hazard reduction burn at North Head resulted in hotel operations needing to close and evacuation of visitors and staff at Q Station on 17-18 October 2020.
- ❑ closure of Q Station between 21 December 2020 and 5 January 2021 (including Christmas Day, Boxing Day and New Years Eve) due to the COVID-19 Northern Beaches lockdown. Gates were closed with security on site.

Planned events and activities at Q Station in 2020 often needed to be changed or cancelled at short notice. It is understood that even while Q Station was open in 2020 they were often not busy.

Closure of Q Station in mid 2020 coincided with media exposure of the site through pre-recorded television specials airing on the ABC and Channels 9 and 10.

Compliance with the CoPA in relation to Community Open Days was particularly difficult in 2020 due to COVID-19. Community Open Days were not able to be held in their usual form on-site in 2020 due to closure of Q Station and social distancing and public gathering restrictions. Mawland organised free public tours of *Les Sculptures Refusees* on weekends

in October-November 2020 in lieu of an Open Day. Advice from DPIE of acceptable options for Open Days if public gathering restrictions occur again would clarify this situation.

It is understood that visitation, occupancy and normal operations at Q Station are slowly improving in early 2021 with the relaxing of COVID-19 restrictions.

Discussions were also held during QSCCC meetings about early exercise of the option to renew the lease of Quarantine Station before 2026-2027.

5 Meeting reports

NPWS provided a report at each meeting on:

- North Head Precinct Planning
- Walking tracks
- Environmental audits and monitoring
- Vegetation and weed management
- Wildlife management – penguins, long-nosed bandicoots, echidnas, small mammals
- Pest management – rabbits, foxes
- Fire planning and management – hazard reduction, fire plans, vegetation management.

Mawland provided a report for discussion at each meeting covering topics including:

- day-to-day operations
- visitation
- activities such as tours, events, and Open Days
- education programs and support for local schools
- activation of buildings and spaces with compatible activities
- support for artists and sculptors through providing a venue for their work
- site maintenance
- building refurbishments and other works
- response to weather, fire and other events which impact on the site
- media coverage
- participation in research projects.

In addition to discussing the above issues, members of the Committee have raised issues and suggestions such as:

- cataloguing a collection of Quarantine Station documents
- improving the safety of people using the funicular stairs.
- feedback on their experience as a guest or visitor at Q Station.

6 Focus for the next 12 months

Quarterly meetings are planned to continue in 2021-22.

The planned activities of the QSCCC for 2021-22 will be guided by COVID-19, the contributions and interest of the QSCCC members, and ongoing and arising management issues raised by NPWS and Mawland. Such activities will include:

- providing feedback and support for the ongoing activation of and increasing visitation to Q Station

- ❑ closer involvement in the review of site-wide management plans and environmental monitoring and audit reports to provide informed feedback and recommendations to the co-proponents
- ❑ continuing to liaise with community and interest groups and with Northern Beaches Council on Quarantine Station related matters.



Sandy Hoy

Independent Chairperson, Quarantine Station Community Consultative Committee

15 March 2021

sandy@parklandplanners.com.au