



# Australian Convict Sites World Heritage Property



**Australian Convict Sites  
Strategic Plan 2024–2026**

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*Cover image:* Convict Precinct, Cockatoo Island Convict Site,  
Sydney, New South Wales Photo: Stephen Fabling

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*The Australian Convict Sites Steering Committee acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the ancestral homelands upon which our sites are situated and recognises their distinct connection to Country. We pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging and all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.*

*We acknowledge the impact and legacy of British colonial expansion on First Peoples, including displacement from Country, loss of life and culture, and inter-generational trauma. We also remember and pay our respects to the Aboriginal, Maori and Khoisan convicts and prisoners who died or were incarcerated on these sites.*



Kingston and Arthur's Vale  
Historic Area, Norfolk Island.  
Photo: Robin Nisbet



## **Our Story**

Over 165,000 men, women and children were transported as convicts by British and colonial authorities to penal colonies in Australia between 1787 and 1868. Together the Australian Convict Sites represent the experiences of these convicts and the shaping of modern Australia.

## **Our Vision**

The history and significance of the convict system in the Australian colonies is better understood and universally valued.

## **Our Mission**

To collaboratively conserve, protect, present and pass on to future generations the Australian Convict Sites World Heritage Property's Outstanding Universal Value.





*Top:* Woolmers Homestead, built about 1820.

*Bottom:* Convict graffiti, Woolmers Estate, Longford.

Photos: Courtesy Woolmers Estate



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# Introduction

The Australian Convict Sites World Heritage Property is a series of 11 outstanding heritage places across Australia. Collectively they are representative of the global phenomenon of the forced migration of convicts.

The Australian Convict Sites World Heritage Property was inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List on 31 July 2010. The sites included in the serial listing are:

- Brickendon-Woolmers Estates, Longford, Tasmania
- Cascades Female Factory, South Hobart, Tasmania
- Coal Mines Historic Site, Saltwater River, Tasmania
- Cockatoo Island Convict Site, Sydney, New South Wales
- Darlington Probation Station, Maria Island National Park, Tasmania
- Fremantle Prison, Fremantle, Western Australia
- Hyde Park Barracks, Sydney, New South Wales
- Kingston and Arthur's Vale Historic Area, Norfolk Island
- Old Government House and Domain, Parramatta Park, New South Wales
- Old Great North Road, Dharug National Park, New South Wales
- Port Arthur Historic Site, Tasman Peninsula, Tasmania

These sites that form the Australian Convict Sites World Heritage Property are outstanding examples of this story in Australia's rich convict history. However, more than 3,000 other convict sites remain around Australia. This is unique in the world today.

All the 11 sites are also listed on the Australian National Heritage List and are protected by Commonwealth, state and territory legislation and site management plans.

The operating environment of the Australian Convict Sites includes heritage management, conservation of buildings and structures, tourism activities and visitor engagement. Each site has differing levels of capacity and capability. Some sites are relatively well resourced in terms of operating budgets and staffing levels, while other sites are comparatively under resourced and staffed.

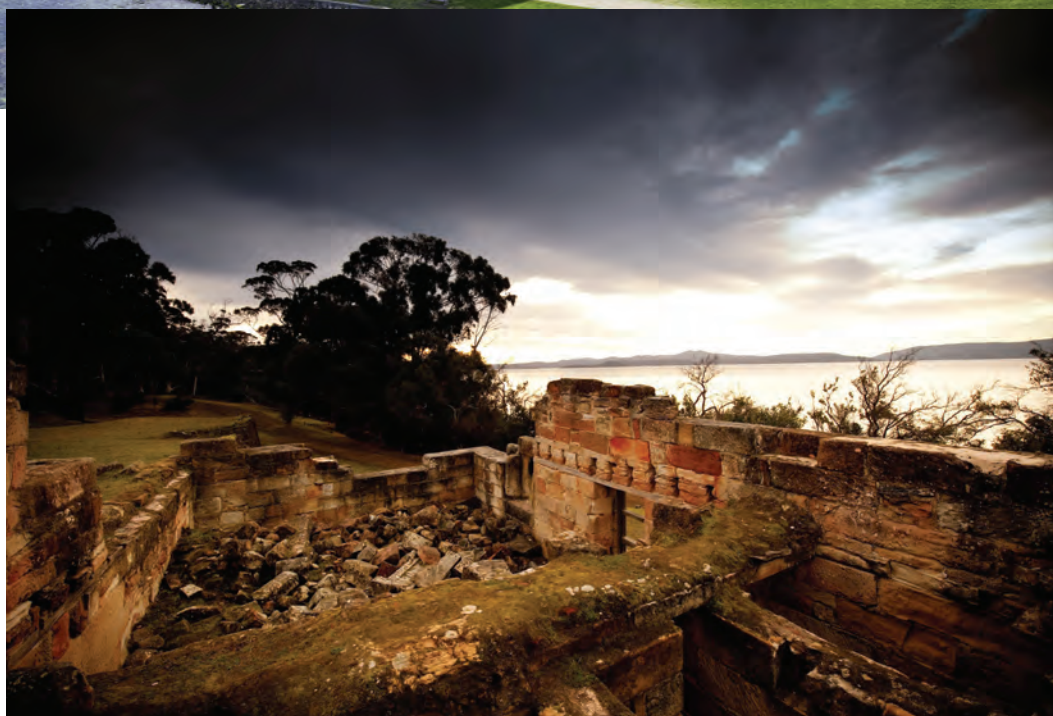


While many of the sites are owned and managed by Commonwealth or State Government agencies, Old Government House is managed by the National Trust of Australia (NSW), Woolmers Estate is owned by a public trust and Brickendon Estate is privately owned and managed. The sites are uniformly protected by the national *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* and managed according to the *Australian Convict Sites Strategic Management Framework* (the Framework). They are also governed by different State legislative regimes.



Adapted from original map by F. von Stulpnagel, *Festlands von Australien und benachbarte Inseln*, 1841. Image: Courtesy National Library of Australia





*Top:* Aerial view of Port Arthur Historic Site. Photo: D Kramer  
*Bottom:* Ruins of Coal Mines Historic Site. Photo: Alistair Bett

# The Framework

As a State Party to the Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (World Heritage Convention), the Australian Government ensures that effective and active measures are taken to protect, conserve, present and transmit the Outstanding Universal Value of our World Heritage properties. These obligations are met through cooperative legislative arrangements between the Australian Government, State and Territory governments, local government, and property owners/managers.

The *Australian Convict Sites – Strategic Management Framework* (the Framework) is an example of these arrangements. This Framework was prepared by the Australian Government in 2018, eight years on from the listing, following a review of the original version, which was prepared to support the nomination. This document represents the evolving nature of the joint management of the Australian Convict Sites. It also recognises the important role the various statutory regimes have in protecting the individual sites and acknowledges collaboration on community engagement.

The purpose of the Framework is to support the World Heritage Property as a whole and foster a better appreciation of Australia’s convict past. The Framework’s aim is to ensure the appropriate hierarchy and/or structural arrangements for the ongoing protection, conservation, management and presentation of the sites within each jurisdiction.

The Framework describes how the management system for the Australian Convict Sites is delivered. It has been prepared to complement existing legislative structures and other management regimes to address Australia’s international responsibilities under the World Heritage Convention.

The Framework also documents the commitment of owners/managers of the individual places to the long-term conservation, management, presentation, and transmission of the Outstanding Universal Value of the Australian convict Sites through compliance with legislation, plans and other relevant governance arrangements. It is part of the overall planning for the Australian Convict Sites and does not contain detailed management policies or conservation plans for the individual sites.

Through the Framework the Commonwealth and state government jurisdictions have agreed to work cooperatively under aegis of the Convict Sites Steering Committee to share information and develop appropriate management strategies for the benefit of the Australian Convict Sites World Heritage Property.

The Framework is reviewed every five years and updated every seven years. In 2023–2024, the Australian Convict Sites Steering Committee will partner with the Commonwealth Department of Climate Change Environment Energy and Water on the five-year review.

The Framework is available for download from the Australian Convict Sites website:

[www.australianconvictsites.org.au/documents](http://www.australianconvictsites.org.au/documents)



# The Committee

The Australian Convict Sites Steering Committee (ACSSC) was established with responsibility for implementing the Framework.

Representation on the ACSSC is composed of site representatives from the 11 component sites, delegates from the jurisdictions including New South Wales, Norfolk Island, Tasmania, and Western Australia, as well as two Commonwealth delegates from the Heritage Branch of the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water.

The main functions of the ACSSC as outlined in the Framework are to:

- **encourage** member sites to work collaboratively to protect, conserve and present the Outstanding Universal Value of the World Heritage property
- **develop** collaborative strategies to help Australian Convict Sites meet Australia's obligations under the World Heritage Convention
- **provide** advice and recommendations to Commonwealth and State Governments on any issues that may impact the Australian Convict Sites Outstanding Universal Value
- **engage** in positive advocacy with governments and stakeholder groups to raise the profile of the Australian Convict Sites World Heritage Property and World Heritage in general.

In addition to the Framework, the work of the ACSSC is guided by several documents including the *ACSSC Meeting and Membership Guidelines (2021)*, the *ACSSC Annual Work Plans*, and the *ACS Corporate Identity Guidelines (2022)*.



Fremantle Prison. Photo: Jessica Wylde





*Top:* Old Government House and Domain, Parramatta Park.

*Bottom:* Dairy Cottage, Parramatta Park.



# Inscription

## Outstanding Universal Value

The Australian Convict Sites World Heritage Property was inscribed on the World Heritage List in 2010. The Property's Statement of Outstanding Universal Value is as follows:

### Brief Synthesis

The property consists of 11 complementary sites. It constitutes an outstanding and large-scale example of the forced migration of convicts, who were condemned to transportation to distant colonies of the British Empire; the same method was also used by other colonial states.

The sites illustrate the different types of convict settlement organised to serve the colonial development project by means of buildings, ports, infrastructure, the extraction of resources, etc. They illustrate the living conditions of the convicts, who were condemned to transportation far from their homes, deprived of freedom, and subjected to forced labour.

This transportation and associated forced labour was implemented on a large scale, both for criminals and for people convicted for relatively minor offences, as well as for expressing certain opinions or being political opponents. The penalty of transportation to Australia also applied to women and children from the age of nine. The convict stations are testimony to a legal form of punishment that dominated in the 18th and 19th centuries in the large European colonial states, at the same time as and after the abolition of slavery.

The property shows the various forms that the convict settlements took, closely reflecting the discussions and beliefs about the punishment of crime in 18th and 19th century Europe, both in terms of its exemplarity and the harshness of the punishment used as a deterrent, and of the aim of social rehabilitation through labour and discipline. They influenced the emergence of a penal model in Europe and America.

Within the colonial system established in Australia, the convict settlements simultaneously led to the Aboriginal population being forced back into the less fertile hinterland, and to the creation of a significant source of population of European origin.



**Criterion (iv):** The Australian convict sites constitute an outstanding example of the way in which conventional forced labour and national prison systems were transformed, in major European nations in the 18th and 19th centuries, into a system of deportation and forced labour forming part of the British Empire’s vast colonial project. They illustrate the variety of the creation of penal colonies to serve the many material needs created by the development of a new territory. They bear witness to a penitentiary system which had many objectives, ranging from severe punishment used as a deterrent to forced labour for men, women and children, and the rehabilitation of the convicts through labour and discipline.

**Criterion (vi):** The transportation of criminals, delinquents, and political prisoners to colonial lands by the great nation states between the 18th and 20th centuries is an important aspect of human history, especially with regard to its penal, political and colonial dimensions. The Australian convict settlements provide a particularly complete example of this history and the associated symbolic values derived from discussions in modern and contemporary European society. They illustrate an active phase in the occupation of colonial lands to the detriment of the Aboriginal peoples, and the process of creating a colonial population of European origin through the dialectic of punishment and transportation followed by forced labour and social rehabilitation to the eventual social integration of convicts as settlers.



Darlington Probation Station,  
Maria Island National Park.

Photo: Joe Shemesh

# Strategic Objectives

Strategic objectives for the Australian Convict Sites were originally drafted in 2007 to guide the property through the World Heritage nomination process and to provide strategic direction for the property during its first years after inscription. A ten-year review in 2017 found that the original objectives were no longer consistent with the operational realities of the serial property. As a result, new strategic objectives for the Australian Convict Sites were developed that focus on the core aims of the World Heritage Convention, specifically Article 5 of the 'Convention' which states that State Parties shall:

*Ensure that effective and active measures are taken for the protection, conservation and presentation of the cultural and natural heritage situated on its territory ... to adopt a general policy which aims to give the cultural and natural heritage a function in the life of the community ... [and] to take the appropriate legal, scientific, technical, administrative and financial measures necessary for the identification, protection, conservation, presentation and rehabilitation of this heritage.*

Based on the core aims described above, the new Australian Convict Sites strategic objectives are:

1. To collaboratively manage the Property's Outstanding Universal Value
2. To conserve and protect the Property's Outstanding Universal Value for current and future generations
3. To present and interpret the Property's Outstanding Universal Value, emphasising each site's contribution to the whole
4. To give the Property a function in the life of the community.

These four objectives represent the core principles of effective heritage management and together represent the aim of the Convention; to protect the Outstanding Universal Value of World Heritage properties for future generations.

This plan identifies key strategies for each objective (p 18) to guide the development of the Committee's priority actions (p 21) and ensure that it is effectively addressing its vision and mission statements.

The Strategic Plan 2024–26 and associated Work Plan are updated every three years and the Work Plan is reviewed and updated annually.





Top: Cascades Female Factory Historic Site, South Hobart.

Bottom: Visitors in new History and Interpretation Centre, Cascades Female Factory Historic Site, South Hobart.

Photos: Alistair Bett



# Key Strategies

## ***Objective 1: Conserve and protect the Property's Outstanding Universal Value for current and future generations***

**Ensure** individual sites have current statutory Management Plans or equivalent

**Improve** the management of the sites' attributes

**Share** expertise, advice, and resources

## ***Objective 2: Collaboratively manage the Property's Outstanding Universal Value***

**Engage** all sites and jurisdictions in the ACSSC work

**Develop** governance documentation to guide the ACSSC work

**Assist** the sites to manage emerging matters and pursue funding and resources

**Contribute** to UNESCO's Periodic Reporting

## ***Objective 3: Present and interpret the Property's Outstanding Universal Value, emphasising each site's contribution to the whole***

**Play** a leading role in communicating and interpreting Australian convict stories

**Develop** communication and interpretive programs that link the sites

**Support** research into and interpretation of the impact of the convict system on First Peoples

## ***Objective 4: To give the Property a function in the life of the community***

**Foster** community engagement with the 11 sites and their attributes

**Develop** strategic approach to community and stakeholder engagement

**Create** collaborative opportunities and partnerships for mutual benefit

**Understand** and **promote** the social and economic value of the Property





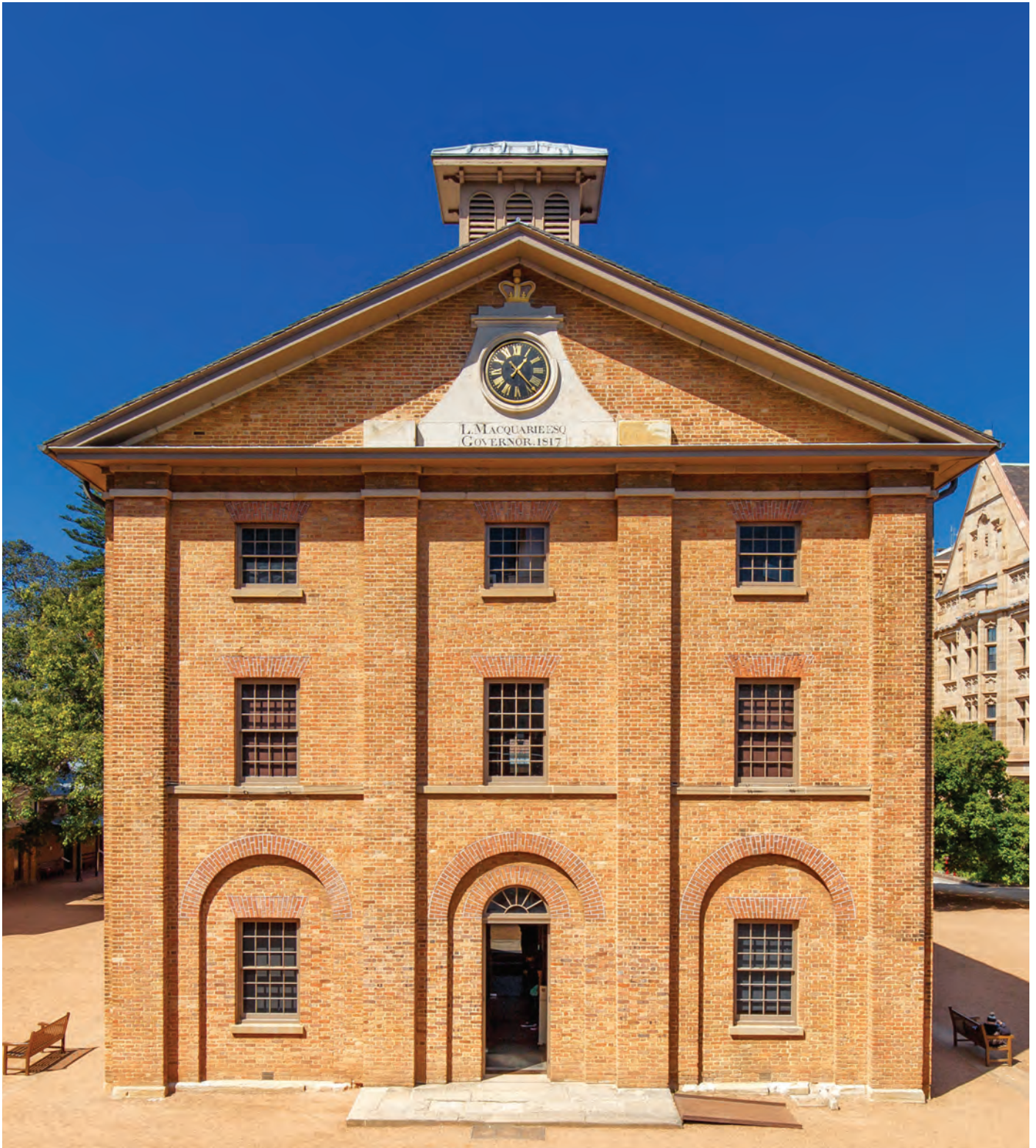
Top: Interpretation at Old Great North Road, Dharug National Park.

Bottom: Hangman's Rock, Devines Hill, Old Great North Road, Dharug National Park.

Photos: Sarah Abad







Hyde Park Barracks, Sydney.  
Photo: Doug Riley



# Priority Actions

## Within 12 Months

July 2023 – June 2024

**ICOMOS General Assembly:** organise Australian Convict Sites presence at the Heritage Exposition and participate in the ICOMOS GA 2023.

**Communications and Engagement Plan:** develop an Australian Convict Sites Communications and Engagement Plan.

**Interpretation Strategy:** scope and explore funding opportunities for an Australian Convict Sites Interpretation Strategy.

**Collections Management Program:** support conservation and management of collections at Woolmers Estate and Brickendon Estate.

**First Nations Program:** continue to scope and develop a First Nations Program.

**Strategic Management Framework Review:** complete review of the Australian Convict Sites Strategic Management Framework including a sustainable long-term funding model.

## Within 3 years

July 2023 – June 2026

**Communications and Engagement Plan:** implement the Australian Convict Sites Communications and Engagement Plan.

**Interpretation Strategy:** secure funding to commission an Australian Convict Sites Interpretation Strategy.

**Collections Management Program:** facilitate expertise sharing and ongoing support for other sites with limited collections expertise.

**First Nations Program:** continue to develop and implement the First Nations Program.

**Periodic Reporting:** complete next round of periodic reporting by 2026.

**Strategic Management Framework Review:** complete update the Australian Convict Sites Strategic Management Framework including the support of all signatories by 2025.



Top: Brickendon Farm Village, Brickendon Estate, Longford.

Bottom: Detail of William Archer's diary, 1829.

Photos: Courtesy Brickendon Estate

Friday 9th October 1829  
 Welsh and the Maid Sewant having been lodged on  
 were tried before the Police Magistrate Capt. Smith to day and  
 convicted of the crimes charged when sentenced the woman to be sent  
 Factory to be placed in the Crime Claps for the remainder of her Term  
 never more to be assigned - and Welsh to solitary confinement for  
 28 of them on bread and Water and 12 with some indulgence all  
 in his behavior and then to be returned to our Service.  
 Lucke Farley Dunows Paquet we very severely reprim  
 Malray Block Lowen Woodley  
 Timber Dodd and Glove with Tern. brot home a large Gum log -  
 Rolling - Ditchfield, with Six, and No 1 Roller, trailing 2 Harrows, on the  
 Fortie with Four and No 2 Roller - upon the Barley Gro  
 Lobbing - Wolstonecroft with Six moving the three had straw pon  
 at about the Stack at the N.W. Corner of the Pa  
 Station at the