

Jo Haylen
Transport Minister



Media Release

New NSW-made Port Authority vessels make waves on Sydney Harbour

*****Vision and grabs available to download [here](#)***

Monday 15 January 2024

Sydney Harbour has new stalwarts to support critical maritime capabilities, with an \$11.5 million dollar investment into two operational vessels, custom-built in the heart of regional New South Wales.

The state-of-the-art vessels, the Burra and Girawaa, are the fastest response vessels ever commissioned by Port Authority. They are designed to play a pivotal role in major on-water incidents, including firefighting operations both on and from the water.

Each year, Port Authority NSW responds to over 1000 incidents in Sydney ports alone, including vessel fires, oil pollution and water rescues.

The vessels were constructed by local manufacturer and family-run shipyard Birdon in Port Macquarie, involving around 60 workers.

Once completed, the new vessels embarked on their maiden journey to Sydney, setting sail from Birdon's dock on the Hastings River in Port Macquarie and navigating their way out to the open sea to their new homes.

The multimillion-dollar build was a critical project for Port Authority of NSW, replacing Shirley Smith and Ted Noffs, that have been retired after almost 40 years of loyal service.

The new twin vessels were launched at Walsh Bay on Monday, honouring ancient maritime traditions with female patrons named and a champagne ceremony. This was a rare chance to see them together before they spend their working lives apart.

Port Authority's operations teams work 24/7, 365 days a year to protect our waterways and manage the safe movement of ships in the ports of NSW.

Key facts:

- Play a key role in emergency actions and marine pollution response to protect life, property, infrastructure and the marine environment.
- Firefighting both on water and from the water where fires are in difficult locations for land crews.
- Supporting Maritime NSW and NSW Police in major on water operations.
- Can pump 16,000 litres of sea water per minute - equivalent to the capacity of 4 large fire engines

- Can project water to over 90 metres - almost the length of a standard soccer field.
- Can travel at speeds of 27 knots (50km/h).
- Can turn 365 degrees in 60 metres, while travelling at 20 knots, making them extremely agile in the water.
- Capable of travelling in shallow water.
- Fitted with an underwater surveillance measuring and monitoring systems.

Quotes attributable to Transport Minister Jo Haylen:

“Today is a landmark day as we unleash the Burra and Girawaa, two sleek vessels designed to safeguard our waterways with unmatched speed and precision for decades to come.

“Seeing these vessels in action, you know our lands and waterways are in safe hands. Each boat can pump 16,000 litres of sea water per minute – equivalent to the capacity of four large fire engines.

“This investment has delivered cutting-edge vessels for Sydney Harbour and Botany, supported local manufacturing, retained highly skilled workers, and stimulated our regional economy.

“The names, Burra and Girawaa, pay homage to local Aboriginal languages, aligning the vessels with the very waters they will protect day in and day out.”

Quotes attributable to Port Authority CEO Captain Philip Holliday:

“These vessels are befitting of the hard-working harbours they have been built especially for and embody Port Authority's commitment to excellence and innovation.

“The Burra and Girawaa will become the new icons of our working harbours, honouring the rich tapestry of maritime heritage in Coastal Sydney and the Traditional Owners whose waters and lands we help to protect every day.

“We thank Tribal Warrior and the Gujaga Foundation for their support in working with Elders and local community to seek appropriate names and permissions for these vessels.”

Quotes attributable to Chairperson of the Gujaga Foundation Ray Ingrey:

“Engagement with Aboriginal partners, Tribal Warrior and the Gujaga Foundation, has allowed the Port Authority of NSW to name their new working vessels Burra and Girawaa.

“Girawaa is the Dharawal word for Stingray, which is a spiritually significant being for Aboriginal people with a cultural connection to Coastal Sydney. Burra (also spelt Bara) is the word for eel in multiple Aboriginal languages spoken within the Sydney basin.”

Quotes attributable to CEO of Tribal Warrior Mr Shane Phillips:

“It is fitting that the Aboriginal names for the vessels were drawn from the waterways on which they will work.”

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