



**Dominic Perrottet**

Premier of NSW

**Matt Kean**

Treasurer, Minister for Energy

**James Griffin**

Minister for Environment and Heritage

**Ben Franklin**

Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Minister for the Arts, Minister for Regional Youth

## MEDIA RELEASE

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\*\*\*[Images available here](#)\*\*\*

### **\$43 MILLION INVESTMENT TO SUPPORT RETURN OF ME-MEL TO ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY**

The NSW Government has committed \$43 million to supporting the transfer of a Sydney Harbour island to the Aboriginal community, and commenced the first step in the official transfer process.

In one of the first NSW Budget 2022-23 announcements, Premier Dominic Perrottet said returning Me-Mel (Goat Island) to the Aboriginal community is a personal priority.

“Returning Me-Mel to the Aboriginal community is the right thing to do, and it helps deliver on my commitment of improving outcomes and opportunities for Aboriginal people across all parts of Government,” Mr Perrottet said.

“A big part of my commitment is ensuring the island is remediated before it’s transferred to the Aboriginal community.

“Through the NSW Budget 2022-23, we’re delivering \$42.9 million to regenerate and restore Me-Mel, and ultimately pave the way for the transfer back to the Aboriginal community.”

Treasurer Matt Kean said the significant NSW Budget funding will go towards important maintenance and safety work that will help ensure Me-Mel can be safely enjoyed for generations to come.

“This \$43 million investment from the NSW Government demonstrates that we’re dedicated to improving outcomes for the Aboriginal community,” Mr Kean said.

“This funding over four years will go towards work such as repairing seawalls and buildings, improving the wharf and access, upgrading services such as water and sewers, and removing contaminants like asbestos.”

Me-Mel is listed on the NSW State Heritage Register and has a rich and diverse array of important Aboriginal, historical and natural heritage values, including more than 30 buildings and other structures dating from the 1830s to the 1960s.

Minister for Environment and Heritage James Griffin said the official process to transfer Me-Mel to the Aboriginal community is now underway through the opening of an Expressions of Interest.

“It’s easy to see why Me-Mel is such a cherished Aboriginal site - it sits in the middle of magnificent Sydney Harbour, surrounded by a vibrant ecosystem,” Mr Griffin said.

“This is a significant transfer from the NSW Government to the Aboriginal community and we need to ensure it’s done right, which is why the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) is now calling for Expressions of Interest to join the Me-Mel Transfer Committee.”

Minister for Aboriginal Affairs Ben Franklin said the Committee will make recommendations for the transfer to Aboriginal ownership, and help determine how the island is managed and used into the future.

“The Me-Mel Transfer Committee includes Aboriginal people and NSW Government agency representatives, and importantly, its establishment is supported by the Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council (MLALC),” Mr Franklin said.

“Me-Mel holds great significance to Aboriginal people, including in the creation story Boora Birra, where the great eel spirit created the water courses known today as Sydney Harbour.”

Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council Deputy Chair Yvonne Weldon said acknowledging and respecting all histories so they can be respectfully enjoyed by everyone will help healing and progress.

“Me-Mel is a place where we can go to be within our culture, pass culture on to our younger generations and share with other people,” Ms Weldon said.

“Me-Mel is an opportunity for truth telling, and it’s about recognising the past and unlocking the future.”

Me-Mel is a complex site and a range of expert advice, including legal, heritage, planning, and governance will be offered to the Committee to help it develop a plan and a business case for future ownership and management of the island.

Me-Mel will continue being managed by NPWS until the transfer is finalised. It will remain open to the public through NPWS.

Community Representative nominations for the Transfer Committee should be received by close of business on Monday 27 June 2022.

For further details please visit <https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/topics/parks-reserves-and-protected-areas/park-management/community-engagement/sydney-harbour-national-park/me-mel-goat-island>

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