



Melinda Pavey
Minister for Roads, Maritime and Freight

Sarah Mitchell
Minister for Aboriginal Affairs

MEDIA RELEASE

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TRADITIONAL BARK CANOE BUILDS SKILLS AND FRIENDSHIPS

Minister for Roads, Maritime and Freight Melinda Pavey and Minister for Aboriginal Affairs Sarah Mitchell today unveiled a traditional Aboriginal Bark Canoe as a symbolic reminder and celebration of Aboriginal people's connection to Australian waterways.

The unveiling of the canoe coincides with the agency's NAIDOC Week celebrations, honouring this year's theme 'Because of her, we can', which involved employees and special guests gathering to celebrate the world's oldest living culture.

"The canoe was made on site by staff, led by local Aboriginal people, using age-old methods of combining ochre with bark from the blue gum stringybark tree, collected sustainably from Watagans State Forest on the Central Coast," Mrs Pavey said.

"It has now been cured and installed in a purpose-built cradle among the other maritime artefacts – a rightful place among one of Sydney's main maritime precincts."

The Aboriginal Bark Canoe project aims to promote diversity across Roads and Maritime by teaching staff traditional boat and rope making techniques in partnership with communities.

"Unfortunately, Aboriginal people are over-represented in boating and water injuries and fatalities. In the 12 years to 2014-15 alone, there were 24 Aboriginal drowning fatalities across Australia," Mrs Mitchell said.

"The aim is now to roll out the Aboriginal Bark Canoe project in other Roads and Maritime offices, as part of a proactive Aboriginal engagement program to raise awareness of boating safety and licensing issues faced by Aboriginal communities."

The canoe is now on permanent display at the Roads and Maritime Services Rozelle Bay foyer.

See how the bark canoe was built, plus grabs from Minister Pavey and Mitchell:
https://www.dropbox.com/sh/vyg0gp4zrppwkrh/AAAs98b8aKO4rwai_X8YShcza?dl=0

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