

CATHERINE HILL BAY PRECINCTS HERITAGE INTERPRETATION PLAN

ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY 5 MAY - 9 JUNE 2025

WE ASKED

To help Council prepare a Heritage Interpretation Plan for the Catherine Hill Bay Master Plan Precincts, we asked the community:

- Do the proposed key interpretive themes and stories from the Catherine Hill Bay Precincts align with the historical themes that are important to you? Is there anything missing?
- Who are the people, families and businesses or infrastructure you believe should be recognised in the heritage interpretation of Catherine Hill Bay Precincts?
- What local stories or events do you think are essential to include in the interpretation of Catherine Hill Bay Precincts?
- Are there any key dates or historical milestones that you think should be featured in a timeline or interpretive element?
- Do you have a personal quote or memory about Catherine Hill Bay that you'd be happy to share?

We also asked the community to share historical photographs, records or further stories to inform the interpretive design.

Feedback was gathered through a heritage interpretation workshop, an online survey and submissions provided to the project team.

KEY INTERPRETIVE THEMES AND STORIES

This is Awabakal and Darkinjung Country

Catherine Hill Bay lies on Awabakal Country with deep cultural and ceremonial significance, evidenced by ancient shell middens and long-standing Aboriginal occupation.

Biraba(a)n, totem of the Awabakal

For the Awabakal people, the biraba(a)n (Eagle Hawk) is a celestial being and a powerful totem. The bird is closely tied to Awabakal identity, with the nineteenth century leader Biraban taking his name from this bird.

Early mining ventures: the origins of Catherine Hill Bay

Catherine Hill Bay began as a mining township following establishment of the New Wallsend Coal Mining Company in 1873. Its name stems from the 1867 shipwreck of the Catherine Hill.

Growing settlement and the Wallarah Coal Company

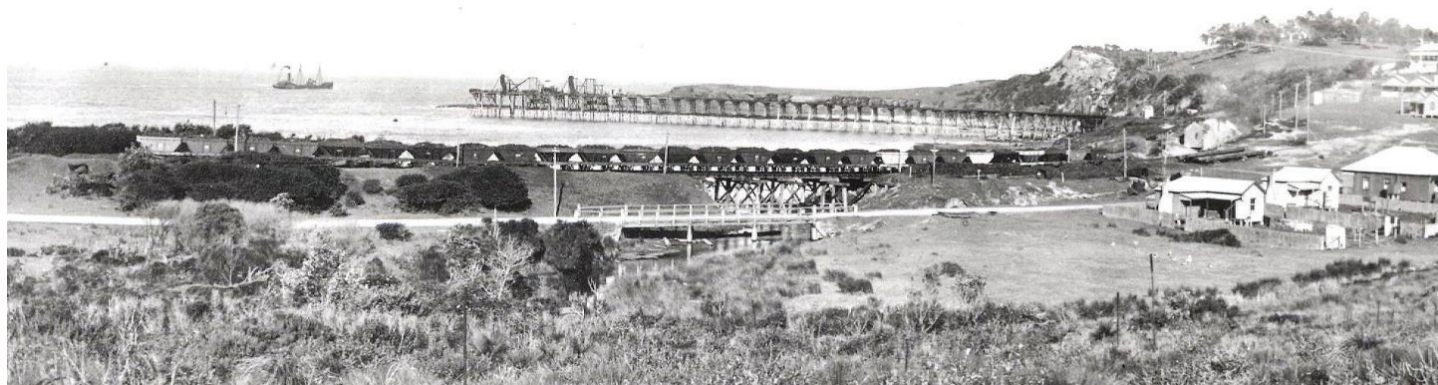
The Wallarah Coal Company's development of transport infrastructure and community facilities drove the town's growth despite persistent poor conditions for miners. Mine Camp and Middle Camp emerged as key residential areas for miners, fostering a vibrant community supported by public services in the early twentieth century.

From shore to sea: the Wallarah Colliery railway and loading jetty

The Wallarah Colliery Railway enabled coal transport from the mines to the loading jetty.

Community and recreation: life beyond mining

Community life in Catherine Hill Bay thrived through institutions like the surf club and bowling club, which provided recreation opportunities for the local community.



We reached



678 visits to our Shape Lake Mac project webpage



3,325 Shape Lake Mac e-newsletter subscribers received a link to the project webpage



Two meetings with Local Aboriginal Land Council representatives



17 participants at a heritage interpretative workshop



550 project postcards delivered to Catherine Hill Bay residents

WHAT'S NEXT?

Your feedback will help inform our Catherine Hill Bay Heritage Interpretation Plan, which will build on the interpretive opportunities identified in the Catherine Hill Bay Precincts Master Plan to provide detailed recommendations for interpretive elements between the Surf Life Saving Club and Middle Camp.

You can stay up to date with the progress of the Master Plan, and subscribe to project updates, at lakemac.com.au.

WE HEARD

- Interpretive elements should complement the scale and character of the location.
- The former railway corridor should be a key interpretative element.
- The lived experience of mine workers and their families should also be honoured while interpreting historic industrial infrastructure.
- Lookout areas present opportunity to interpret Awabakal and Darkinjuni heritage especially the biraba(a)n (Eagle Hawk).

