

Resolution of Council

24 August 2026

Item 14.8

Welcoming the Federal Government's 'Enhanced Civilian Access' Program to Increase Public Use of and Community Activity at Victoria Barracks, Paddington

Moved by Councillor Maxwell, seconded by Councillor Gannon -

It is resolved that:

(A) Council note:

- (i) that Victoria Barracks is an approximately 15-hectare Commonwealth heritage listed sandstone precinct within the City of Sydney, established in the 1840s and one of the most significant intact heritage sites in Australia, presently in active use as an Army facility, and consequently is all-but-inaccessible to the civilian community
- (ii) that, in anticipation of the potential divestment of the site by the Federal Government, Council resolved in November 2024 to undertake a community consultation process and develop Guiding Principles for the future of the site, should it be divested
- (iii) that on 4 February 2026, the Federal Government announced its intention to divest the site, as part of the Defence Estate Review
- (iv) that in March 2025, City of Sydney staff met with Department of Defence staff to discuss the development of the Guiding Principles
- (v) that the City received 1,092 pieces of feedback through that engagement process, and that the Engagement Outcomes Report demonstrates strong community support for maximising public accessibility, enhancing green open space and maintaining the site in public ownership

- (vi) that the Department of Defence has since initiated an 'Enhanced Civilian Access' Program, that will allow more civilian use of certain defence sites that are transitioning away from exclusive use by the Department of Defence and the Australian Defence Forces, including Victoria Barracks, in order to:
 - (a) provide new, high quality public space to the communities in which these facilities are located
 - (b) provide new opportunities for residents and communities to gather, celebrate, express themselves and participate in the adaptation of these sites to public and community use
 - (c) begin to integrate these facilities and spaces into the fabric of daily life of the communities in which they are located; and, most importantly
 - (d) road test actual alternative uses for these sites, particularly those which centre public access, such as markets, concerts, as host sites for artistic work, event activations, festivals and other kinds of public and community gatherings
- (vii) that the Enhanced Civilian Access program aims to increase public access and community use of the Victoria Barracks, and that this aligns with the City's Guiding Principles for Victoria Barracks, and begins to make real the community's top priorities for the Victoria Barracks site, that is, to 'maximise its public accessibility' for the community
- (B) the Lord Mayor be requested to write to the Hon. Peter Khalil MP, Assistant Minister for Defence and the Hon. Richard Marles MP, Deputy Prime Minister of Australia and Minister for Defence, welcoming the roll out of the Enhanced Civilian Access program, and encouraging the Department of Defence to facilitate greater public access and community use of the Victoria Barracks site.

Carried unanimously.

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