



Middle Head – Gubbuh Gubbuh location

# Middle Head – Gubbuh Gubbuh – Environment Education Centre

Information pack | December 2023

## Investing in our schools

As part of the NSW Government's plan to rebuild essential services, the 2023-24 Budget is delivering a record \$8.8 billion for new and upgraded schools. This targeted investment in growing communities will ensure working families get access to a world class public education.

School Infrastructure NSW (SINSW) is planning a project to deliver Middle Head – Gubbuh Gubbuh – Environment Education Centre (EEC) in Sydney Harbour National Park. The project aims to support cultural values of the existing site and increase its use by providing facilities for up to 120 visiting students from Kindergarten to Year 12 on any given day.

The upgrade will deliver:



One covered outdoor learning area (COLA)



2 classrooms within the existing heritage cottage (Soldiers' Institute)



Staff facilities, student amenities and storage

# Public exhibition of design for the adaptive reuse of Soldiers' Institute

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## Proposed use of the former Soldiers' Institute building and grounds for an EEC and construction of a COLA.

SINSW is publicly exhibiting the proposed concepts and design for an EEC at Middle Head – Gubbuh Gubbuh, Sydney Harbour National Park. The proposed EEC includes the adaptive reuse of the former Soldiers' Institute building and construction of a COLA with storage and toilets.

Adaptive reuse offers new uses for old places. The new use needs to be compatible with the building and retain its historic character, but it can still introduce new services, as well as modifications and additions. The aim of this adaptive reuse of the Soldiers' Institute is to expand the opportunities for NSW school students in environmental education as well as the local community.

SINSW is seeking feedback on the design plans for the existing building and a new building, the COLA. No significant physical works have been proposed for the former Soldiers' Institute building aside from minor internal refurbishment works. This will include alterations and additions to the kitchen and amenities and for form 2 classroom areas.

The opportunity to comment is open from **Wednesday 6 December 2023 to Friday 9 February 2024**.

To comment, submit your feedback here: <http://edu.nsw.link/Middle-Head-Public-Exhibition> or via the QR code.



# Concept design - COLA

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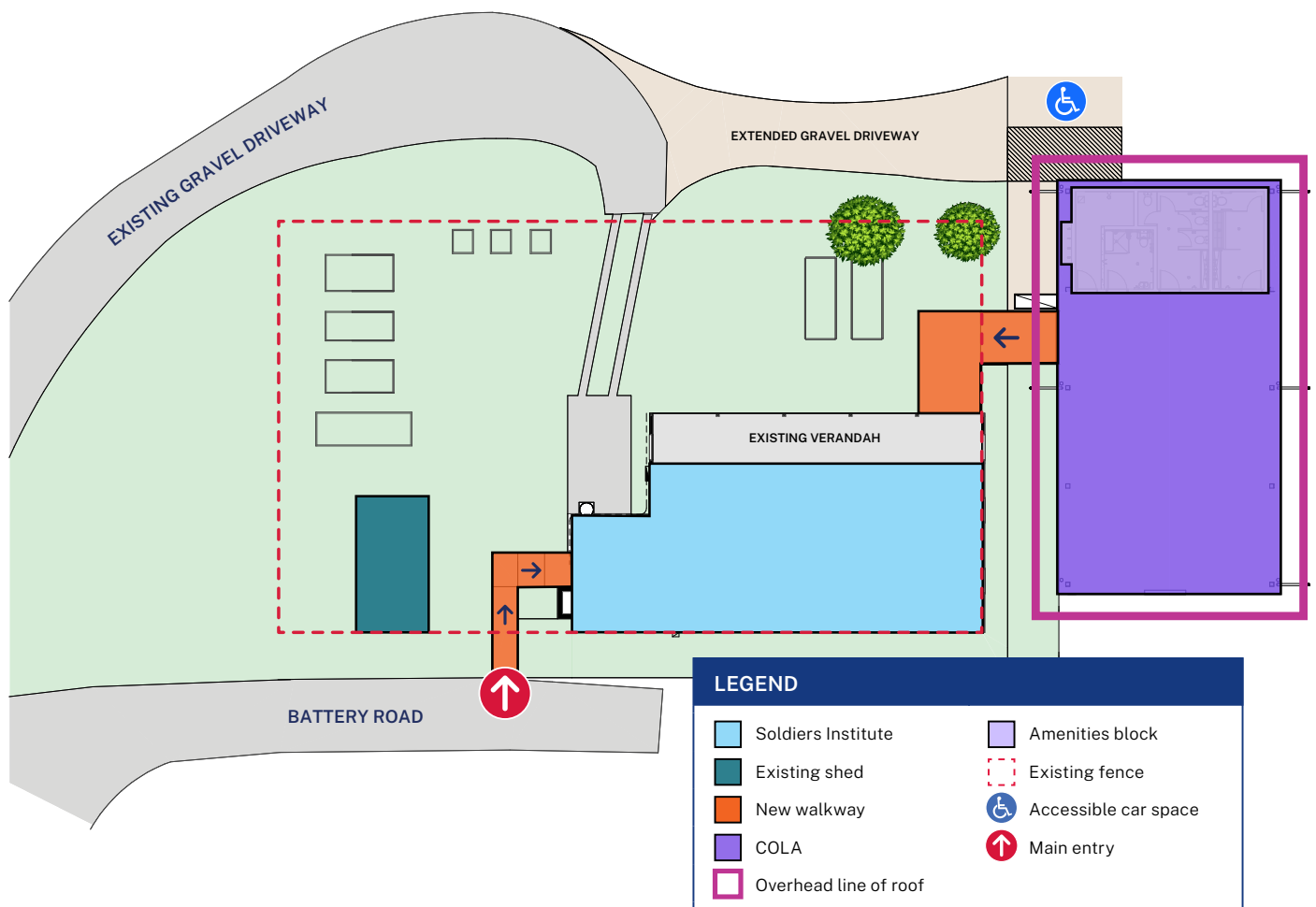


Artist impression of COLA next to Soldiers' Institute with learning area at the front and amenities block at the back



Artist impression of COLA - side view

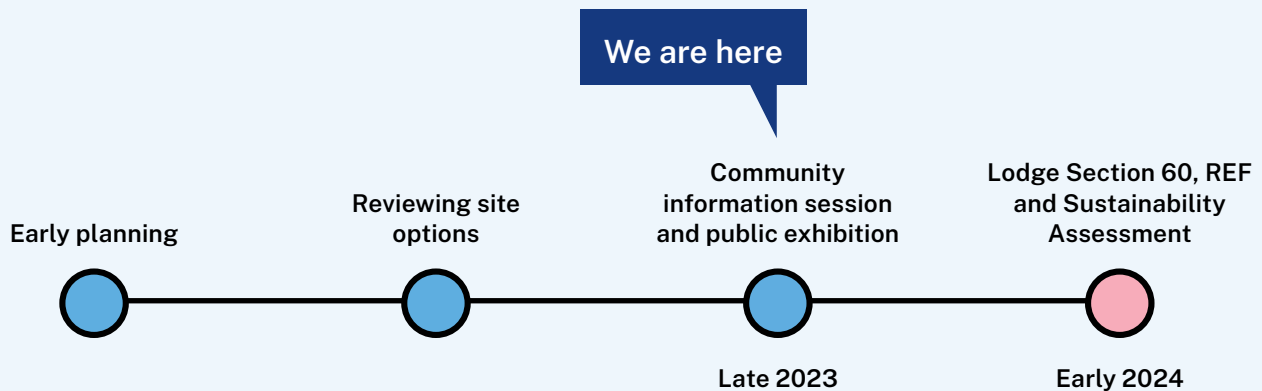
# Floorplan of COLA



## What are the next steps?

- Review public exhibition submissions and develop and lodge a Section 60 works application to Heritage Council NSW
- Develop and lodge a Review of Environmental Factors (REF) and Sustainability Assessment for National Parks and Wildlife Services (NPWS) consideration
- Following all necessary approvals for the project, the department and the appointed contractor will develop a clear timeline for the work to occur, which will be shared with the community.

# Timeline



## Project progress summary

- Planning to deliver the Middle Head – Gubbuh Gubbuh – EEC is underway.
- In February 2023 the Heritage Council of NSW Approvals Committee met to review the EEC proposal.
- In mid-August 2023, SINSW consulted with the Sydney Harbour Federation Trust (SHFT) to investigate options for locating the EEC in Building 6 and/ or 7 in the existing Ten Terminal complex at Middle Head, adjoining Sydney Harbour National Park. These buildings are currently vacant and have been identified in the Harbour Trust’s draft master plan for Middle Head – Gubbuh Gubbuh as the potential location for a future interpretation centre. The Harbour Trust has indicated it is open to exploring with SINSW the possibility of co-locating the EEC in these buildings, (along with the Harbour Trust’s interpretation centre) as an alternative to SINSW’s current proposal.
- After consultation with Heritage NSW, SINSW engaged environmental and heritage consultant to assess 3 potential locations for the COLA. The advice of Heritage NSW also informed the design of the COLA and proposed modification and refurbishment of the Soldiers’ Institute.
- In mid-September 2023 a Bushfire Risk Assessment Report was prepared. The report provides an independent assessment of the bushfire risks associated with the construction of the COLA and identifies required risk mitigation measures such as maintenance of an asset protection zone.



# Siting options

The environmental and heritage assessments carried out by Gary Puksand Pty Ltd consultants considered the potential impacts of Option 1A, Option 1B and Option 2 for the COLA (see figure 1) and the sites environmental and heritage values.



Figure 1: Proposed site locations (indicative only)

# Preferred COLA site location

The preferred COLA site location is shown in Figure 2. The property is deemed bushfire prone under the Mosman Council's Bushfire Prone Land Map and this location meets the requirements of Planning for Bush Fire Protection -2019 and complies with the construction requirements for bush fire-prone areas.

The Bush Fire Consultant developed a series of principal maintenance recommendations of an Asset Protection Zone around the proposed COLA, and development of a Bushfire Emergency Management Plan consistent with NSW Rural Fire Service Guidelines.

The location was also found to be suitable in the environmental and heritage assessment. The assessment found that while it impacts a small area of vegetation, the construction of the COLA will not impact threatened species.



Figure 2: Preferred site location (indicative only)

# Keep in touch

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We will continue to keep the community updated as the concept design phase progresses. We encourage members to sign up to the project's mailing list here: <http://edu.nsw.link/Middle-Head-Updates> or via the QR code.



For more information, please visit the Middle Head Environment Education [project page](#).

## Frequently Asked Questions

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### What is an Environment Education Centre (EEC)?

EECs are NSW public schools staffed by trained teachers. Depending on the unique features of their location, they provide tailored sustainability education programs to school communities. This may include incursions, excursions, and professional learning activities for teachers.

The Department of Education has 25 existing EECs across NSW operated in partnership with NPWS.

Each EEC offers a range of education programs which give students the opportunity to explore conservation areas and learn about nature, Aboriginal culture, historic heritage and more.

### Will the EEC be open for community use outside of school hours and on weekends?

Yes. SINSW will work with NPWS to determine best use for community purposes outside of school hours and on weekends.

Community use will be in line with the management plan and objectives with National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974.

### How will the final location be determined?

SINSW will continue to work with the ecological consultants, NPWS, Heritage NSW and SHFT to determine an appropriate location for the EEC at Middle Head –Gubbuh Gubbuh to ensure it meets all requirements to protect park values and comply with environmental planning legislation.

What is the purpose of a public exhibition and what happens once it closes?

A public exhibition involves actively seeking the opinions of interested stakeholders. This helps the project team plan accordingly.

Once the public exhibition closes, all feedback will be collated, reviewed and a submission report will be developed. This will be used when finalising the Review of Environmental Factors (REF).

### What is a Review of Environmental Factors (REF)?

A REF is planning document that assesses the potential environmental impacts of a proposed development, and is required under the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979. The purpose of this REF is to examine all matters affecting or likely to affect the environment and/or heritage as a result of the proposed installation of a COLA at Middle Head –Gubbuh Gubbuh.

A REF may include reports prepared by industry specialists including Ecological Consultants, Heritage Consultants (Aboriginal Assessments), Noise and Vibration, Contaminated Lands to address the specific details required for the project approval.

## Frequently Asked Questions (cont.)

### When will the option of a location on the Sydney Harbour Federation Trust (SHFT) site be considered?

The SHFT has indicated it is open to exploring with SINSW the possibility of co-locating the EEC in these buildings, (along with the SHFT's interpretation of the EEC) as an alternative to SINSW's current proposal. This option will be considered once the review of options for the location at the Soldiers' Institute has been completed.

### Are there threatened flora species at the proposed site for the COLA?

The habitat for two threatened flora species, the Neilsen Park She-oak (*Allocasuarina portuensis*) and Sunshine Wattle (*Acacia terminalis* subsp. Eastern Sydney) occurs in the area. The construction of the COLA will not impact these species. No other threatened flora or fauna species were recorded during the field studies.

### What happens next?

A concept plan will be developed and a Section 60 works application to Heritage Council NSW will be lodged. SINSW will then develop and lodge a REF and Sustainability Assessment for National Parks and Wildlife Services (NPWS) consideration.

Once the REF is approved, the construction contractor will be appointed. SINSW will work with the contractors and their design team to further progress the detailed design and develop the program of works to deliver the EEC.

## Contact us

For more information about this project, contact School Infrastructure NSW:

**Website:** [schoolinfrastructure.nsw.gov.au](http://schoolinfrastructure.nsw.gov.au)

**Email:** [schoolinfrastructure@det.nsw.edu.au](mailto:schoolinfrastructure@det.nsw.edu.au)

**Phone:** 1300 482 651

## Stay informed



#### Website

Stay up to date by visiting the School Infrastructure NSW website [schoolinfrastructure.nsw.gov.au](http://schoolinfrastructure.nsw.gov.au)



#### Email

Contact the Community Engagement team by emailing [schoolinfrastructure@det.nsw.edu.au](mailto:schoolinfrastructure@det.nsw.edu.au)



#### Phone

Contact us between 9 am and 5 pm, Monday to Friday on **1300 482 651**



For a Translation and Interpreting Service call 131 450 and ask them to call the Department of Education - School Infrastructure NSW on **1300 482 651**.