



Ruins of a terrace of three lighthouse keepers' cottages at Point Stephens. The cottages, oil stores and other buildings were important components of each lighthouse complex.

### Constant maintenance

Lighthouse buildings were continually battered by rain, wind and salt spray and required a constant program of maintenance.

After spending the night working four-hour shifts to operate the lamp, lighthouse keepers had to clean the lantern equipment every day. They also had to regularly polish all of the lighthouse's metalwork to stop corrosion. The external surfaces of all buildings needed painting every few years.

In their little spare time, the lighthouse families tried to turn the rugged landscape into something more familiar. They laid paths and planted small gardens and orchards. Many of these patches of exotic plantings survive today, clustered around lighthouse buildings.

In general, however, lighthouse keepers made little impact on the hardy coastal areas. Many of these natural environments are now part of national parks and other NPWS protected areas. Some, particularly those on offshore islands, provide great bases for wildlife research.

### Conserving the lighthouses

In 1997, agreement was reached to transfer nine historic lighthouses from the Commonwealth to the NSW Government. Although the lighthouses are owned by the NPWS, the operation of the lamps is still managed by NSW Waterways and the Australian Maritime Safety Authority.

The NPWS is currently developing a Conservation Management and Cultural Tourism Plan for the lighthouses. This plan will ensure that the lighthouses are conserved and visitors can enjoy the full cultural and heritage values of these powerful monuments.

Each lighthouse has a distinctive architectural character and combination of natural and cultural landscape features. The NPWS will highlight these individual characteristics, while showcasing the nine lighthouses as linked 'coastal highway lights'. The surrounding national parks will be managed to stress the coastal isolation and natural landscape of these remote places.



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## HERITAGE INFORMATION

# Coastal highway lights

the NPWS lighthouses



Romantic icons from a more hazardous era of ocean navigation, lighthouses helped in the development of safe coastal trade. Today they are important reminders of Australia's maritime heritage.

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# Beacons from the past

'Like a street with lamps'

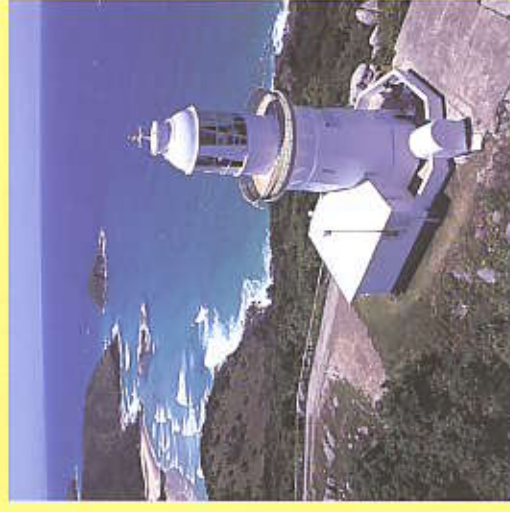


Shining across the sea in all weathers, lighthouses protect ships and sailors from dangerous shoals, headlands, bars and reefs.

Without them, our early trade and shipping — the backbone of 19th-century Australia — could not have developed.

The coastline of NSW is dotted with these beacons. With shipwreck numbers on the rise, colonial authorities wanted to light the NSW coast 'like a street with lamps'. Between 1858 and 1903, thirteen major lighthouses were constructed. Many smaller lamps, particularly in the north of the State, completed the historic 'coastal highway lights'.

Technological advances in marine navigation mean that we no longer need staffed lighthouses. Most of NSW's major late-19th-century lighthouses, from Cape Byron in the north to Green Cape in the south, are today managed and conserved by the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS).



Furthest point east, Cape Byron Lighthouse and its restored keepers' cottages are a major visitor attraction on the north coast of NSW.

## Aboriginal associations

While the European colonisers of Australia found the rocky coastlines remote and dangerous, for Aboriginal people the coastal environment was a provider of important and diverse resources.

Traditional Aboriginal fishing practices, in particular, rely heavily on elevated coastal areas — where lighthouses are frequently built. Fishing from canoes, Aboriginal mariners undoubtedly used headlands as reference points for return trips.

Aboriginal connections to these headlands, often stretching back thousands of years, can be seen in the camping sites, shell middens, stone artefacts, scarred trees, quarries and burial sites that have been found around the NPWS lighthouses.

Aboriginal people continue to use many of the NPWS lightstation sites, and many Dreamtime stories survive explaining the creation of these places.

◀ Sitting on a high narrow headland, Smoky Cape Lighthouse overlooks the unspoilt coastal beauty of Hat Head National Park.

## The lighthouse buildings

For the first century and a half of white settlement, European Australians tended to see themselves as part of a settler society — inhabitants of a colony on the edge of the world. Lighthouses, standing alone in rugged, remote locations, were powerful symbols of this isolation.

However, lighthouses also symbolised the growth of the modern Australian nation and the 'civilisation' of the landscape. On the dangerous and relatively uncharted NSW coastline, European settlers and merchants lived in constant fear of shipwreck. With a chain of beacons lighting the shoreline, they felt better able to survive nature's whims.

The construction of 'coastal highway lights' along the NSW and Queensland shorelines saw the opening of Australia's northern trade routes in the late 19th century. Settlement and development quickly followed.

## A stubborn environment



On one level, lighthouses helped European colonisers to 'conquer' Australia's natural environment.

However, for individual lighthouse keepers and their families, nature was all but unconquerable.

The close-knit lightstation communities were separated from many of the necessities and luxuries of civilisation. They had no easy access to schools and emergency medical facilities, and could be cut off from food supplies in bad weather.



# Links in a chain

Each of the nine lighthouses managed by the National Parks and Wildlife Service has its own style. Some have tall, thin towers rising from the surf, while others sit proudly on top of prominent headlands. Some have powerful lamps sweeping across the ocean, while others are more limited in range. Some are built from granite, others from sandstone or concrete.

But despite their local flavours and differences, these historic landmarks were designed to work as a chain of beacons along the NSW coast allowing colonial authorities to open up safe routes for trade and commerce to Australia. Built mostly in the late 19th century, our 'coastal highway lights' are from an era when lighthouses and their surrounding cottages were considered important public buildings reflecting a consistent vision of architectural excellence.



## Cape Byron

Cape Byron Lighthouse stands on the most easterly point of the Australian mainland, at 'the edge of the world'. Built in 1901, it is the last of the great 19th-century-style lighthouses in the NPWS collection. With its light clearly visible from Byron Bay township, it is a symbol of local pride and a popular visitor destination.

The lighthouse and its surrounding cottages are constructed from concrete blocks, in the extravagant style of the late Victorian era. They stand dominant in Cape Byron State Recreation Area, two kilometres east of Byron Bay. From the headland, you can enjoy panoramic views of the ocean and northern hinterland — including regular sightings of turtles, dolphins and humpback whales. Visitors may stay in the lighthouse keepers' quarters (bookings essential, call 02 6685 6552). For more information, phone 02 6685 8565.



## South Solitary Island

Lighthouse keepers and their families were used to living in remote locations, but even they regarded South Solitary Island as the most isolated place in NSW. South Solitary was hard to get to. Lying 18 kilometres north-east of Coffs Harbour, and rising dramatically from the steep rocky landscape, the lighthouse was linked to a high jetty. When seas were calm, food and supplies were delivered using the jetty and basket lifts.

The lighthouse and its cottages were built of concrete in 1880. Although the island cannot be visited, the lighthouse can be viewed by boat cruises from Coffs Harbour. South Solitary Island sits within the Solitary Islands Marine Park. For more information, contact the NPWS on 02 6657 2309.

## Smoky Cape

Situated on a high, narrow headland, Smoky Cape is the most elevated lighthouse managed by the NPWS, even though its tower is



## Barrenjoey

At the end of Palm Beach, 40 kilometres north of Sydney CBD,



## Point Stephens

The circular tower of Point Stephens Lighthouse, with its flared base, grand external stairs and clean pure lines, is one of the most distinctive of the NPWS lighthouses. Built in 1862, it stands tall and elegant above the rocks and coastal heath near Fingal Bay, 50 kilometres north-east of Newcastle.

The sandstone lighthouse and its terrace of now ruined cottages are in Tomaree National Park, on an island connected to the mainland by a sand spit. The spit can be highly dangerous, and visitors should never cross on a rising sea or tide. For more information, call 02 4981 9004.

unspoilt coastal scenery of Hat Head National Park is a picture of splendid isolation.

Smiley Cape is one of the last major lighthouse complexes designed by James Barnet, the Colonial Architect who created most of NSW's late Victorian lighthouses. Constructed out of concrete in 1891, it has an octagonal tower with a prominent balcony. The lighthouse keeper's cottages provide accommodation for visitors (call 1800 624 040 for bookings).

The lightstation is reached by a steep, narrow pathway from the national park. It is 40 kilometres north-east of Kempsey, along the South West Rocks road. For more details, phone 02 6584 2203.



### ▼ Inner South Head

Hornby Lighthouse, at the entrance to Sydney Harbour, is the oldest lighthouse of the nine — and the only one built as a harbour light. Perched at the end of South Head in Sydney Harbour National Park, it is a thought-provoking landmark for the thousands who pass the heads each day.

The lighthouse itself is managed by the Ports Corporation while the NPWS manages the original keepers' cottages. They are reached by a pleasant stroll along the low cliffs above the harbour. For more details, phone the NPWS on 02 9337 5511.

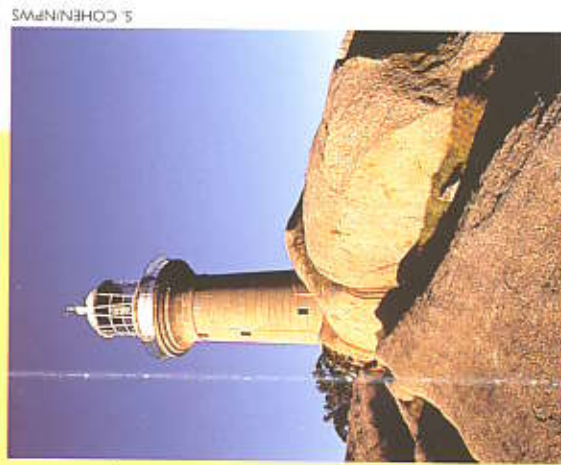


### ▶ Montague Island

Nine kilometres east of Narooma, Montague Island is home to seals, seabirds and about 10,000 pairs of penguins. It is covered with gigantic granite boulders and from one of these rises the tall, slender tower of Montague Island Lighthouse.

The lighthouse dates from 1881. Two cottages and a number of outbuildings huddle around it.

When weather conditions allow, authorised cruise launches from Narooma can take you to the lighthouse and Montague Island Nature Reserve. For more details, phone 02 4476 2888 or 02 4476 2881.



5. COHEN/PWS

Barrenjoey Head Lighthouse is a favourite walking destination for Sydney residents and visitors. From Barrenjoey Head, which is part of Ku-ring-gai Chase National Park, you can enjoy spectacular views across Broken Bay.

Built in 1881, the lighthouse is the only one in NSW to use sandstone alone for its tower, oil store and cottages. For more information, contact the NPWS on 02 9451 3479.



### ▶ Cape Baily

Built in 1950, Cape Baily Lighthouse is the youngest of the NPWS lighthouses — though its lantern enclosure was taken from an unknown late-19th-century lighthouse.

Standing in Botany Bay National Park, the lighthouse looks across the coastal heath of Kurnell Peninsula. It is surrounded by significant Aboriginal sites, sandstone cliffs and gorges, and several important wetland areas. For more information, contact the NPWS on 02 9668 9111.



E. CARPENTER/PWS

### ▶ Green Cape

Perched on the edge of a peninsula, Green Cape Lighthouse is the tallest and most southerly in NSW. Its octagonal tower juts out from a square base, in dramatic contrast to the low-lying landscape surrounding it. It looks across Disaster Bay — the site of many shipwrecks.

The lighthouse and the keepers' quarters were made from concrete in 1883. Located in the middle of Ben Boyd National Park and 27 kilometres south of Eden, it can be reached via the Princes Highway, Edrom Road and Green Cape Road. For more information, contact the NPWS on 02 6495 5000.

