

The aim of this week-long training course is to share knowledge, develop museological skills, make connections and build a sense of community

As the group walked along the museum's wharves, Scott Grant, Head of Fleet, delivered a tour from the heart. The group also boarded SY *Ena* and learnt about the museum's approach to caring for historic and contemporary vessels. Image Megan Baehnisch/ANMM



## Learning the ropes with MMAPSS

Our new Maritime Museum Administrators' Course is launched

Late last year, a group of employees and volunteers from maritime heritage organisations around the country gathered at the museum for a museology training course as part of the Maritime Museums of Australia Project Support Scheme (MMAPSS). Lifelong Learning Officer, Anna Gregory, tells how the course came about.

THE MARITIME MUSEUMS OF AUSTRALIA Project Support Scheme (MMAPSS) is a partnership between the museum and the federal Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts. This annual outreach program has been providing grants and training to staff and volunteers at regional museums and organisations for over 25 years. Since 1995, the scheme has given more than \$2.2 million to organisations in support of over 520 projects and funded over 70 internships.

In 2022, the training component of MMAPSS was refreshed, and developed into the Maritime Museum Administrators' Course. The aim of this week-long training course is to share knowledge, develop museological skills, make connections and build a sense of community among the maritime museums of Australia.

In November, the museum welcomed 12 people from 10 organisations for the first iteration of the course. Participants travelled from as far as Port Adelaide, Hobart and Kempsey. Each came with their own unique story and prior experiences. One person originally hailed from France and was a specialist in Middle Eastern archaeology. Another had previously managed the Clinical Immunology and HIV/AIDS Department at the Royal Prince Alfred Hospital for over 20 years. Participants had experience in graphic design, teaching, marine science, administration, student mentoring and marketing. Some participants were tertiary-trained museum professionals, while others were volunteers learning the museum trade 'on the job'. These vast experiences and varied backgrounds were a great asset and only enhanced the learning experience. The participants' interests and reasons for attending this course were equally varied – ranging from digitisation to collaborating with Indigenous communities, and everything in between. Regardless of their previous experience and interests, all were eager to learn and expand their networks.

Throughout the week, the MMAPSS visitors participated in a range of seminars, workshops and on-water experiences. Each day of the program was organised thematically to help participants consolidate their knowledge on a particular area of maritime museum operations.

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In the conservation lab, the MMAPSS participants learnt about conserving objects made from a variety of materials. Image Megan Baehnisch/ANMM



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Aboard Sydney Heritage Fleet's ferry *Harman* for a trip to Rozelle Shipyard and Cockatoo Island are Andrew Walsh (Woodbridge Marine Discovery Centre, TAS), Colin Pierpoint (Macleay River Historical Society, NSW), Lynette O'Grady (Historic Ketch Falie Inc, SA), Julia Hornsby (Royal Prince Alfred Yacht Club, NSW), Pamela Vine (Camden Haven Historical Society, NSW), Camille Reynes (Maritime Museum of Tasmania), Susan Burk (Royal Prince Alfred Yacht Club, NSW), Nicole Sutherland (Jervis Bay Maritime Museum, NSW), Bronwen McLeod (Marine Rescue Port Stephens, NSW) and Justin Croft (Flagstaff Hill Maritime Museum, VIC). Image Anna Gregory/ANMM

02



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On the first day, Monday 21 November, the theme was 'community and connection'. To begin building a sense of community, each participant delivered a short presentation to introduce their home organisation, their role and some priority projects. These presentations revealed amazing maritime stories, shared challenges and a mutual passion for maritime museums. They also ensured that museum staff could prepare sessions that were tailored specifically to the participants' interests and their museum's needs. The remainder of Monday was spent learning about how to engage meaningfully and respectfully with Indigenous communities; nurturing a network of support; and exploring the global community of maritime museums.

Tuesday was windy but sunny – just perfect for a sail on *Duyfken*! As the group sailed around Sydney Harbour, they learnt about reading the winds and listened to daring tales of 'tall shippers' climbing the rig to unfurl the sails. Back on land, they heard about the logistics of vessel management plans and participated in a practical and enjoyable grant-writing workshop. They finished the day with a visit to the Anzac Memorial in Hyde Park. This moving tour demonstrated the powerful stories a museum can tell in a small space and on a tight budget.

On day three of the course, the participants followed the journey of an object from entering the museum, through registration, conservation and ultimately display. They worked in groups to design creative exhibitions using museum objects. One group developed a thought-provoking exhibition concept targeting an elderly age group, called 'Time is running out'. This exhibition focused on the importance of taking action on climate change, before it is too late.

On Thursday, the participants were introduced to the museum's programs and promotions. They learnt strategies to develop engaging, educational and entertaining programs; shared programming ideas; and enjoyed a collegial dinner with special guest speaker Alan Edenborough from Sydney Heritage Fleet.

On Friday morning, Sydney Heritage Fleet generously took the group on a harbour tour on their ferry, *Harman*. The group learnt about historic vessel repairs at the Rozelle shipyard and heard about the many layers of history at Cockatoo Island.

To round out the week, the participants had the opportunity to speak one-on-one with a museum staff member of their choosing. During this time, participants could ask for advice, brainstorm ideas, discuss projects and troubleshoot problems. After a busy week of learning and sharing, it was wonderful to witness the consolidation of new knowledge, the sparking of new ideas and the solidification of newly formed relationships. After the course, one participant commented, 'I left on Friday feeling better informed, better connected but most importantly excited about the things I could take back to my museum.'

The Maritime Museum Administrators' Course has had many benefits for the individuals who attended, their home organisations and the Australian community of maritime museums. In the post-course survey, participants were asked to identify the sessions which they found to be most beneficial. One participant nominated the sessions on object conservation and writing grant applications as the most useful. Another participant identified the sessions with the Fleet and Digital teams. One person said: 'I loved the variety of content from the speakers and the mixture of workshops and talks.' The diverse range of sessions during this course ensured that the participants gained a holistic understanding of maritime museum operations, while also learning strategies that were relevant to their museum's particular circumstances and priorities.

MMAPSS is a crucial part of the museum's annual outreach program. This refreshed course was a fantastic way for the museum to reconnect with its regional counterparts, after years of COVID-19 interruptions. The benefits of this course for the maritime museum community will only be amplified over time, as the participants apply their knowledge, share their experiences and continue to keep in contact. As one participant commented: 'I had a wonderful time and would highly recommend the program to future participants.'

The Maritime Museum Administrators' Course will be run annually in November. Applications for 2023 close on 31 March 2023. For more information, or to apply, go to [sea.museum/about/grants-and-awards/funding-for-maritime-heritage/how-to-apply](https://sea.museum/about/grants-and-awards/funding-for-maritime-heritage/how-to-apply)