

MEDIA RELEASE

SYDNEY OBSERVATORY CELEBRATES 160TH ANNIVERSARY

Sydney Observatory celebrates 160 years in June 2018 with night tours, a new time ball, book launches and a once-in-80,000 years celestial event!

Since opening in 1858 Sydney Observatory has set the time for ships in Sydney Harbour, contributed to charting the southern hemisphere night sky and inspired a fascination with galaxies far away for hundreds of thousands of visitors both locally and across the world.

MAAS Director and CEO Dolla Merrillees said “Sydney Observatory has a special place in the hearts of the people of NSW. From the heart of the city this special building has been opening up the night sky to visitors to ponder the universe for 160 years.”

Opposition of Mars and lunar eclipse

Every 16 years Mars’ orbit moves significantly closer to Earth. This is called the Opposition of Mars. Approximately once every 80,000 years this event coincides with a lunar eclipse, as it will on Saturday 28 July. At dusk in Australia there will be a full moon that will look red, alongside an unusually large Mars. So mark 28 July 2018 in your diaries to see the Opposition of Mars and lunar eclipse. Or wait until 28 July 82018.

Sydney Observatory book launches

Sydney Observatory is the nation’s oldest operating observatory. This history is captured in a new book launching in July; *The History of Sydney Observatory*, written by astronomers, historians and staff past and present. In August MAAS will launch *Time and Memory*, a book exploring the history of Time as a museum collecting theme.

Time for a new ball

Built on the highest natural point in Sydney, Sydney Observatory originally set the time for Sydney by dropping the time ball each day for ships in the harbour to set their chronometers. For the past 160 years the time ball has still been dropped at 1pm each day. In 2017 the MAAS annual appeal raised money to refurbish the time ball, which has been replaced atop the Observatory in all its bright yellow glory in time for the 160th anniversary.

New tours at Sydney Observatory

Sydney Observatory night tours are so popular new tours have been added in 2018 to keep up with demand to view the night sky through both historic and cutting-edge telescopes. In celebration of the 160th anniversary of Sydney Observatory and collaborated with the Australian Architecture Association to develop a series of daytime Architectural Tours that will provide visitors with a deeper appreciation of the history of the building, the site and the technology operated at Sydney Observatory.

EVENT DETAILS

What: *Sydney Observatory Architecture Tour*
When: 11am – 12pm 29 July, 26 August, 30 September, 25 November
Where: Sydney Observatory, Upper Fort Street, Millers Point, Sydney
Price: \$30 Adult \$25 Concession \$25 MAAS or AAA Members
Website: maas.museum/event/sydney-observatory-architecture-tour-2/

Preserving Sydney’s history

Sydney Observatory has played a seminal role in the history of timekeeping, meteorology and astronomy in Australia. MAAS has been developing a comprehensive Conservation Management Plan to preserve one of the most significant sites in the nation’s scientific history for future generations. Due for completion in late 2018 the plan will ensure this heritage site will continue its important role as a museum and public observatory.

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About the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences. Powerhouse Museum, alongside Sydney Observatory and Museums Discovery Centre, is part of the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences (MAAS), Australia’s contemporary museum for excellence and innovation in applied arts and sciences. MAAS has a vast and diverse collection of over 500,000 objects.