



## Media release

# Façade cleaning of Sydney's former General Post Office kick-starts brand conversion to The Fullerton Hotel Sydney

*Remediation project part of broader programme to connect locals with historic landmark*

**SYDNEY, Australia—16 April 2019:** In the lead up to the launch of The Fullerton Hotel Sydney in the former Sydney General Post Office (GPO)—the vision for which is to become the city's luxury heritage hotel in the heart of the CBD—remediation and maintenance work on the façade of the historic landmark has commenced.

Built on a grand scale and at huge expense, Australia's first GPO building dominated the Sydney streetscape and skyline for decades. Constructed in two stages, beginning in 1866 and designed under the guidance of colonial architect James Barnet, the GPO was regarded as a building which would come to symbolise Sydney in the same way the Houses of Parliament in Westminster represent London and the Eiffel Tower, Paris. With its intricate stone work and carvings causing a public outcry when it was first launched, the GPO remained Sydney's most well-known landmark since 1874 until the Sydney Harbour Bridge was erected in 1932.

With extensive experience preserving historic buildings in The Fullerton Heritage precinct in Singapore, the Hotel's future operator The Fullerton Hotels and Resorts is committed to the conservation of the Sydney GPO building for future generations. Cleaning its iconic façade is the first step of a broader remediation programme.

"As custodians of heritage, we believe it's imperative that significant historical buildings such as the GPO retain their heritage features. At the same time, we want to share the Grand Dame's unique story with everyone who visits the property—hotel guests and the general public alike," said Cavaliere Giovanni Viterale, General Manager of The Fullerton Heritage.

"This painstaking cleaning process is just the beginning of the Hotel's transformation, which will be implemented in a series of staged phases in the lead up to, and post launch in October this year," he said.

Experienced local heritage structural engineers Shreeji Consultant is charged with overseeing the building's preservation. Equipped with extensive conservation and remediation experience, the team has worked on several prestigious buildings. With a Masters in Heritage Engineering from Europe, lead project manager Sumeer Gohil has experience working with Sydney sandstone and has been involved in major local heritage projects including the Strand Arcade and the Queen Victoria Building.

"There are significant challenges involved in cleaning heritage buildings and remediation work of this type is time-consuming and requires acute attention to detail," noted Mr Gohil.

"We don't actually want the building to look brand new, but we want it to look clean, so finding the right balance is tricky, as is marrying the old and new parts of the building so they work in harmony.

"Sandstone is 250 million years old, with the oldest section of the Sydney GPO building dating back 153 years. Therefore, we don't want to hide or cover up features of the building, including blemishes



and imperfections which tell its story. Instead we want to retain the artisanal qualities of the original stonework—all while ensuring the building is structurally sound,” he added.

The laborious chemical-free cleaning process, estimated to take more than 38,000 working hours, will be carried out by highly trained specialists who will use steam, water and scrubbing brushes to remove accumulated layers of dirt without altering the sandstone’s natural patina, preserving the building’s integrity and showcasing its beauty. The specialist team, led by Rick Timperi from Stonemason & Artist (SMA), has a combined total of 334 years of stonemasonry experience.

During the cleaning process, a secure water capture system will ensure that there is no contamination to the stormwater system and no disruption to the public walking below, while scaffolding will be erected around the building for access and safety.

In selecting experts to work on the project, The Fullerton Hotels and Resorts was careful to choose reputable and experienced professionals and artisans, such as curator and writer Dr Charles Pickett, Rick Timperi from Stonemason & Artist (SMA), and Sumeer Gohil of Shreeji Consultant, who respect the building’s heritage and historic significance.

“We understand the historic and sentimental value of this landmark property, and we’re committed to retaining the ‘soul’ of the building,” said Cavaliere Giovanni Viterale.

“This beautiful building still belongs to the people of Sydney and should be enjoyed not only by hotel guests, but also the wider community,” he said. “In addition to heritage exhibitions, we are planning to encourage public access in a number of ways to re-connect locals and future generations with this historic gem.”

The façade remediation process commences this month and the first stage of cleaning is expected to complete in time for the Hotel’s official opening in October 2019. After its rebranding, the Hotel will offer dedicated heritage tours to share the building’s fascinating history which spans from the hallowed hallways of the historic building to the ornamental carvings on the façade.

### **About the Pitt Street GPO façade carvings and the public outcry of 1883**

When completed in August 1883, the carvings above the Pitt Street GPO archways caused a massive public outcry. The carvings depicted contemporary people at work in realistic form—rather than the more traditional gods or goddesses—and were deemed to be inappropriate and sacrilegious for the adornment of such a classically designed building. So vehement was the opposition to the carvings that there was a parliamentary enquiry debating their removal.

During the remediation and maintenance work being commissioned by The Fullerton Hotels and Resorts, special attention will be paid to the building’s carvings depicting subjects that represent the banking, agriculture, commerce, mining, literary, press and postal industries.

This includes a postmaster general, thought to be Francis Wright delivering a letter to a young barmaid with whom he appears to be flirting; an astronomer marking Sydney’s position on a globe; a young architect, thought to be James Barnett drawing a building; a professor demonstrating an experiment with an hourglass in hand; and an experienced digger pointing with satisfaction to a chunk of gold and quartz.



### **About the Martin Place GPO façade sculptures and carvings**

On the front of each arch along Martin Place, 24 face carvings represent different states, countries and continents, ranging from a Russia clad in bear skin and a sage, fatherly Europe, to a square-jawed America with stars across her brow. Australia is represented by a bearded indigenous man, while a stony-faced Queen Victoria overlooks Martin Place from her perch above the main entrance.

### **About the George Street façade carvings**

The representation of the badge of NSW on the GPO building is seen as a turning point in the colony's symbolism. Carved on the eve of the 1888 centennial celebrations, the badge of NSW is positioned on a shield with a crown as a crest, and an emu and kangaroo appear above a ribbon bearing the motto 'Sic fortis Etruria crevit'. Loosely translated as "thus strong Etruria prospered", this is a line taken from Virgil's second Georgic and is an early motto of the Colony of New South Wales.

By the time the motto appeared on the GPO building in 1888, The Heritage Council of New South Wales declared it was a "long discarded convict motto", as it was never intended that New South Wales should be officially called Etruria.

For images click [here](#)

For more information visit: [the-fullerton-hotel-sydney.com](http://the-fullerton-hotel-sydney.com)

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### **About The Fullerton Hotel Sydney**

The Fullerton Hotel Sydney, situated in Martin Place, in the historic former Sydney General Post Office will officially open in October 2019, marking The Fullerton Hotels and Resorts' first international expansion. The Fullerton Hotels and Resorts currently owns and operates two award-winning hotels in Singapore: The Fullerton Hotel Singapore (opened in 2001) and The Fullerton Bay Hotel Singapore (opened in 2010). Both hotels anchor the historic and cultural Fullerton Heritage precinct, located in Marina Bay the heart of Singapore's city centre. The Fullerton Hotel Sydney will become a sister hotel to The Fullerton Hotel Singapore, which shares a similar rich history as a former GPO. The Fullerton Hotel Sydney will deliver a luxury hotel that can further contribute to Sydney's growth as an international tourist destination and showcase the beauty and heritage of the original building to a wider audience, both nationally and globally. The Fullerton Hotels and Resorts is affiliated with Preferred Hotels & Resorts, which represents a global portfolio of independent hotels and independent hotel experiences.

**For further information including requests to interview Cavaliere Giovanni Viterale, Rick Timperi, Dr Charles Pickett or Sumeer Gohil, please contact:**

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