



“Sydney sandstone”: Heritage Stone from Australia

Barry Cooper (1) and Sabina Kramar (2)

(1) Barbara Hardy Institute, School of Natural and Built Environments, University of South Australia, GPO Box 2471, Adelaide SA 5001 Australia, (2) Slovenian National Building and Civil Engineering Institute, Department of Materials, Ljubljana, Slovenia

Sydney is Australia's oldest city being founded in 1788. The city was fortunate to be established on an extensive and a relatively undeformed layer of lithified quartz sandstone of Triassic age that has proved to be an ideal building stone. The stone has been long identified by geologists as the Hawkesbury Sandstone. On the other hand the term “Sydney sandstone” has also been widely used over a long period, even to the extent of being utilised as the title of published books, so its formal designation as a heritage stone will immediately formalise this term.

The oldest international usage is believed to be its use in the construction of the Stone Store at Kerikeri, New Zealand (1832-1836). In the late 19th century, public buildings such as hospitals, court houses as well as the prominent Sydney Town Hall, Sydney General Post Office, Art Gallery of New South Wales, State Library of New South Wales as well as numerous schools, churches, office building buildings, University, hotels, houses, retaining walls were all constructed using Sydney sandstone. Innumerable sculptures utilising the gold-coloured stone also embellished the city ranging from decorative friezes and capitals on building to significant monuments.

Also in the late 19th and early 20th century, Sydney sandstone was used for major construction in most other major Australian cities especially Melbourne, Adelaide and Brisbane to the extent that complaints were expressed that suitable local stone materials were being neglected.

Quarrying of Sydney sandstone continues today. In 2000 it was recorded noted that there were 33 significant operating Sydney sandstone quarries including aggregate and dimension stone operations. In addition sandstone continues to be sourced today from construction sites across the city area. Today major dimension stone producers (eg Gosford Quarries) sell Sydney sandstone not only into the Sydney market but also on national and international markets as cladding and paving products as well as block. Recent international projects by Gosford Quarries include Mishima Golf Club in Japan, Al Awadi Tower in Kuwait, New World Resort in China and a Hard Rock Café in Florida, USA.

Arguably Sydney sandstone is Australia's most prominent potential Global Heritage Stone Resource and details are readily available in existing publications to make the nomination.