EMBARGOED UNTIL 12 NOON, MONDAY DECEMBER 11

PARRAMATTA’S UNTOLD HISTORY UNEARTHED

(Sydney, Australia) Monday December 11, 2017 – Australia’s most well-preserved convict hut and the earliest surviving remains of a hotel in Australia will be available for all to see for the first time in 200 years after a new heritage display centre opened to the public today.

Previously hidden underground, the remains of an 1800s convict hut and the cellar of one of Parramatta’s oldest pubs built in 1801 the Wheatsheaf Hotel, were unearthed during construction of a new apartment tower at 45 Macquarie Street.

NSW Premier Gladys Berejiklian together with Crown Group Chairman and Group CEO Iwan Sunito cut the ribbon to open the centre before more than 100 guests and members of the public on site at 12pm.

The Wheatsheaf Hotel (1801-1809) was located on the “Western Road” into Parramatta and would have been one of the first major establishments people saw when entering the town from the west between 1801 and 1810.

Archaeologists also uncovered a well once used to access scarce drinking water, a wheelwright’s workshop used to create wheels for 1800s carts and a baker’s oven used to make large quantities of bread were also discovered alongside dinner plates, children’s toys, 19th century bottles and hundreds of artefacts which now form part of the display.

After excavation was completed, the sensitive site was protected with a concrete canopy to enable construction of the 590-apartment tower, and was later uncovered and incorporated into the new ‘Philip Ruddock Heritage Centre,’ which will be open to the public seven-days-a-week.

Referred to as Parramatta’s Vertical Village, the 29-storey V by Crown Group building features a 590 apartments, a pool, gym, five-star hotel and modern restaurants.

The heritage centre on the ground level of the building is officially named after former Member for Parramatta and one of Australia’s longest serving federal politicians, Philip Ruddock, who left federal politics last year and was recently elected Mayor of Hornsby.

Cr Ruddock said he was deeply honoured to have the centre named after him.

“Crown Group have done a magnificent job with this project and I am pleased to have my name associated with it,” Cr Ruddock said.

“It perfectly reflects my views about development – we need to keep moving forward, but at the same time it is vitally important that we preserve our heritage,” he said.

Crown Group Chairman and Group CEO Iwan Sunito said the V by Crown Group building had set a new bench mark in the integration of public and private space within residential developments.

“When we purchased this site in Parramatta we knew immediately we had to create a building which was truly special. This site is located on a prominent corner of Parramatta’s growing CBD and we knew this had to be a great design for the future, something which had never seen before,” Mr Sunito said.

“Many developers would have seen the discovery of important archaeological remains as an unwanted hurdle, but we saw it as a once in a lifetime opportunity to create something for the community. Our vision for V by Crown Group was to bring the past, present and future together,” he said.
Lead archaeologist on the project Dr Ted Higginbotham said the discovery was a great surprise, since it had been previously thought the site on Macquarie Street was poorly preserved.

Dr. Higginbotham led a team of more than 20 professional archaeologists and volunteers during the excavation.

“This was an exciting discovery. Despite concrete piers from a previous development, the site was well preserved. This is the first time that the physical remains of a convict hut have been put on display. The baker’s oven, the wheelwright’s workshop, the later brick cottage could all be matched with the known historical occupants of the site,” Dr. Higginbotham said.

“The archaeology reveals the contribution of many early settlers to the development of Parramatta. The convict huts stand in contrast with Old Government House in Parramatta Park,” he said.

The Philip Ruddock Heritage Centre also features an “walk-through” educational display exploring the broader history of Parramatta and an explanatory video chronologically detailing the discovery.

The Centre is open to the public seven days a week from 10am – 11.30am and 2.30pm– 4.00pm.

Visitors can enter at their own convenience and take their time exploring the rich history of the Parramatta area. No booking is required.

Fast Facts:

- Historically significant archaeological remains of a convict hut and adjoining cellar, along with adjoining relics from later layers of occupation were uncovered on the site at 45 Macquarie Street Parramatta in 2005.
- They were quickly identified by experts as “equal to or better than most of the other identified archaeological relics in Parramatta” and the remains were conserved with a plan to be put on public display in the future.
- Crown Group later purchased the site after the initial discovery and took the lead in the reshaping the intended building to accommodate a future public display of the remains.
- The design of the building was revised by architects Allen Jack and Cottier to accommodate a future public display of the remains.
- Manual excavation was completed by qualified staff and volunteers over several months and continued until the lowest layers, or natural clay was reached.
- The V by Crown Group development included 590 apartments and a new hotel and restaurant and was completed in early 2017.
- The historical display – officially named “The Philip Ruddock Heritage Centre” was officially opened to the public by the Premier of NSW Gladys Berejiklian on December 11, 2017, 12pm.
- Remains found include:
  - Footings of a **convict hut** built by 1800 were located, originally a two-roomed structure with a fireplace and wattle and daub walls. 3.6m x 7.3 metres in total.
  - A quern stone (for grinding flour), and an oven which are evidence the building was converted for use as a **bakery**.
  - A **Wheelwrights workshop** which was added to the former convict hut in the 1820s. James Walker, wheelwright, conducted his business there, making and repairing carts and wagons, the main form of transport at the time.
In 1840 James Walker could afford to house his family in better style. The hut and workshop were demolished to make way for a **brick cottage** with central hallway and flanking rooms and large windows facing the street. A **well** was dug for water at the back of the house. This cottage survived until the 1950s.

- Remains of the **Wheatsheaf Hotel** (1801-1809) were located on the corner of Marsden and Macquarie Streets. The original hotel was on the Western Road into Parramatta and would have been one of the first major establishments people saw when entering the town from the west between 1801 and 1810.
- A selection of the many thousands of artefacts that were found - plates, dishes, children's toys, many bottles, as well as spigots from the barrels in the cellar.

- The Centre is now open to the public seven days a week from 10am – 11.30am and 2.30pm–4.00pm.

**Significance of the remains found:**

**Wheatsheaf Hotel** – excavations have revealed the **earliest surviving remains of a hotel in Australia**.

**Convict hut** – this is the first time the actual remains of a convict hut have been able to be displayed to the public. Previously discovered remains of a convict huts in other locations have been impossible to display to the public – because the timbers had not survived, **BUT** in this case, remains have been able to be conserved in the heritage centre with original materials - **a first for Sydney and a first for Parramatta**.

ENDS

**Media Interviews**

**Crown Group Chairman and Group CEO Iwan Sunito** is available for a limited number of interviews on request.

**Editor’s Note**

Images and animation are available to download here:

**VIDEO FOOTAGE OF DIG + ANIMATION OF CONVICT HUTS AND WHEATSHEAF HOTEL**

https://www.dropbox.com/s/tv7yiq3ndxtk8du/171204_VBC_Single_Screen_1080p.mp4?dl=0

**STILL IMAGES of the building and the heritage centre:**

https://www.dropbox.com/sh/yvt00uqh2d2wgxm/AAD5KRgRrBFtpCVTAz9strWBa?dl=0

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About Crown Group
Crown Group Holdings (Crown Group) is a leading Australian property group specialising in property development, property investment and serviced apartments.

The company was co-founded by architect Mr Iwan Sunito and engineer Mr. Paul Sathio with its first project in Bondi in 1996.

Past and recent projects
Since the company was founded in 1996, Crown Group has successfully completed major developments in Sydney’s best locations including Bondi, Bondi Junction, Parramatta, Ashfield, Epping, Homebush, Newington, Pennant Hills and Rhodes and most recently Skye by Crown Group in North Sydney. Today, Crown Group boasts a large portfolio of projects under development and in the pipeline and is currently developing three major projects: Infinity by Crown Group in Green Square, Arc by Crown Group in the heart of Sydney and Waterfall by Crown Group in Waterloo.

Skye Hotel Suites

Future launches

For more information visit www.crowngroup.com.au