

MEDIA RELEASE



Sydney Harbour Bridge at 85: the online exhibition!

NFSA publishes online exhibition to celebrate 85 years of the Sydney Harbour Bridge.

Audiences can enjoy historical footage, home movies, ads, photos and songs, from the 1930s through to the 21st century.

The National Film and Sound Archive of Australia (NFSA) is celebrating the Sydney Harbour Bridge ahead of its 85th birthday (19 March 1932) with the publication of a new [online exhibition](#), featuring archival footage of its construction and controversial opening, and highlighting the many roles it has played as one of Australia's most recognisable icons.

A popular 1930 song called it 'the bridge of our dreams come true'. 'The Coathanger', as the bridge is affectionately known, plays an important role in both special occasions and everyday life for Sydneysiders. It's been the site for fireworks, marathons, stunts, protests and an Olympic torch run. It also has its share of romantic moments with an average of three couples per week getting engaged while they're on the Bridge Climb.

The Sydney Harbour Bridge represented Sydney's coming of age, from remote colonial outpost to a modern city with its own engineering wonder - the world's longest arch bridge in the world at the time. Even the Queen Mother referred to it as 'a magnificent monument to [Australia's] progress'.

The bridge provided employment to 1,400 people during the Great Depression, and has served a much greater purpose than its original function. It doesn't just connect Sydney north and south; it's an international icon that looms large in the consciousness of Australians.

Highlights include:

- Footage of the construction and opening of the Harbour Bridge - including Major Francis de Groot slashing the ribbon with his sword, ahead of the official opening by Premier Jack Lang.
- 1930s songs about the bridge.
- A recording of the Queen Mother calling it 'One of the wonders of our time'.
- A 1984 tourism promo starring former bridge rigger Paul Hogan.
- Opening of BridgeClimb, 1998.
- Greg Norman carrying the Olympic torch, 2000.
- Behind-the-scenes photos of the post-apocalyptic bridge from *Mad Max: Beyond Thunderdome*.

The **online exhibition** is available here: <https://www.nfsa.gov.au/collection/online-exhibition/sydney-harbour-bridge> or <http://bit.ly/SHBexhibition>. A **curated collection** with extended content is also available: <https://www.nfsa.gov.au/collection/curated/sydney-harbour-bridge> or <http://bit.ly/SHBcollection>

Interviews available. For more information, please contact Miguel Gonzalez, Manager National Media, (02) 8202 0114, 0404 281 632, or publicity@nfsa.gov.au.

ABOUT THE SYDNEY HARBOUR BRIDGE

The bridge took 1,400 workers eight years to build. During construction 16 lives were lost and hundreds of homes and businesses were demolished. It was known as 'the Iron Lung' because of the jobs it created during The Great Depression.

The steelwork alone weighs 52,800 tonnes and it's held together by 6 million rivets - each one driven in by hand. The structure rises 134 metres above sea level - almost as high as The Great Pyramid in Egypt - and is 503 metres long. The pylons are just for show. They were added to give the public confidence in the bridge's stability.

The bridge often makes an appearance in film and television to signify Sydney, and Australia as a whole. It has been featured in Australian films such as *Mad Max: Beyond Thunderdome* and *Starstruck*, and has been destroyed in Hollywood blockbusters such as *Pacific Rim*, *World War Z*, and the 2008 remake of *The Day the Earth Stood Still*.