

Leading light of the harbour bows out

Edmund Tadros
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THEY are called the Wedding Cakes, and known and loved by thousands of sailors and fishermen on Sydney Harbour.

The green and red lights of the two white, tiered channel lighthouses have guided vessels through the harbour since 1924. The fragile wooden structures were due to be replaced by Sydney Ports before the middle of next year at a cost of up to \$300,000.

Now it is too late for one of them. Wedding Cake West, off Georges Head at Mosman, collapsed about 4.30pm yesterday.

The last weather reading from its channel marker recorded a temperature of 17.6 degrees and an 18-knot south-westerly. Travellers on the 4.35pm JetCat from Manly were slightly delayed as their captain slowed down to avoid the debris of the channel marker.

Sydney Ports had buoyed off the area late yesterday and, along with the NSW Maritime Authority, were collecting what was left of the marker.

A spokeswoman, Kamini Paraghar, said the marker would be replaced immediately.

The Bureau of Meteorology weather station, a 10-metre stainless steel mast on Wedding Cake West, was installed in 1996 to provide information about conditions in the harbour, specifically for the 2000 Olympics.

The markers were originally gas powered but had been converted to solar. The sunken lighthouse had a red light, a concrete tower, copper top and wooden paling skirt. It was built in 1924, replacing a marker buoy. The green-lit Eastern Channel Lighthouse was built in 1908.

The only indication left of the fallen lighthouse are four temporary buoys.

They too are lit - but in white.



The weather mast on Wedding Cake West.

Photo: *Andrew Meares*