

Agreement in Principle

Mr PHILLIP COSTA (Wollondilly—Minister for Water, and Minister for Corrective Services) [6.05 p.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now agreed to in principle.

The transfer of Throsby Park Historic Site to the Historic Houses Trust will bolster its status as a living heritage place. Throsby Park is located on the outskirts of Moss Vale. It was one of the first properties in the Southern Highlands, helping to open up settlement of the region. Throsby Park is an excellent example of early colonial Australia, containing a Georgian house built in the 1830s and a small cottage, furnished with a number of period pieces associated with the Throsby family. The property was granted to Dr Charles Throsby in 1819 by Governor Macquarie and developed by his prominent nephew Charles into a large, successful commercial mixed farm, which supported virtually every household and building requirement on the property.

The Historic Houses Amendment (Throsby Park Historic Site) Bill 2009 will revoke the site from reservation as a historic site under the National Parks and Wildlife Act, and will vest the land with the Historic Houses Trust. It will also amend the Historic Houses Act to prevent the site from being sold without an Act of Parliament, thus ensuring that this significant heritage site will remain in public ownership in perpetuity. This level of protection mirrors that afforded by the National Parks and Wildlife Act. The Historic Houses Trust is a statutory authority within Communities NSW and was established in 1980 to manage, conserve and interpret historic buildings and places. It currently manages 14 properties, including houses, public buildings, gardens and parklands, and holds extensive heritage collections. The trust has world-class expertise in areas such as building conservation, architecture, social history research and the management of historic gardens and interiors.

The bill will ensure that Throsby Park is managed by the organisation that is best equipped to manage the site for its most appropriate use, while also ensuring that its heritage values are protected. Throsby Park Historic Site was reserved under the National Parks and Wildlife Act in 1975. At that time the estate was run down and beyond the means of the Throsby family to maintain. The Throsby family donated the site to the Government so that its values could be protected, and it was agreed that one family member, Miss Del Throsby, could remain living on the site. We thank the Throsby family for its very generous donation. Since this time the Heritage Act has commenced and the Historic Houses Trust has been established. This provides a more appropriate conservation framework for grand historic houses such as Throsby Park. I know the region well and it is certainly a grand historic house. Sadly, Miss Throsby died in 2006.

After thorough consideration of a range of possible management approaches the Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water and the Historic Houses Trust have agreed that a long-term residential lease would provide the best and most cost-effective management option to conserve the site's State significant heritage values. The trust will manage the site under its Endangered Houses Fund. The Endangered Houses Fund is a revolving fund initiative that is used to acquire historic buildings then conserve and protect them before putting them on the market for sale or as long-term leases, which will be the case for Throsby Park. To ensure that the public will continue to have the opportunity to appreciate the historic heritage values of the Throsby Park site the trust will put conditions in the lease to ensure that some form of regular public access is provided as part of any leasing arrangements, as determined by the Historic Houses Trust. Throsby Park is listed on the New South Wales Heritage Register and is therefore protected under the terms of the Heritage Act. It gives me great pleasure to move that this bill be agreed to in principle. I commend the bill to the House.