

Second Reading

The Hon. HENRY TSANG (Parliamentary Secretary) [5.31 p.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

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 in the Southern Highlands, about 140 kilometres from Sydney. It is a symbol of early colonial Australia, being one of the first properties in the region, and opened up settlement of the Southern Highlands. Throsby Park contains a Georgian house built in the 1830s and a small cottage furnished with period pieces, many pieces having an association with the house or the family. The property was granted to Dr Throsby in 1819 by Governor Macquarie and developed by his nephew Charles into a large, successful commercial mixed farm that 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. While the Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water has a continuing role in the protection of the State's historic heritage, the Historic Houses Trust has a greater range of expertise relevant to the care of historic houses such as Throsby Park and is better placed to manage this site into the future.

The Historic Houses Trust is a statutory authority within the Department of Arts, Sport and Recreation, 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 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.

Since that time, the Heritage Act has commenced and the Historic Houses Trust established. This provides a more appropriate conservation framework for grand historic houses such as Throsby Park. 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, either 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 should be noted that this is not the first transfer of an historic heritage site. A similar transfer occurred when the Historic Houses Trust was created in 1980. Vaucluse House, now managed by the trust as one of its house museums, was previously reserved under the National Parks and Wildlife Act as part of Sydney Harbour National Park. I commend the bill to the House.