

**Submission  
No 10**

## **INQUIRY INTO REVIEW OF THE HERITAGE ACT 1977**

**Name:** Mr Howard Tanner

**Date Received:** 16 June 2021

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## **Review of NSW Heritage Legislation**

I write as a former Chair of the Heritage Council of NSW to express my concerns regarding the currently depleted circumstance of heritage administration in NSW.

**Focus Question 1:** What should be the composition, skills and qualities of the Heritage Council (and its Staff)

The current Heritage Council members have extremely limited (or possibly nil) significant heritage experience, with the exception of the Landscape Consultant. Architecture, Building, Planning and the National Trust deserve representation by individuals with significant heritage experience.

I could find no list of the Heritage Office staff online. I am aware that suitable appointments exist in Landscape Heritage and Marine Heritage, but depth of experience in heritage architecture and construction, and in planning, appear to be sorely lacking. In particular, individuals with proven involvement with real projects, not just abstract administrative backgrounds.

Archaeology has been over-emphasized in the Heritage Office's work; it is a quite limited commodity in this State.

**Focus Question 5:** How can the NSW Government legislation better incentivise the ownership, activation and adaptive reuse of heritage?

Owners would be incentivated if grants, favourable loans or tax benefits were available. The Heritage Act has the ability to change planning and zoning to introduce worthy outcomes, but this possibility has rarely been used.

Adaptive reuse is vital, as all buildings require a suitable use that provides income which allows for maintenance. A great deal more lateral thinking - leading to considered outcomes - is required in this area, with early discussions between authorities and owners, and forums where reasonable options can be properly discussed and resolved. The 'you can't change a thing' attitude, or 'you can only match existing details' represents unsophisticated thinking.

**Focus Question 11:** Would streamlining enhance the listing process?

Possibly, yes. In recent years there has been very little State listing of buildings, and in the reasonably recent case of the major historic Anglican Church at Camden and its important setting, one witnessed completely irresponsible procrastination by the Minister, and a less than satisfactory outcome.

The production of vast and expensive heritage conservation policy documents has become a standard expectation, often lacking a concise summary and recommendations in their introduction. When vast and unwieldy, they discourage further use. Dr James Kerr perfected the concise model in the 1980s, and it hasn't been bettered.

The public expects some visible and positive outcomes from NSW Heritage, including a significant listing programme. Some important publicly-appreciated decisions regarding development would be most welcome. Very little of this of late.

Indeed, it would appear that the Chair of the Heritage Council and the Senior Staff of the Heritage Office nowadays have no visible public profile in the media, and do not make clear and definitive public statements. They appear to be in disconnect with the opinion makers and with the citizens of the State.

Howard Tanner  
10 June 2021

Howard Tanner's appointments have included: Principal, Tanner Architects (now Tanner Kibble Denton Architects); National President, Australian Institute of Architects; Chair, Heritage Council of NSW; Councillor, Australian Heritage Council; Chair, Australian Architecture Awards. Key heritage projects include: Sydney Town Hall, NZ Parliament Buildings, Admiralty House, Sydney Grammar School, Rockwall House, Tempe House.