

**Submission
No 13**

INQUIRY INTO REVIEW OF THE HERITAGE ACT 1977

Organisation: Broken Hill City Council

Date Received: 18 June 2021

REVIEW OF THE HERITAGE ACT 1977

SUBMISSION

Introduction - Broken Hill City Council has been a leader in heritage management for over 30 years since the introduction of a comprehensive heritage program in the outback City in 1987. A heritage advisor and restoration fund has been in operation during this time with considerable achievements which have been well recognised across NSW. This program has achieved a lot of varied heritage outcomes, a notable one being the reconstruction of many verandahs in the key commercial streetscapes (special verandah program) and repainting and conservation of traditional "Broken Hill Tinnies" (residential dwellings). Critical to the success of the program has been partnering with the NSW government over the years, with continuous financial support provided in the form of grants from State Government. Without this financial commitment the achievements made would likely not have been possible. Council is appreciative of the support shown by State Government over these years and for ongoing assistance in the development of Councils heritage program.

Key points for Broken Hill from the Terms of Reference are:

(i) a category approach to heritage listing to allow for more nuanced and targeted recognition and protection of the diversity of State significant heritage items.

Response - This is not seen as an issue in the current system and the hierarchy of National, State, Local (LEP listed) and then scheduled contributory items (CIs) within Conservation Areas works well. Clear schedules of CIs essential for the careful management of Conservation Areas.

(ii) consideration of new supports to incentivise heritage ownership, conservation, adaptive reuse, activation and investment.

Response – This is key for an outback town like Broken Hill where heritage tourism is a key economic driver. In addition, relatively low property values, compared to high costs of conservation and adaptive reuse of particularly commercial heritage buildings requires this investment to make projects feasible. With many major heritage hotels, economic incentives have been very important for the morale and positive achievements of property owners of substantial heritage places. Similarly for more modest heritage buildings (such as the Broken Hill "tinnies") financial incentives via the small grants program has been a key to its success. Ongoing, and increased financial support is very important. The multiplier of \$1 allocated to Broken Hill has been in some cases 11 times, resulting in job creation and economic benefits for the city. The financial support of the heritage advisory service is a key to its success and ongoing important role in heritage management in the City.

(iii) improvements to heritage compliance and enforcement provisions.

Response – This is not as critical in Broken Hill where council (with input via the heritage advisor) deals with compliance issues.

(iv) streamlining heritage processes - this is a key issue. Long wait times for approvals from Heritage NSW can be very off putting to property owners. Previously Broken Hill had delegated approval to process development associated with State Heritage Register items. Council considers that this should be reinstated, with the option to refer to Heritage NSW if and when required.

Response – Council should continue to be supported by State Government in relation to big picture heritage issues. A key issue is the response of local government to the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly Goal 11. Local Governments in Australia vary in their accountability to these Goals, and greater leadership is required by State and Federal Government to respond to these goals.

Similarly Council should continue to be supported by State Government with the ongoing development and retention of the heritage advisory service and grants funding . Capacity building, training of council officers, tradesmen etc are key issues for high standards of conservation. The Heritage Advisory service in NSW is a leader in the country and provides excellent value for money and should be reinforced by greater funding, particularly for remote outback and rural councils. The current requirement for councils to prepare and adopt heritage strategies is excellent as it benchmarks process and makes the council accountable.

Recommendations:

Response – a key issue for Broken Hill is resourcing for heritage management overall and projects in particular. There is now a clear link between retention of culture and wellbeing, and the promotion and engagement of communities in their own place is very important. Ongoing and increased financial support for all aspects of heritage management are requested including:

- Skills training (practical workshops on heritage),

- Boost support for heritage advisory services, and annual skills training workshops (can be remote or in Sydney)

- Boost financial support for: practical conservation projects, preparation of guiding conservation management plans, updated heritage surveys, interpretation, advocacy, and relationship to cultural tourism events (Example heritage festivals).

Please Note - a detailed response to all the Focus Questions has not been prepared due to limited resources to do this. Council however agrees that greater acknowledgement of Aboriginal cultural heritage should be included in any revisions to the Heritage Act.