

**Submission
No 92**

INQUIRY INTO REVIEW OF THE HERITAGE ACT 1977

Organisation: Australian Museums and Galleries Association, NSW Branch

Date Received: 4 July 2021

Submission to Heritage Act Review

Australian Museums and Galleries Association, NSW Branch

4 July 2021

The NSW Branch of the Australian Museums and Galleries Association would like to comment on the current review of the NSW Heritage Act. We are the peak professional body for museum and gallery professionals and volunteers in Australia. Our NSW members care for museums with state significant collections often within heritage buildings or cultural landscapes across the cities and regions of NSW.

We welcome the goals of the review to deliver more effective, relevant, and best-practice ways of recognising, conserving, re-using and celebrating the important heritage of NSW.

We make the following comments:

- That museum and heritage collections should be considered alongside moveable heritage, archaeology, natural heritage, built heritage and cultural landscapes in NSW. These are often inter-related physically, historically and thematically, yet are often managed, documented, promoted and accessed differently. There is a great deal of potential in terms of conservation, management, interpretation, education, tourism and economic benefits in considering better integration of objects, collections the built environment and natural places.
- We are keen to contribute to a new system of heritage trails in NSW inclusive of museums, galleries, Aboriginal and other heritage to better promote and celebrate all of our heritage and bring tourists to regional NSW and suburban areas in our cities.
- Regional, local and community museums often have collections of extremely high local, state and national significance and mostly operate on very small budgets and through volunteer labour. Grant and funding systems often do not focus appropriately on care and conservation of collections and places. There have been some great opportunities for digitisation projects, however our members have also commented that deeper documentation and story-telling opportunities are required, along with funding for proper care, storage, environmental conditions, insurance and maintenance. The Act should make reference to appropriate funding for care of all of our heritage.
- We support the development of new Aboriginal Cultural Heritage legislation. First Nations cultural material and places should be managed by appropriate communities or individuals and moveable objects should be cared for in keeping places or museums on the advice of the cultural owners. The principles of the AMaGA publication *First Peoples: A Roadmap for Enhancing Indigenous Engagement in Museums and Galleries* should be adhered to. The revised Act should clarify the ongoing ownership and management of all archaeological collections.
- Moveable heritage, associated objects, interiors and fittings should always be carefully assessed, included in heritage listings and conserved and managed appropriately.

- Current Section 170 requirements should be continued, inclusive of moveable collections, archives and interiors. These listings should be publicly available online.
- In order to better increase awareness and to celebrate our heritage, all types of heritage should be documented and interpreted in an engaging way. Themes related to educational curricula should be well documented by heritage resources online. Large museums often do this well, however places have not often been related to museum collections and engaging stories told. This is essential if we are to build an appreciation of heritage on all levels.
- We would propose an in-depth thematic study of museums operating within heritage buildings and places. These are often highly significant to the state and have been historically underfunded and resourced, with losses occurring.
- Climate change continues to bring significant challenges to our sector. Extreme weather events and bushfires have resulted in damage and increased insurance premiums, which puts collections and buildings under significant increased threat.
- We are very concerned about ongoing loss of heritage values within Sydney due to increasing development pressure. Adaptive re-use should prioritise the cultural heritage values of the place as advised by a range of independent heritage experts. Independence means not only advice paid for by the developer or influenced by particular sectors of government. International tourism research has shown that tourists wish to engage with the heritage and history of a place, including Aboriginal history. Our heritage, including twentieth century and culturally diverse heritage should be carefully conserved to ensure our cities and regions prosper into the future.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the new legislation.

NSW Branch of the Australian Museums and Galleries Association