

**Submission
No 151**

INQUIRY INTO REVIEW OF THE HERITAGE ACT 1977

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I make this personal submission in an effort to raise the situation of the shortcomings in the current legislative components of the 1977 Heritage Act.

I make these comments/statements hoping that mine and (other submissions) can lead to improvements to how this state's Heritage items are protected, preserved and conserved for my family, my impending grandchildren, acquaintances and future generations across the communities within this State.

I make these comments as an accredited Tour Guide, whose clients regularly inform me of their despair at how NSW Heritage is inadequately recognised or appreciated or

valued as it should be, as happens in other States of Australia or overseas.

There is an expectation by visitors/tourists that our Heritage is/should be adequately protected and conserved - disappointingly, this is often not the case.

All too often, it is found that new "glass and concrete" constructions are changing a face of the city or specifically, the "Cradle of the Colony (Parramatta)" being destroyed to be replaced by a "modern and sophisticated" look.

NSW has such a young colonial history compared with overseas, yet it is evident that currently inappropriate development is allowed rather than conserve and present our Heritage character and craftsmanship and identity, functionality or sustainability of purpose.

The opportunity to reflect on history is an important ideology that adds much value to a visitors experience of a place.

I submit that there needs to be changes/amendments to the Heritage Act of 1977 to give it more significance and strengthening towards the Preservation, Protection and Conservation of our Heritage sites, our items and our objects, and be enabled to be presented for the future appreciation and enjoyment of all citizens and visitors.

Currently, there is much loss of NSW Heritage items because of the lack of recognition, realisation by Government bodies as to the important role of Heritage in cultural, social, economic, educational and philosophical ways of society.

This is shown by the indifferent way the Government's own Heritage Branch (now known as D.I.P.I.E.) is mishandled, misdirected, under-resourced and passed around from portfolio to portfolio under job-sharing Ministerial ownership over many periods of time over the years, sometimes being included in the Premier's Department, then "shafted" to the Arts umbrella where there is an abundance of other non-associated jurisdictions.

The Heritage Branch with Its immense skills and knowledge base developed over the longterm has been over-ridden and not utilised as its mandate was intended.

The Heritage Branch has the interests and values of protection and conservation of historical items at heart, and the ability to implement such measures as needed and to present the appropriate management of such on behalf of communities that have passionate and committed interests.

Similarly, the role of the NSW Heritage Council needs to be given more importance and status and to serve Independently. With its recognised Heritage experts and organisational representatives it should be able to have some authority. and should then be able to fulfill a more substantive and consultative role..

Both of these entities have had their legislative protective and enforcement roles downgraded in respect of "State Significant Developments/Infrastructure" matters, which means the community/citizens/visitors miss out or loses significant Heritage both locally as well as across NSW.

Concerns are raised at the "convenience" of turning off legislative criteria to "suit" or to allow State Significant Infrastructure development thereby putting at risk cultural and community heritage (State owned assets) which gets in the way of what should be appropriate management, care and control by Government agencies.

This action is to be deplored. It is an unacceptable policy and must be stopped immediately and in its entirety for the sake of retaining of our Heritage (either Local, State or National registration level).

I, and others who have a passionate interest in Heritage, specifically, our Colonial History, have lost faith in the systems of NSW Government that fail to recognize the economic and tourism values that preservation of Heritage presents, namely evidence of community involvement and commitment to social needs and purpose, "placement" and educational role.

It is vital that we uphold the status quo in regard to the elements and intention of the 1977 Heritage Act be kept, and also the amendments made at a later date varying matters in regard to "State Significant Infrastructure/Developments" to be re-instated and more stringent measures made to retain Heritage items.