

**Submission
No 277**

INQUIRY INTO REVIEW OF THE HERITAGE ACT 1977

Organisation: The Royal Botanic Garden Sydney

Date Received: 4 July 2021

26th June 2021



Dear Sir/Madam,

I am writing to you in response to the Review of the Heritage Act 1977 on behalf of the Royal Botanic Gardens & Domain Trust (the Trust).

As a National and State heritage listed site, the RBG and Domain is one of the earliest public parklands and has been the centre of botanical collection and research in Australia for over 200 years, forming part of the Sydney Harbour Aboriginal cultural landscape, which has notable connections into contact period.

Recognised for its iconic location and outstanding landscape, the RBG attracts over 5.2 million visitors and the Domain approximately five million visitors every year. Its connection with Country and strong and enduring association with the Sydney Community – as a place of recreation, leisure, a place of significant events and public celebrations and commemorations.

The Trust has reviewed the Standing Committee on Social Issues and the Government's Discussion Paper and offer the following comments:

1. Making Heritage Easy

In order to navigate approvals and compliance, the system requires fundamental changes to ensure that the process is not only cost-effective but time-efficient. Thus, establishing a framework that is streamlined, contemporary in nature and uses simple language to ensure the approval pathway is relevant and fit for purpose.

Further collaboration with key stakeholders is required throughout this process to provide transparency, further insight and improve efficiency to achieve the desired outcomes.

2. Putting Heritage to Work

To continue to support the conservation and economic growth of the RBG and Domain, there is a requirement to carry out regular essential maintenance through remedial or repair work or replacement of infrastructure and systems. Delays in approvals can lead to further deterioration and permanent damage to an asset, which can become costly. This is relevant to all elements of the Garden, including buildings, structures and walls.

Consequences of climate change have shifted the sun access planes, which impact planting and may require moving or merging garden beds to ensure there is sufficient sunlight. This places further pressure on the collection and landscape and can essentially change the fabric and layout within the RBG and Domain. Further to this will be the need to develop onsite water retention and recycling strategies that will require alteration to the fabric of the Garden in order to protect, preserve and enhance the public asset.

There are many variables to be considered: climate change, building maintenance or future development, which will require adaptive reuse, activation, and further investment. It must be supported by a robust,



agile framework that responds to the community needs and addresses the inefficiencies to support key stakeholders and the custodians of these treasured assets.

3. Making Heritage Relevant.

The RBG and Domain continue to provide the community of NSW a diverse range of activities and events such as Field Day, Outdoor Cinema, Opera in Domain, Food festivals, Private Marquee Events, Sporting Events, Vivid and Oktoberfest. All of which support the NSW economy and align with our statutory obligations under the Royal Botanic Gardens and Domain Trust 1980.

This Act establishes the Royal Botanic Garden and Domain Trust as a statutory authority and provides the Trust with the responsibility to undertake certain functions to manage the lands comprising the RBG&D.

The principal objects of the RBG&DT Act are to:

- maintain and improve the Trust lands,
- increase and disseminate knowledge of the plant life of Australia and NSW, and
- encourage the use and enjoyment of the Trust lands by the public by promoting and increasing the educational, historical, cultural and recreational value of those lands.

Any development on Trust lands needs to address and demonstrate consistency with the objects and other relevant provisions of the RBG&DT Act.

In terms of the proposed NSW Heritage listing categories, the RBG and Domain are of National and State significance; therefore, it would fall under Category 1 – Heritage of exceptional and iconic value. However, the proposed features suggest category one would have 'heightened regulatory controls' - the Trust would like to understand what this means and the potential implications.

In closing, our role, facilities, research capabilities, expertise and collections are recognised as global leaders in plant science. Therefore, the Trust reserve the right to add, treat and remove trees as appropriate based on the advice and expertise of the Royal Botanic Gardens as a living scientific collection

The Royal Botanic Gardens and Domain Trust looks forward to firmly establishing a balance to continue to preserve, protect and enhance our assets for current and future generations.

Should you have any further enquiries regarding this matter, please contact our Planning Project Manager, Louise Farley,

Yours sincerely

George Salouros
Director Asset Management, Planning and Projects

