



*The***Barossa***Council*

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Please Quote
Our Ref:

9 March, 2006

Ms Jill Irvine
Heritage Inquiry
Productivity Commission
PO Box 80
BELCONNEN ACT 2616

Dear Ms Irvine,

Re: Conservation of Australia's Historic Heritage Places

We refer to the Commission's invitation to make submissions in respect of the above-stated report. At its meeting on 7 March 2006 Council resolved to make the following comments.

Heritage Contracts, Values, Funding

- Of concern to Council and local government generally, are recommendations relating to private contract agreements with owners of heritage listed properties. These will be voluntary however it is difficult to envisage a reliance on heritage contracts with owners that are mindful of profit offsets.
- It is difficult to appreciate who will enforce and maintain private heritage contracts and in particular how will they be valued. Built and cultural heritage is often valued in respect of its contribution to the community and it would be difficult to place a dollar value on it. To this end heritage conservation needs more support from the Federal government who should focus on providing more funding (in the same way they do for environmental conservation).
- Recommendations in the Commission's report suggest voluntary listing as being a viable option. Experience has shown this approach is unlikely to attract domestic properties and will continue to skew towards institutional listings (which may eventually realize heritage listing as a cost impediment).

Statutory Controls

- There is seen to be a need to maintain links to the development assessment system. This will coordinate planning approvals and avoid incompatible buildings being sited together or impinging on each other.
- Heritage conservation should be legally endorsed with a greater scale of fines and administered in the same way as environmental laws are.
- Compulsory acquisition equates to unnecessary conflict and cost. There will be inherent inequities where the value of a place lies in community appreciation. Again, who will enforce and monitor the need for this, and who will arbitrate the cost? Compulsory acquisition may also result in such acquired properties not being able to find new owners.
- Maintaining structure and well funded statutory controls rather than voluntary contracts provides continuing leadership. Performance would be enhanced by greater federal alignment with policies and controls in each state. The nexus between heritage conservation and planning/building controls must be improved, not made more flexible.

Conclusion

If heritage agreements are to be an option in addition to current laws and legislation then improvements to the current system can be made. However it will need to be resourced more by the Commonwealth and prioritised more than it has been.

Rural council's are burdened by prolific examples of town heritage and are generally not in a position to cope financially with the added responsibilities. This results in neglected heritage elements that have limited commercial opportunities compared to metropolitan areas.

To this end it may appear the productivity commission's funding may be based on a minority of problems; when the real issue may be simply to focus on more support and incentives for listing and maintaining properties.

If you wish to discuss this matter or require further information, please contact Mr Louis Monteduro, Council's Strategic Planner (phone 8563 8492).

Yours faithfully

Judith Jones
Chief Executive Officer