

SUBMISSION OF BRAIDWOOD HISTORICAL SOCIETY TO
AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT PRODUCTIVITY COMMISSION.

Braidwood is a New South Wales country town, situated on the King Highway between Canberra and Batemans Bay, with a population of just over 1,000 people.

The Braidwood Historical Society was formed in 1970. Soon after, the society purchased a large 1840s two-storey granite building in the main street of Braidwood and from this marvellous building we operate a museum, a family history research service, a photographic reproduction service, as well as selling books on the history of Braidwood and providing guides to visiting groups. There are over 130 members in the only history related business in Braidwood. We are active in preserving artefacts and paper based records, as well as the built historic heritage.

Our submission will address Items 1 and 3 of the Scope of the Inquiry

- ***the main pressures on the conservation of historic heritage places***
- ***the current relative roles and contributions to the conservation of historic heritage places of the Commonwealth and the state and territory governments [by] heritage owners, community groups and any other relevant stakeholders.***

The town of Braidwood is unique and has been recognised as such, with listing by the National Trust, and the Register of the National Estate. The NSW Heritage Council also intends to list Braidwood and its setting on the State Heritage Register in November of this year. Thus, Braidwood has state, as well as national, importance. We in Braidwood are well placed to comment on pressures on the conservation of heritage places and may well be the only town in Australia so placed.

In the Statement of Significance for the listing proposal, the NSW Heritage Office noted that 'Braidwood and its setting are of state significance as an excellent surviving example of a Georgian period town plan, dating from the late 1830s'. It also notes that it is the integrity of the 19th century buildings in Wallace Street that makes it particularly significant. Braidwood is rare in New South Wales because it has retained the significant historic form and fabric of the town, and the views to the surrounding countryside.

However, the town plan, which at present is intact, is under huge threat. The main pressure on the conservation of the historic town of

Braidwood comes from developers. Although we are a geographically isolated small country town over one hour from Canberra and Goulburn, large scale developers see this aesthetically pleasing town as a great place to develop. Relying on an outdated Local Environmental Plan (1991), the pro-development local Council has recently passed two controversial large developments that, together, have the potential to add another 600 or 700 inhabitants to the town. Both will be tacked on to the existing grid pattern of the town plan, lessening its integrity and its reason for listing by the NSW Heritage Office.

The Braidwood Historical Society has been and is a major stakeholder in the conservation of Braidwood. It is the only community group with a proven record in this field. For the past 35 years we have been actively involved in the restoration of our own 1840s buildings as well as promoting Braidwood as a unique historic town. We have done all this voluntarily. But we are now powerless to protect Braidwood against these rapacious developers. It is now up to the NSW Heritage Office to protect Braidwood by listing the town.

The only possible remedy we see for the development threats is to place an Interim Heritage Order on the town of Braidwood as soon as possible. If the Commonwealth government is serious about the conservation of towns such as Braidwood, it should provide legal backing to Braidwood's listing on the Register of the National Estate. That listing is a toothless tiger at the moment.

I can be contacted at any time to add to this submission.

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