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22 September 2005

Mr Neil Byron
Presiding Commissioner Heritage Enquiry
Productivity Commission
PO Box 80
BELCONNEN ACT 2616

Dear Mr Byron

Productivity Commission Enquiry into Historic Heritage

City of Casey welcomes Productivity Commission's enquiry into policy framework and incentives for the conservation of Australia's heritage. Following information is put forward as submission from City of Casey.

- The survey format duly filled.
- A note on heritage management issues in Casey.

We shall be happy to provide any further information on the matter if required.

Yours sincerely,

Greg Bursill

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Heritage Management in Casey

City of Casey's is an outer metropolitan council of Melbourne. It has diverse indigenous and post European contact heritage. The heritage assets are spread thinly throughout the municipality. The Council considers conservation of the heritage assets as an important part of the development process as it provides identity and character to a place.

Council's current heritage management practice includes:

- Identification of heritage places through heritage studies.
- Preparation of the Citation (Statement of significance) for the heritage place as part of a heritage study.
- Providing brief guidelines/general principles for maintenance and management of a heritage place in the citations.
- Providing heritage advice in relation to a planning permit application on a heritage place by the Council officers.
- Depending upon the need; advice is also provided through an external adviser appointed by Casey, in special cases for which the Council receives a small sum from Heritage Victoria and spends a matching amount from its own sources, every year.
- Capital works for maintenance of Casey owned heritage places.

The City of Casey currently protects 137 heritage places (identified through various heritage studies) through its Planning Scheme. Maintenance of a heritage place in Casey, as elsewhere in Australia is mainly the owner's responsibility. As stated above the support provided by the Council is very limited.

Casey is one of the fastest growing municipalities of Australia. It is also identified to be part of the largest growth area of Melbourne in the Melbourne 2030, a strategic document prepared for growth of Melbourne up to 2030. The rapid growth in Casey presents a pressure on the Council to provide infrastructure and services. At the same time the community is also stretched financially to cover these needs. In such a case infrastructure development and heritage become competing objectives where heritage incentives and support take a back seat.

Also the rate of growth in the municipality is bringing significant changes in the land value. This places pressure on the land owners (of heritage properties) to take advantage of these values and thus heritage protection and maintenance are seen as the impost on the property. Heritage controls in the absence of financial incentives have negative economic impact on some of the places resulting in neglect and disrepair of the assets. Council often has to stretch its resources, a lot, to bring in timely advice to avoid any loss of its heritage values/assets.

While the economic impacts of growth and development VS heritage listing are evident Council acknowledges importance and benefits of protecting and conserving our heritage. Following other initiatives that have been found effective in other parts in Victoria are being considered for protection and promotion of Casey's heritage

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- Provision of small grants for restoration.
- Cash awards for outstanding maintenance or restoration of a heritage place in a municipality.
- Rate rebates.
- Creation of a "Heritage Fund" to provide time to time support for works and maintenance including promotion/presentation of the heritage places.
- Dispensation of the Planning Permit Application fee for applications of certain categories of works.
- For generation of a sense of pride among the heritage place owners promotion and awareness generation is considered important:
 - Celebration of Heritage Week /Heritage Day.
 - Publication of a leaflet or brochure giving information on the heritage places of the municipality.
 - Creation of a directory of heritage consultants, contractor and trades person/groups and also manufacturers, retail or wholesale outlets of building materials or elements used in heritage buildings.
 - Exhibitions and Cultural programmes promoting the local heritage.
 - Promoting Business/Corporate support for looking after significant examples of high local importance.

Small repair/restoration grant scheme initiated by the Council earlier was found ineffective. An amount of \$ 500/- per application as a grant was proposed under the scheme. The scheme did not generate many applications as the prospective applicants considered the amount of \$500/- to be too small. A modified scheme with higher amount/application would mean additional burden on the budget.

Recognizing the fact that heritage is an asset enjoyed by all Council is considering incentives such as Rate rebate to heritage properties owners. However, in suburban growth municipalities, where the Rates are high due to infrastructure development needs there are competing areas of demand for Rate rebates such as for rural agricultural properties. In such a situation providing rate rebate for heritage properties and not for others becomes an issue. Extending the rate rebate to all critical areas of demand would again be dependent upon the availability of municipal resources.

This factor of arriving at balance between the development and the heritage management would continue to play a significant role till the growth stabilizes in Casey. Till such time awareness about effective/alternative practices and additional cash support would be the need of the municipality. We hope that recommendations of Productivity Commission enquiry would address this issue.