

Goulburn Mulwaree Council

22 February 2006

Mr Neil Byron
Presiding Commissioner
Heritage Inquiry
Productivity commission
PO Box 80
BELCONNEN ACT 2616

Dear Mr Byron

Subject: Productivity Commission Draft Report Conservation of Australia's Historic Heritage Places

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission in relation to the Commission's Draft Report on the Conservation of Australia's Historic Places.

As Australia's first inland City, Goulburn and the surrounding community have a strong interest in heritage issues. Goulburn Mulwaree Council is very supportive in any endeavour to improve the conservation and management of the community's heritage assets.

Council agrees with the general description of the current heritage conservation system as being:

- Too many "sticks" and not enough "carrots".
- Lacking statements of significance to support heritage listings.
- Overlapping responsibilities between local government and State agencies for development assessment and multiple approvals.
- Public sector being poor managers of heritage properties and poor role models for the wider community.

Goulburn Mulwaree has a range of "carrots" and "sticks" i.e.

- Heritage grants to encourage restoration.
- Free Heritage advice.
- Statutory planning controls (mainly blanket Heritage Conservation Areas rather than individual listings).
- Council policy, guidelines and studies.

At Goulburn Mulwaree, there is no question that the emphasis on legislative or regulatory controls to conserve heritage buildings has not been matched by the incentives and education components of its approach to heritage conservation. This is in part due to the lack of funding provided by higher levels of government and the restrictions placed on local government to raising revenue. The system is antiquated with its focus on property restrictions ranging from roof pitch, window styles, paint and colour requirements. The system of statutory controls consumes by far the greatest amount of resources for the organisation. In addition it a blanket style control in which all properties within the Heritage Conservation Area, regardless of heritage value, are affected by the controls and individual heritage buildings receive little recognition and are not supported by clear statements of significance.

A move away from statutory controls and listings to voluntary conservation agreements being negotiated with owners, as a precursor to listing and only while an agreement is in place, will impact on local government. A system based on negotiated outcomes will have resource implications and with the heritage stock in Goulburn Mulwaree (over 2,000 identified in the last review of the Heritage Study) it could be years before protections are in place.

The alternative direction proposed in the Commission's report seems to be a reaction to the over regulation of the current system. Council prefers a balanced approach to heritage conservation rather than either of the extremes. Any successful strategy, including heritage conservation, has three broad prongs i.e.

Regulation: Planning controls
 Zoning requirements
 Development approvals

Incentives: Grants
 Tax incentives
 Rate holidays
 Voluntary agreements

Education: Heritage advisor
 Guidelines, best practice notes
 Staff training
 Heritage Awards

The efforts toward heritage conservation need to be supported equally by all levels of government in each of the broad categories outlined above.

If you require any further information regarding the above please contact me during office hours on telephone 4283 4480.

Yours faithfully

Chris Berry
Director Planning & Community Services
for
General Manager