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Manly, Warringah and Pittwater Historical Society
ESTABLISHED 1924

Patron: The Hon. Dr. James Macken, LLD (Hon.Syd.)

PO Box 695
Manly NSW
1655

29th July 2005

Conservation of Historic Heritage
Places Inquiry Productivity
Commission
PO Box 80
Belconnen ACT 2616

By fax: (02) 6240 3311

Dear Sir or Madam,

Re: Conservation of Historic Heritage Places Inquiry

We are a historical society with about 100 members and covering the three local government areas of Manly, Warringah and Pittwater, NSW.

How we contribute to the conservation of heritage places:

- representation on Council heritage committees
- written submissions to Councils in relation to heritage requiring attention particularly in cases where the item is the subject of a development application
- presentations at public hearings relating to development and re-zonings - pressure on Councils to update statutory heritage inventories
- letters to local newspapers
- education of our members and the public via speakers at meetings and in our newsletter

We deal with the three level of government as outlined below:

- Federal government: generally through our local member or the relevant Minister

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- in relation to pending Federal legislation affecting heritage or in relation to Federal property with a heritage aspect.
- State government: through our local member or the relevant Minister in relation to the legislation affecting heritage, eg. Funding of the Heritage Office and changes to procedures such as the introduction and working of private certifiers; and in relation to heritage at risk, eg. the proposed lease to a developer of the North Head Quarantine Station. Also with State government agencies such as the Heritage Office, Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority, and National Parks on heritage matters.
 - Local governments: through their heritage committees and by direct contact with staff, councillors or administrator and by correspondence.

The strengths and weaknesses of our involvement

The strength we see in our involvement is that we have grass-roots contact with the community and its heritage and can often alert Councils to matters of which they are unaware. The weakness is our lack of legal clout and the need to work with sometimes reluctant Council staff and Councillors who would rather remove items from the heritage inventory so as not to impede development.

Establishing of our priorities

We don't have the luxury of planning priorities and it is generally a matter of trying to get to the most urgent in good time. There are too few people with the time and/or ability to attend public consultation meeting and make submissions. A further restriction is that the people who are able are often working or studying full-time or otherwise engaged with family etc. The oldest members sometimes have more time but often not the energy to pursue a vigorous campaign. All of these impede our ability for conservation activities at the level we would like.

Impediments to our activities

Because we work mostly with local government we can detail some of the problems we meet there.

- Councils claim lack of funds to adequately protect heritage or to embark on studies to identify heritage with a view to updating their heritage inventories. State government's pegging of rate increases is often blamed for lack of funds. As the major collector of our taxes the Federal government has a responsibility to ensure that adequate funds are available at a local level.
- Council staff levels are not adequate to properly prepare conditions to a DA consent and thus they are too loose where heritage protection is concerned. The old Brookvale Brickworks major development for residential units in the Warringah Council LGA is a prime example of this.
- The private certifier concept introduced by the State government allows for things to fall through the cracks. We find that the private certifier will not act on our concerns, referring us to Council; whereas Council staff say they can't act because the developer has appointed a private certifier. While this goes on we possibly lose the heritage item concerned due to poorly-defined conditions of DA consent (see above).
- Councillors can too easily remove heritage items from their environmental planning instruments. Items identified at one time can be removed by a later group of Councillors in response to requests from owners or developers. The dismissed Warringah Council was a good example of this.
- Shifting focus of NSW Heritage Office to matters of only State (as opposed to local) significance. This leaves no recourse for addressing heritage matters when a Council's actions are a concern to us.

We need stronger legislation and regulation to assist in our fights to conserve our heritage. This will preferably come from the Federal level where it is furthest removed from local developer pressure. This needs to be linked with adequate Federal funding. It is currently too easy for

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people at all levels of government to avoid responsibility in relation to heritage conservation.

Thank you for your attention to our submission.

Yours faithfully,

Meg Quinlisk (Ms)
President

cc: Royal Australian Historical Society