

COMMENTS:

Officers of the Pine Rivers Shire Council support all the recommendations in the report, including the key recommendation regarding negotiated conservation agreements for privately-owned properties.

In so doing, however, the authors are concerned that the proposed three tier regime for managing historic heritage places shifts a great deal of the burden for identifying and managing the bulk of these places to local government. Amongst many other things, local governments would be required to establish conservation management plans for properties under their control, document and publicly report on the heritage-related costs associated with the conservation of such properties and establish conservation agreements with the owners of privately-owned properties.

It is our belief that this will place an intolerable burden on our under-funded and under-staffed system of local government. As very few of the smaller local government bodies currently employ specialist staff with cultural heritage expertise, or can afford to allocate scarce financial resources to engage cultural heritage consultants, it will be very difficult for local governments to competently carry out a great deal of this work without some measure of Federal or State assistance.

It has already been noted by us that the State Heritage Councils have recently become much more conservative in the way in which they have determined what is of State versus local heritage significance. This shift in emphasis has often been counter-productive because local governments have been unable or unwilling to respond to the challenge of filling the vacuum which has been created.

One way of responding to the needs of smaller local government bodies might be to fund State governments so that they can share their cultural heritage expertise on a State-wide basis. Another approach might be to collaboratively appoint Heritage Officers who can assume responsibility for a number of contiguous local government areas. In Queensland, for example, the Queensland Museum has established a system of Museum Development Officers who are shared between councils. A similar system, where State and relevant local governments both contribute to the cost of employing a Heritage Officer, should be considered as one of the measures to assist local governments.