

SUBMISSION TO THE AUSTRALIAN PRODUCTIVITY COMMISSION ON
HISTORIC BUILT HERITAGE PLACES
ON BEHALF OF THE TOURISM COUNCIL TASMANIA

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Firstly, we acknowledge the unique position that Tasmania enjoys having such a concentration of the best and earliest examples of our national built heritage.

Within a short drive one can enjoy more than anywhere. It is a key element of Tasmania's brand.

Protecting examples of our built heritage is important, but so too is promoting the benefits and the use and the experiences that these properties should provide.

Tourism is a key contributor to Tasmania's economy – our built heritage is a key attraction, and potentially, with the right application ie providing really appealing and attractive experiences based on these properties, it could make an even larger contribution.

To start, we need to look at the role of heritage buildings – it is to add value to a community in a number of ways – and for the benefit of generations to come.

We also need to associate the value of heritage with a benefit to the economy:

- Tourism
- Accommodation
- Attractions
- Construction examples from different eras
- Lifestyle comparisons from different eras

And we need to promote use of these heritage buildings.

There are some very good examples of heritage buildings that are worthy of protecting.

However, not everything is worthy of protecting. Not everything is excellent and in some areas, heritage is losing its attraction.

We can have too much and we should not be acquiescing to the anti everythings where the real value, the benefit to the community and the economics of keeping the building, can't be demonstrated.

In fact Tasmania is known for its heritage buildings and in some instances now Tasmania needs, in order to keep its tourists coming, more high standard accommodation, more modern attractions and not more heritage buildings preserved. The market is almost saturated with heritage buildings.

In reality, the market is looking for more than what old buildings can provide as attractions or even in some adaptive re-uses.

It is not conducive to developers and investors to be held to ransom, thereby jeopardising economic activity and jobs, by third party objectors who have no understanding of how, let alone the ability, to make these sites pay for their upkeep. (reference National Trust).

The need to keep these buildings, the best of them alive and providing an attractive and appealing experience for visitors, is demonstrated by observing the fate of some of the National Trust Properties not having the appeal of some years ago and not being able to be maintained.

These buildings need a commercial application to be maintained as living examples. Many are in a parlous state.

These buildings need to be promoted and able to contribute to the economy and jobs by providing an experience and enjoyment of the past.

They must be changed from static furniture displays – they must provide an experience.

Those buildings worthy of preservation that will undergo adaptive re-use, still need re-wiring for power and light, re-plumbing and that is a major cost.

If these adaptive re-uses provide a public and community economic and social benefit, then some incentive or recompense should be made to the owner or developer.

Some examples of costs being borne disproportionately by owners and developers are:

A well maintained hotel property has been restored as an example of its era and is a major tourist attraction.

The wider community walks through and enjoys, uses the rest rooms and doesn't contribute financially.

This is a working, experiential site and an excellent example of an adaptive re-use.

However, the upkeep using traditional building materials as against modern materials and methods, imposes a considerable cost that impacts on the heritage buildings operational competitiveness.

Slate, sandstone and paint specifications that require more expensive paints, all contribute to the additional costs of maintaining a heritage property.

If the community wants these buildings to be preserved, the community should contribute.

This could be an increased tax deductibility for these projects, changes to depreciation schedules or cash grants for periodic major works such as slate re-roofing or sandstone maintenance.

ENDS

VINCENT BARRON – BOARD MEMBER ON BEHALF OF
TOURISM COUNCIL TASMANIA