

## WILLOUGHBY DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY Inc.

ABN 60.927-748-466

*Affiliated with the Royal Australian Historical Society  
Patron' The Mayor of Willoughby. Cr, Patrick Reilly*

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### **Submission to the Productivity Commission Heritage**

#### **Enquiry**

**29 July 2005.**

Willoughby District Historical Society Inc. (WDHS) was established in 1974.

Current membership is 60 members.

The Willoughby District Historical Society, & its Museum, located at 58 Johnson Strut, Chatswood, aims to preserve the rich tapestry of Willoughby's past through the collection and preservation of artefacts, tools, & an intriguing display of local history of interest to students, residents, local history buffs and historians of all ages. The museum, 'Boronia' was built in 1912, a typical house of that period, which was bequeathed to the society by the late Mrs Sonya Narelle Kirkham who requested that the house be used as a museum, and headquarters for the Willoughby District Historical Society.

Each room has its own theme, where the main displays are concerned with the history of local industries, such as the Tanneries, Stonemasonry and Potteries, & there are fascinating displays of photographs of early buildings, & posters advertising early subdivisions of estates. .

The most recent exhibition at the museum, is an eclectic collection of historic tools, including tools used by coach builders, woodworkers, stonemasons, and engineers. The collection contains an extensive range of tools used by local tradespeople. The collection provides a tangible and intriguing link to many lost skills.

The Willoughby District Historical Society & Museum are supported by an active committee of volunteers, who maintain local history records, study the social, cultural and industrial history of Willoughby, organise exhibitions, & conduct guided tours to promote better understanding and appreciation of this community's rich heritage.

#### **Activities:**

Income raised by the Society through membership fees, stalls, tours, grants and bequests is used to fund a range of activities including: publications,

Museum maintenance, exhibitions, collection management and conservation.

**Exhibitions:** The Tanneries, Mashman Pottery, an extensive permanent collection of antique tools and items significant to the work of architect and planner Walter Burley Griffin,

The Museum is open to the public one day per month, for events, and by appointment. Local schools are invited for special exhibitions.

**Maintenance** of an exhibition/demonstration garden.

**Participation:** WDHS is represented on the WCC Heritage Advisory Committee, the Federation of Progress Associations, and on community consultation committees as requested,

**Liaison:** with Willoughby City Council (WCC), WCC Library, local schools, the National Maritime Museum, the National Trust, other local history and conservation organisations.

**Research:** Recent extensive research into the work and remaining houses designed by architect F G Castleden.

### **1. Contribution to the conservation of historic heritage places**

**Presentations:** Volunteer members make presentations to local schools, other Historical Societies and community organisations. Monthly WDHS Speaker meetings, open to the public. Topics include historic heritage buildings and places.

**Heritage tours:** to heritage houses, conservation zones, places of heritage significance to the district including the Burley Griffin Estate are organised for local residents, community organisations, visitors and guests.

**Community Liaison:** WDHS participates in events such as Heritage Week by organising stalls, presentations, tours and Museum Open Days.

**Exhibitions:** Willoughby District Historical Society Just as the value of archiving a scientific record is relevant to current research, our local Museum contributes to our understanding of past processes. i.e.: the antique tool collection is a reference point for modern craftsmen, many of whom still prefer to use classic wood working tools.

**Advocacy:** The society has advocated to all levels of government for protection of local social & built heritage and has played a key role in the identification of, and nomination of items of local and state significance and conservation area zones in Willoughby.

**Publications:** Monthly newsletter, local history journals.

Books: Pottery The Mashman Story; WDHS Commemorating 25 Years; Recipes and Recollections,

#### **Promotion of Heritage Values and social capital:**

- The Museum is a significant educational resource for local issues and technology and provides opportunity for research, study, networking, community partnerships and social contact with 'like minds'.
- The symbolism of our built environment provides and nurtures a sense of identity and informs the viewer of community values, i.e.: the design of our Federation Railway Stations makes a gesture of service, which reminds us of the intended role of the state.
- An aging community relies on a consistent sense of place as an aid to orientation.

undergraduate Degree course in conservation has been discontinued).

**3. Establishment of priorities for conservation, measurement and reporting**

- Priorities and activities undertaken in accordance with constitution, and committee resolution
- On-going improvement to collection management systems through specialised museum computer program, and training of volunteers in its use,
- Recent purchases of display cabinets and storage facilities to upgrade collection management, display and storage
- Regular reporting and evaluation of activities to relevant funding bodies and to the WDHS Management Committee
- Consultation with volunteer conservator and curator to prioritise activities
- Committee members attend seminars and workshops to update skills, improve knowledge and practices

**4. Impediments to conservation activities for volunteers**

- Valued positions such as that provided by our volunteer curator would be extremely difficult to replace.
- Enlisting the support of new members, particularly those willing to accept positions of responsibility at the museum.
- Identifying, collating and maintaining a repository of local history items is time consuming and requires multi skilled volunteers.
- Assistance and guidance required to meet on-going requests for participation in various heritage consultation processes

For Willoughby District Historical Society

•• Doug Zihrul,