

Scanned copy of original submission

Enquiries to:
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Heritage Inquiry Productivity Commission
PO Box 80
BELCONNEN ACT 2616

Dear Sir

CONSERVATION OF AUSTRALIA'S HISTORIC HERITAGE PLACES

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment on the draft Conservation of Australia's Historic Heritage places.

Firstly, the City of Perth would like to express its concern that aspects of its original submission were dealt with out of context. The Commission took the liberty of quoting from the City's submission without acknowledging additional information provided as part of its submission. In particular:

"The City of Perth is in the process of undertaking its own research to better understand the implications of heritage listing.

Preliminary findings are:

Properties in the King Street Precinct between Hay and Murray Street have shown a significant increase in value based on improved value per square metre.

The Precinct was established as a heritage precinct in 1989 with streetscape upgrades occurring between 1993 and 1997 to the value of \$1.5 million.

In 1989 initial values reflected a rate per metre for land improvements of around \$2,000.

Whilst major refurbishment's have occurred, properties in this precinct have increased in value (2003) based on preliminary evidence of between \$12,000 - \$14,000 m² improved.

Actual Sales evidence over the same period has indicated a growth of 22.9% per annum in value.

Property on St Georges Terrace, the premier office address within the city (approx 2003) indicated that values were tracking from \$8,500 per square metre improved.

Comparative assessment is still being undertaken.

The outcomes of the research are vitally important to determine where Councils limited resources should be allocated."

These findings have since been substantiated.

The Commission has an obligation to report accurately and not pick and choose quotes out of context from a series of some 78 questions it posed.

There are still a number of fundamental issues in relation to this Commission that have not been addressed:

1. The City of Perth highlighted that there had not been adequate research undertaken into the implications of heritage listing. This comment becomes even more relevant now that the Commission is recommending fundamental changes to the way heritage is dealt with in Australia. To recommend such a significant departure from the current process based on no actual quantifiable research is very disturbing. The Commission could be guilty of accepting perception as fact, which is why the current debate surrounding heritage has been very one sided.

The Commission has not even recommended starting with some basic understanding of how heritage is currently perceived by the Australian public. In the UK for instance, a MORI (2000) survey was commissioned by English Heritage as part of a comprehensive review of government policies on the Historic Environment. This survey highlighted that only 2% of the people surveyed indicated that they had no interest in heritage whatsoever, while 98% of people surveyed had a positive association with heritage. The outcome of this research has then been the driver for change in changes to funding and legislation in the UK.

2. The next debate to have once the above research has been conducted is to determine what is heritage - a public or private good. The Commission it would seem has made up its mind without this debate occurring and without the evidence to substantiate one side or the other. The City advocates and supports research, because not all listed private property should receive incentives, as some listed property has benefited economically from listing. The City believes heritage is both a public and private good and therefore cannot be left in one arena - being public or private. This is why its program has developed in the manner it has and why it has embarked on its own research.

The City believes that there are a lot of perceptions in the community - possibly even within the Commission - about listing. These perceptions have not been adequately explored, research nor addressed. We need to understand the implications of listing of places of cultural heritage significance and the implications of cultural tourism on towns cities and regions. This research has

only recently been undertaken in the UK, as they have been having similar discussions.

One only needs to look at the way legislation has been introduced in Western Australia to see that heritage has not had its proper debate within society. The legislation is very young and imposed. It is not marketed, the community are not engaged, the research has not been done, perceptions have not been identified, and if wrong, properly addressed. No wonder there is so much confusion around heritage. The Commission is adding to this confusion by not taking the logical steps of research and grounding its findings in solid data.

3. Finally the City of Perth was concerned regarding the number of questions it was asked to respond to as these only set to confuse, highlight and divide. The original terms of reference were very tight, highlighting six areas to be addressed, however the questions then posed totalled 78. The time taken to discuss aspects raised by the Commission made it very difficult within the current work environment to provide detailed responses. The City welcomed the beginnings of a dialogue as it believed it was needed, however the subsequent recommendations made by the Commission concern the City.

If the recommendations proceed, there has been no consultation or research by the Commission to determine what the likely impact will be on local government or places of cultural heritage. To state local government Councils would need to substantially change their conservation activities is a concern when the City of Perth has a \$1 million heritage program.

If the Commission were to consider continuing down this path, the City would request this research be undertaken as a matter of priority prior to a final recommendation being taken to proceed.

Clearly there are some fundamental issues underlying where heritage conservation sits within our community. These issues need to be explored. The Commission has started to engage a small section of the community, however a longer term strategy of qualitative research as a foundation point needs to be developed to enable a proper debate and proper long term solutions to be developed.

Should you have any queries regarding this matter, please contact (08) 9461 3113.

Yours sincerely

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