



MEDIA RELEASE

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National Trust releases inaugural Advocacy Agenda

In its independent role to protect the places and objects of heritage significance in NSW, the National Trust has today launched its inaugural Advocacy Agenda, detailing its campaign priorities for the year ahead.

The agenda outlines nine principles that will shape future advocacy efforts and highlights six of the many places where there is unresolved tension between the recognition of heritage values and market forces in NSW.

Scott Woodcock, public relations director at the National Trust, said heritage protection in NSW had been weakened due to legislative and government administrative changes.

Under the *Heritage Act* amendments, owners of significant properties are now allowed to rationalize neglect of listed heritage sites on the grounds of undue financial hardship. Requests to delist and demolish listed items on such grounds typically presage development applications.

“Wambo Homestead in the Hunter Valley is one example. Only in NSW could a coal mining company claim undue financial hardship during a minerals boom,” Mr. Woodcock said.

Similarly many mid to late twentieth century buildings designed by eminent architects are being demolished as a by-product of the new complying development codes. Unlisted houses are afforded little protection as has been witnessed in Ku-ring-gai.

Accelerated decision-making should complement best practice. Not all local government authorities frequently review their heritage registers. For purposes of contrast the City of Blue Mountains has close to 900 listed items whereas some rural councils are only now documenting their heritage. If complying development codes are to continue in NSW then recurrent funding of regular heritage listing surveys is necessary.

Of most concern is the growing subservience of heritage values to competing land use agendas in this state. State Heritage Listings have been deferred pending consideration of development applications as has been demonstrated at Catherine Hill Bay and Currawong.

“The National Trust Advocacy Agenda 2011 maintains that the heritage significance of a place or item is independent of its commercial value. Planning and administrative reform is urgently needed to reinforce the independence of the Heritage Council and remove the Heritage Branch from the planning portfolio” Mr. Woodcock said.

The six places of heritage value named in the agenda are Barangaroo (east Darling Harbour), Ku-ring-gai, Catherine Hill Bay, Exeter/Sutton Forest, Goat Island and Newcastle CBD, but there are many more.

The agenda states that heritage did not end in 1901. The Trust believes that modern architecture presents an opportunity for today’s designers to make a positive contribution to Australia’s sense of place. The National Trust looks to the future, learning lessons from the past.

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