



Former Planning Minister Kristina Keneally (now Premier) with winners of the 2009 Heritage Volunteer Awards

News from the NSW Department of Planning's Heritage Branch

It has been another busy period for the Heritage Branch of the NSW Department of Planning, since the publication of the last National Trust Magazine (NSW).

Twenty two heritage heroes in a range of fields including community campaign, historical research and education and promotion were recognised at the eighth annual NSW Government Heritage Volunteer Awards, held in November.

The awards recognise the outstanding contribution of volunteers in conserving the State's heritage, whether it is quiet heroes who have freely given their time and skill, or inspiring leaders at their local heritage organisation.

These 22 heroes join around 140 individuals and groups that have been recognised by the NSW Government over the past eight years, whose unfailing dedication has helped to foster the wealth of heritage we enjoy today.

Beryl Winter, Fran McKinnon, Margaret Whyte and Keith Parsons – volunteers with the National Trust (NSW) – have all been recognised as heritage heroes at this year's awards.

In listing news, a number of heritage items have been placed on the State Heritage Register.

Two of these items are part of the State's military heritage.

Sydney's Martin Place Cenotaph, which has been a focal point of the ANZAC Day Dawn Service honouring those lost in conflict for over 80 years, has been placed on the State Heritage Register. The Cenotaph is a rare, universal memorial to our nation's military history and its listing now formally recognises its importance to the State.

The Yooroonah Tank Barrier near Armidale has also been listed, as one of the few surviving inland anti-tank defence systems in NSW from World War II. The barrier was built in 1942 as a collaborative effort between Federal, State and local governments to protect inland NSW against the common enemy.

Two Aboriginal heritage items have also been listed.

This includes a rare Aboriginal rock art site in Earlwood, which is believed to be several thousand years old and hidden beneath undergrowth in a Sydney backyard. It also includes Ferguson's Cottage, a modest weatherboard cottage in Coffs Harbour that served as a refuge for local Aboriginal people during the 1950s and 1960s. As the home of Nanny Ferguson and the

heart of her community work Ferguson's Cottage symbolises the birth of reconciliation and the deepening of Aboriginal-European relations in northern NSW.

Other listings are the Simpson-Lee House in Wahroonga, designed by modernist architect Arthur Baldwinson, and the former Liverpool Hospital site, which its main 1820s Macquarie-era block is considered one of the finest colonial buildings remaining in Australia. The site is highly regarded for its architectural and historical significance owing to the rarity of its pre-1850s archaeology.

In other news, in October the amendments to the NSW Heritage Act came into force, delivering a fairer and more balanced system for listing and protecting the State's heritage.

The amendments followed a comprehensive review of the legislation by an independent expert panel, which included considerable community and stakeholder consultation.

A set of objects have now been incorporated into the Act, which include goals to promote an understanding of the State's heritage, encourage its conservation and assist owners with the conservation of heritage items, amongst others.

The membership of the Heritage Council has been reduced from 15 to 11 members, with a greater focus on the skills, expertise and experience of the members, rather than their organisational representation. A representative of the National Trust will remain on the Council.

There is also a focus on increased rigour in heritage listing, for instance an item must meet more than one listing criteria if it is to be considered for listing on the State Heritage Register. A recommendation on a listing may be referred to an independent panel – such as a Ministerial Review Panel or the Planning Assessment Commission – to provide additional scrutiny to the process. Also, the Minister may take into consideration both heritage and non-heritage issues – such as ongoing economic viability – when considering an item for listing or de-listing.

At the local government level, councils will also now be able to refer owner-objections to local heritage listings to independent panels for review, which will provide greater transparency for both councils and owners.

These changes are designed to further strengthen the system of heritage protection in NSW, ensuring that it is a balanced, transparent and a thorough framework for the ongoing conservation of the State's heritage treasures.