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World Heritage Day is Wednesday 18th April
Up for national list: National Trust nominates rare forest, crane and railway workshops as state's most endangered items

What does a 40,000 year old blue gum forest have in common with 19th century railway workshops and a 1940s cantilever crane that serviced Australia's navy ships?

They are all unique NSW heritage items that are at risk of being lost forever.

To draw attention to their plight, the National Trust of Australia (NSW) has announced that for World Heritage Day on Wednesday, 18 April, it is nominating three items for the National 2007 Heritage at Risk List. They are Ku-ring-gai's Blue Gum High Forest and Urban Conservation Area, the Hammerhead Crane on Garden Island, and the Eveleigh Railway Workshops at Redfern.

"The Ku-ring-gai Blue Gum High Forest in St. Ives on Sydney's North Shore goes back 40,000 years and is prized for its rarity and beauty. Sadly, intensive land use has severely affected it. Less than 5% of the forest survives as intact bushland but remnant trees occur throughout the Ku-ring-gai ridge tops and still beautify this unique landscape. These existing bushland remnants and surviving trees continue to be threatened by insensitive development and weed invasion," said Trust Executive Director, Tina Jackson.

A prominent landmark in Sydney Harbour, the Hammerhead Crane was, when built during World War II, the largest crane in the Southern Hemisphere and it remains unique in Australia. Built to lift up to 250 tons, it serviced the British Navy fleet and demonstrates Australia's position in the former British Empire and the peak of mid-20th century electrical technology. It has been idle for more than a decade and neglected.

"This is very sad. The Hammerhead Crane is an excellent example of engineering design in its time. There are only 15 of these cranes still left in the world and those left in Scotland have the highest protection, unlike here," said Ms. Jackson.

Eveleigh Workshops is considered by the Trust to be one of Australia's finest industrial heritage items. They are the largest surviving intact railway workshops dating from the steam era in Australia and possibly the world. The Smithsonian Institute has commented on their rareness and called for their preservation.

Eveleigh consists of some of the finest historic railway engineering workshops in the world complete with late 19th century forge installations, cranes and power systems.

The workshops have been suggested for the Heritage at Risk list as several buildings within the site have already been redeveloped and adapted to a range of non-railway uses while others have been rezoned for multi-storey development under the Redfern Waterloo Authority's Built Environment Plan.

“The Trust is concerned about the proposals for multi-storey development and urges the retention of those workshops and a continuation of their role in training skilled apprentices and in rebuilding our state's steam engines,” said Ms. Jackson.

The Heritage at Risk program was begun to build public awareness of heritage assets. State and territories lists are being released for World Heritage Day while a National Top 10 ‘Heritage Most at Risk’ list will be determined by the Australian Council of National Trusts (ACNT) from the state/territory lists and announced on 1st July 2007.

Heritage at Risk is an initiative of the National Trusts of Australia along with Engineers Australia (Historic Section), Museums Australia and the Royal Australian Institute of Architects.

For more information:

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