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MEDIA RELEASE

CALL TO ACTION: National Trust Opposes Planning Reforms

The National Trust (NSW) calls on State MPs to oppose changes to the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act due to be debated in parliament.

The Trust says proposed changes to planning legislation severely undermine heritage protection in NSW and completely removes the rights of residents and local communities to speak for themselves to protect their properties.

Whilst the National Trust recognises the need to improve the current system, the proposed reforms are “developer driven and designed to constrain community influence”, according to Trust Conservation Director Graham Quint.

“We are concerned about the erosion of local government and the fact that residents will lose the right to comment on developments in their own neighbourhoods. It is fundamental to a democratic government that communities have the right to determine the environmental planning for their areas,” Mr Quint said.

The National Trust has numerous concerns about the proposed legislation including:

- **The repeal of Part V of the Heritage Act 1977. This will greatly erode heritage protection in NSW, diminish the role of the Heritage Council and remove any obligation for developers to comply with Heritage Council guidelines.**
- **The legislation is being rushed through without enough time to study it in more detail. Crucial details of the new regulations have not yet been made public. It is likely the new system will lead to more disputes and delays than the current system.**
- **Design Codes will be set by State Government rather than by local government in consultation with the local communities. The National Trust believes local government and local communities should determine their own design codes. The Trust is concerned that state imposed ‘Design Codes’ will focus on street frontages and allow wholesale redevelopment behind facades, leading to widespread loss of heritage buildings and degradation of urban conservation areas.**
- **Part 9A of the reform package would give the Minister for Planning the power to acquire privately owned land for development if it was considered to have a net public benefit. Who determines net public benefit? The Minister giving himself unfettered power again overrides the rights of private owners in NSW.**