

Camden Residents' Action Group

Incorporated

Camden – Still a Country Town

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Camden Council Meeting 10 Sept 2019

Notice of Motion

“We, Councillor Cindy Cagney, Councillor Paul Farrow and Councillor Ashleigh Cagney, hereby give notice of our intention to move the following at the Council Meeting of 10 September 2019:

Council staff gather information in the form of a report back to Council that outlines the processes that would need to be undertaken, if Council was of the mind to assist the community in having the township of Camden heritage listed, at the State level, sometime in the future.”

RECOMMENDED

That Council staff gather information in the form of a report back to Council that outlines the processes that would need to be undertaken, if Council was of the mind to assist the community in having the township of Camden heritage listed, at the State level, sometime in the future.

I speak on behalf of Camden Residents' Action Group, which has been active since 1973 representing the community on liveability, heritage and environmental matters. We thank you for the opportunity to address Council on the future of the Camden township and its heritage conservation area.

As we all know the history of the Macarthur area is central to the story of NSW and Australia and is intrinsic to our local identity. In particular Council documents recognise the cultural history and special aesthetics of the Camden township, which was founded in 1840 as a private town on the Macarthur estate. Camden's Destination Management Plan, for instance, focuses on the town's strong heritage precinct as one of the few remaining attractive heritage town centres in greater Sydney and NSW. It notes the economic benefits of the town's heritage to tourism and that its heritage value needs to be protected and preserved.

The town's special character, rural heritage and cultural role and its status as a jewel in the crown of the Municipality was most recently acknowledged in Camden's 2019 draft Local Strategic Planning Statement. It states that the town provides a key opportunity to celebrate Camden's unique and culturally rich history, tell nationally important stories and contribute to heritage-based tourism (pp. 21,63). Similarly, the current strategic plan of the Camden Region Economic Taskforce (CRET) includes leveraging off our unique heritage assets to support the visitor economy. Studies have shown that heritage place tourism is the most rapidly expanding in terms of visitor numbers and that cultural tourists stay longer and spend more than non-cultural tourists.¹

State and national listings put places on the tourist map which helps create jobs and new business opportunities.

We think everyone is in agreement that the old town is one of our most valuable and strategic heritage places. Its relative intactness and its proximity to Australia's largest city and the planned western city airport makes it a very valuable asset.

One means of ensuring our asset into the future is state heritage listing.

Although a community nomination in 2016, under the authorship of our Group, was unsuccessful the NSW Heritage Council recommended that it be considered in future planning for the State Heritage Register. An internal report acquired under GIPA stated that although the town may be of state significance, the Heritage Division at that time lacked the resources needed to investigate it. Since then the town has been recognised by the Greater Sydney Commission as a heritage town. The town, along with Camden Park, was also recognised as significant in the recent state listing of St John's Church Precinct. State listing of the town would also help protect the contextual curtilage of its individually state listed items.

Included in the 2016 nomination was a Heritage Study² which was endorsed by eminent academic historians and the Historical Society. It included a comparative analysis with other early towns in NSW which clearly shows that Camden meets the listing criteria more comprehensively than any other town, including Braidwood, which is the only town that is currently state listed. Quite arguably the town is also just as culturally significant as nationally listed Broken Hill.

Only minor updating would be needed to lodge a new nomination for state listing.

Support from Camden Council would be invaluable and we sincerely and hopefully request that Council consider assisting in progressing a new nomination. Thank you.

564 words

¹ <https://www.heritage21.com.au/the-benefits-of-heritage/>

² <https://www.crag.org.au/camden-township-heritage-study/>