

Camden Residents' Action Group

Incorporated

Camden – Still a Country Town

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State of NSW

Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water

13 July 2025

Dear Heritage NSW,

Thank you for the invitation on 21 May 2025 to provide input and ideas into the draft NSW Heritage Strategy outlining a new vision for heritage in NSW. Camden Residents' Action Group Inc, established in 1973, has a long history of representing the community on heritage and environmental matters.

This draft Strategy follows on from the *Review of NSW Heritage Legislation Discussion Paper* (April 2021), to which we made a submission¹ on 4 July 2021, and its subsequent 2021 Report² (October 2021). We were involved in an online focus group session to further progress the 2021 Review on 12 December 2023.

We are active in the heritage space having often raised issues associated with protecting Camden's heritage with our local member, Sally Quinnell, and also having raised them with her and Minister Sharpe at Parliament House on 2 August 2023.

As further background, we have interacted with the NSW heritage system on a number of occasions. Notably we have lodged two nominations to state list the locally listed Heritage Conservation Area of the 1840 town of Camden, both based on comprehensive heritage studies including testimonials from eminent historians.

¹ Camden Residents Action Group 4 July 2021 *NSW Heritage Act Review* Available at <https://www.crag.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/4-July-2021-NSW-Heritage-Act-Review-CRAG-submission.pdf>

² NSW Legislative Council Standing Committee on Social Issues October 2021 *Report 59 Review of the Heritage Act 1977* Available at <https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/lcdocs/inquiries/2814/Report%20No.%2059%20-%20Standing%20Committee%20on%20Social%20Issues%20-%20Review%20of%20the%20Heritage%20Act%201977.pdf>

The first in 2016 also included an application for an Interim Heritage Order to protect it from major inappropriate Council works that were the subject of public protest and media attention. The second nomination in 2023 was based on promises to support listing made by our local state member, Sally Quinell, and Minister Penny Sharpe. However, although considered of likely state significance, the Macarthur town was not progressed for assessment and listing by Heritage NSW because it was not a strategic priority and because of the complexity of the number of landowners and varied land uses.

After so much community effort, this was disappointing, particularly as Recommendation 9 of the 2021 Report was to trial a community-driven nomination process for preliminary consideration by the NSW Heritage Council, which would presumably not be subject to elimination based on criteria other than heritage significance.

We are pleased to see the draft Strategy proposes to introduce the concept of *cultural landscape* to enable more complex heritage items such as the old Macarthur town and Aboriginal places of significance to be more easily processed and listed in the State Heritage Register.

We were also heavily involved in the campaign to save Camden's St John's Church Precinct from intensive development of two thirds of its area. It was state listed in 2018, following a nomination by our vice President, that has helped protect it for future generations. While that listing process was successful it was drawn out and administratively difficult, and was not signed off by the then Minister for Heritage until questions were eventually raised in the media.

We later (unsuccessfully) appealed to NSW Heritage about a 2012 zombie DA to develop another section of the Church Precinct, in close proximity to the Church itself, that was permitted, despite community opposition as well as our Group's legal advice that the DA had rightfully lapsed, to be reactivated without taking into account its later state listing.

At the outset, we state that we do not consider the binary categorisation of heritage items as either local or state significance to be helpful in protecting heritage. Listing at both the local and state level is a long process and often depends on an individual/community or a local council making considerable effort to research and nominate an item or conservation area. Significant heritage may or may not be nominated or accepted for listing depending on priorities. The distinction between local and state heritage can also be arbitrarily the result of a nominator decision to lodge with Heritage NSW or local council.

The 2021 Discussion Paper presented three key themes, making heritage easy, putting heritage to work and making heritage relevant and introduced the premise that:

An effective heritage system will facilitate the community in harnessing the cultural and economic values of heritage sites. It will also provide a framework for managing competing values and adapting to the pressures and challenges of an ever-changing world. (p. 6)

Public submissions, including ours, raised that the themes did not focus on protection of cultural heritage and better heritage outcomes. The subsequent 2021 Report, stated as its first recommendation:

That any legislative reform of the Heritage Act 1977 has as its guiding principles the need to protect, conserve and celebrate the State's heritage, and that the guiding policy themes in the government's discussion paper of making heritage easy, putting heritage to work and making heritage relevant, must be secondary to these principles.

The draft Strategy (Introduction, p. 6) sets a guiding principle that: *Heritage is not just about the past. It is also about the future.* It emphasises the need to evolve and manage competing values, to consider how we prioritise funding for heritage in parallel with other pressing state priorities, such as climate change, housing, education and health.

Managing climate change, through such measures as mitigation, sustainability upgrades and adaptation, and making more housing available through the planning system are priorities considered in proposed actions throughout the draft Strategy.

We fully appreciate these priorities, but are concerned about the weighting given to competing priorities in decision scenarios. We understand that we need to adapt to climate change and trust that measures taken will not compromise heritage protection in the future. In relation to additional housing, we understand that much infrastructure is located close to local and state items of heritage significance and within heritage conservation areas. Addressing the housing crisis is urgently necessary. However, it is not in the best interests of the people of NSW that we lose what is precious to all and damage community sense of place. We urge that all options for additional housing are explored even if more costly in the short term.

Again, we maintain that the guiding principle of the Heritage Act should be protecting significant heritage, that managing competing pressures should be secondary and not overwhelm that principle for the sake of expediency at the expense of the longer-term public interest.

We are concerned about the lack of state protection of local heritage, heritage that is highly valued but is not necessarily state listed, quite possibly for administrative rather significance reasons. Since its inception in 2021, the Review into the Heritage Act, has sidelined protection of local heritage as something that can be managed through the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act (EP&A Act), LEPs and policies, the interpretations of which are often subject to developer pressure and the knowledge that the appeal process is costly to Councils. Local Planning Panels routinely accept staff assessment recommendations, including unusual policy interpretations and LEP 4.6 variations to standards.

We believe that heritage is not as relevant in planning decisions as many communities would wish or expect from reading the planning instruments, despite their provisions being clearly expressed.

To date, our experience is that the heritage system has not facilitated the Camden community in harnessing the value of Camden's substantial and significant cultural landscape, and listed heritage including its conservation areas, which are closely associated with the story of people, place and economic development in NSW and Australia. Local planning assesses each proposed development involving heritage, LEP 4.6 request to vary a standard and non-consistency with DCP provisions on an individual rather than holistic basis, a process that results in incremental loss of unique cultural value in relation to tourism and competitive point of difference. To date, given Camden's proximity to Sydney and the new Western Sydney Airport this approach can only be viewed as lack of vision and an economic error.

Whilst we acknowledge the draft Strategy's proposed actions to strengthen existing intersections of local planning with the state heritage system and develop clear guidance for local councils on identifying, managing and regulating local heritage, we would not expect meaningful improvement in heritage protection at the local level without mandatory specific direction.

Our more detailed comments with references to the draft Strategy follow.

Timeframe, vision and direction

The purpose of the draft strategy (p. 7) is stated under *What the draft strategy will do* as: "The draft strategy sets out a vision and direction for protecting heritage in New South Wales and establishes a road set of actions the NSW Government proposes to carry out to achieve that vision over the next 5 years."

We believe the timeframe of 5 years to achieve the vision and review the Heritage Act is overly long, especially as the Review was first opened for discussion in April 2021.

We ask that the timeframe be shortened.

As can be seen below in the *Strategy on a Page*, the vision stated of heritage being valued is different to that of heritage being protected as quoted above.

We consider that the Vision statement in the *Strategy on a Page* would be more accurately listed as a principle as heritage is already highly valued as an integral part of our culture.

We submit that the community expects that recognition and protection of heritage is the aspiration and direction of any heritage strategy, and the guiding principle of any Heritage Act.

We ask that the vision of the draft Strategy be defined in terms of recognition and protection of heritage.

Vision	Heritage is valued as an integral part of the culture and wellbeing of our communities and our sense of place			
Principles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aboriginal cultural heritage is the foundation of all heritage in NSW • Heritage is diverse, dynamic and beneficial to our wellbeing • Community voices are critical to understanding heritage significance • Heritage is conserved for everyone • Change and innovation are essential to heritage conservation 			
Objectives	① Embrace and reflect the diversity of our heritage	② Empower owners to conserve heritage	③ Realise the benefits of heritage	④ Improve the State heritage system
Actions	1.1 Recognise a broader range of stories and values	2.1 Support owners and the community to care for heritage	3.1 Promote activation, adaptive reuse and sustainability	4.1 Establish a more robust State Heritage Register
	1.2 Increase the accessibility of our heritage system and places	2.2 Assist government to manage heritage	3.2 Strengthen the alignment between the heritage and planning systems	4.2 Modernise the heritage framework

Source: *NSW draft Heritage Strategy* p. 11

The direction of a strategy usually involves both timeframes and performance measures to guide actions towards desired objectives. The road set of actions is non-definitive and lacks progress measures. For instance, providing a tailored regulatory approach for complex items such as a cultural landscape could potentially be progressed through a series of defined steps with allocated time frames of completion, along with reporting on them, which would also have the advantage of signalling the new category of state protection (Action 4.2, p. 24).

We ask that performance on the set of actions, possibly broken down into smaller component actions in the Strategy, be allocated timeframes and be periodically reported on to show progress in recognising and protecting heritage.

Cultural landscapes

Action 4.2 refers to recognising cultural landscapes as:

provide tailored regulatory approaches for complex items like moveable heritage and cultural landscapes to enable more complex heritage items, such as cultural landscapes and moveable heritage, to be listed on the State Heritage Register

As covered in the 2021 Report, the value of cultural landscapes, described by the World Heritage Convention (Article 1) as representing the “combined works of nature and of man”, came up often in submissions as a concept that needed inclusion in the NSW Heritage Act 1977. The Act was not designed to protectively manage cultural and layered landscapes, with its focus being more on physical fabric, historic buildings and structures and requiring the same listing process regardless of size or complexity.

Cultural landscapes, have long been recognised in the ICOMOS Burra Charter through the term “place”, a geographically defined area, such as a site, area, land, landscape, building or other work, group of buildings or other works including spaces and views. Its *Practice Note: Cultural Landscapes*³ takes the concept further and sets out how to apply the Burra Charter process to them. The Heritage Council of Victoria’s Guidelines⁴ also provide a system of analysis in relation to landscapes of cultural heritage.

The time and resourcing required to analyse, assess and recognise cultural landscapes could of course be reduced by using GIS-based tools and taking advantage of community knowledge. Partnering with universities and local historical societies and encouraging more community-led nominations, perhaps with some resourcing of expert support would spread the workload and enrich the knowledge base of our significant landscapes. In the case of Camden there is an active Historical Society, long-standing research activity and publications providing a wealth of documentation about its heritage value, including on Aboriginal culture and history, the cowpastures, the Macarthur legacy, early estate settlement, the private town plan of Camden based around St John’s Church Precinct and Camden Park (both state-listed), Chinese market gardeners on the Nepean River, the dairy industry and town farm and the role of Camden in the economic foundations of Australia.

We believe many communities would similarly have community experts willing and able to share the workload associated with research into and nomination of a cultural landscape.

³ ICOMOS December 2022 *Practice Note: Cultural Landscapes* Available at https://australia.icomos.org/wp-content/uploads/Burra-Charter-Practice-Note_Cultural-Landscapes_22.12.2022.pdf

⁴ Heritage Council of Victoria February 2015 *Landscapes Of Cultural Heritage Significance: Assessment Guidelines* Available at <https://assets.heritagecouncil.vic.gov.au/assets/LandscapesOfCulturalHeritageSignificance-AssessmentGuidelines2015-compressed.pdf>

We understand that legislative changes are also needed to address impediments to listing and ongoing management, such as multiple property ownership and consent issues around perceived loss of development rights and land values, delays caused by owner objections, overlap with incompatible land use zones and priorities of other government agencies.

Drawing on the Burra Charter, we suggest there are many amendments to the Act that can be envisaged to define, recognise and enable protective listing of cultural landscapes. For instance, incorporating more flexible boundary definitions, including views, topography and more intangible associations, introducing a tiered listing model possibly covering landscape conservation areas, visual viewsheds, thematic listings and so on that allow an overlay of protection that does not necessarily require universal or lot by lot consent.

The assessment and listing process could include criteria and new assessment templates specifically designed for cultural landscapes. For instance, it could integrate setting, visual and spatial relationships, viewsheds, Aboriginal connections, early colonial settlement forms, agricultural systems and historical significance of the landscape in the societal and economic story of NSW.

The 2006 state-listing of Braidwood and its Setting, a cultural landscape comprised of the historic town centre and some areas of surrounding rural landscape, has not been without challenges to heritage management. In 2024 these challenges and way forward were addressed in a 15-Year Management Review of Braidwood's listing reported to Heritage NSW.⁵

The challenges, such as confusion in planning approval pathways, issues and outcomes caused by LEP and DCP inconsistency with the state listing, underutilisation of Braidwood's point of difference in tourism and difficulties in resourcing its ongoing protection, provide valuable information about what to avoid in designing a system for protecting the State's cultural landscapes.

In order to improve the performance and management of Braidwood's listing, the 15-Year Management Review provides a framework of short, medium, and long-term goals addressing the lessons learnt, including the importance of clearly articulated implications of listing, ongoing engagement with community and the local council, and regular promotion and celebration of the heritage values.

Ongoing heritage management of Braidwood as listed requires significant input of resources. In year 1 it is recommended for instance that clear guidance materials be developed for developer applicants and planners, regular communication be started between Heritage NSW, Council and stakeholders, the community engagement plan be initiated and key technical studies such as

⁵ GML Heritage July 2024 *15-Year Management Review of Braidwood and its Setting State Heritage Register* Available at <https://hdp-au-prod-app-nsw-haveyoursay-files.s3.ap-southeast-2.amazonaws.com/6717/2039/5931/Management-review-Braidwood-SHRL.pdf>

thematic heritage and Aboriginal cultural heritage studies be commissioned. In years 2 to 3 the objective is to consolidate reforms and establish a 5-year review cycle for heritage planning tools and process of approvals. In the longer-term (Year 3 onwards; 2028–2029 and beyond) the objective is to develop a strategic plan to promote and celebrate Braidwood’s heritage listing, implement a heritage interpretation plan to support public understanding and tourism, establish and manage incentive programs (e.g. grants, tax relief, conservation trust), provide sustained support for applicants and property owners and monitor and review the effectiveness of incentive programs and heritage engagement.

The need for these measures is largely due to Braidwood and its Setting being listed under an Act not designed to accommodate cultural landscapes. However, the experience of managing Braidwood provides a useful case study in designing an efficient system that reduces or eliminates impediments to timely listing, ensures alignment between local planning and state protective provisions, facilitates public engagement and appreciation of the economic, tourism and social welfare benefits of conserving cultural landscapes and need for their ongoing protective management.

The concept of cultural landscape allows for a more varied, inclusive and nuanced approach to area listings, than that applied to Braidwood and its Setting, that does not necessarily impact individual property owners so directly (especially if the property is not individually listed) whilst ensuring that historical associations, character and sense of place is conserved. For instance, the approval pathway could be simplified through ensuring usual LEP and DCP provisions are consistent with the landscape listing and including an overlaid mandatory direction to councils of compliance with them. Too often heritage value is lost through lot-based approvals subject to developer pressure and questionable interpretation of heritage policy and LEP 4.6 variations to standards.

New cultural landscape listings can avoid the issues experienced in the Braidwood case by setting the parameters upfront with clear guidance, community engagement and ensuring seamless intersection between state objectives and local planning.

We submit that the concept of cultural landscapes and a framework for their listing would be a welcome and very positive inclusion in the NSW Heritage Act.

We ask that the proposed action of including the concept of cultural landscapes in the Heritage Act be operationalised and expedited.

Recognition of heritage

Heritage listing at both state and local levels involves a process that does not necessarily ensure that significant and diverse heritage is recognised which means that it can easily be lost, along with its benefits (Objectives 1 and 3).

Local listing of heritage items significant to the community is often haphazard to the extent of some councils not providing a clear path or even a nomination form. In the case of Camden, a community member can only add a potential item to a list to be considered in the next comprehensive heritage study review, for which there is no timeframe.

Once assessed and accepted for local listing, the process of listing an item involves a number of steps and can typically take a year or more before it is listed in an LEP. We submit that in order to reflect our diverse heritage (Objective 1) and realise its benefits (Objective 3), councils require mandated direction on streamlining and fast-tracking recognition and listing of heritage items.

State heritage listing also requires many steps, and is a long process culminating in a recommendation by the NSW Heritage Council, and the listing will not take effect unless the Minister signs off on it. The listing process can also be defeated by a contemporary context of societal and political priorities. The process itself is a deterrent which means that much diverse and significant heritage (Objective 1) has not necessarily been nominated or made it to the state register.

An item of great significance may never be listed or remain as locally listed, at the mercy of local planning pressures.

We submit that in order to improve the state heritage system (Objective 4), establish a robust heritage register (Action 4.1) and modernise heritage framework (Action 4.2) the heritage system needs dedicated resourcing to inform communities about the process of recognising heritage, to accept and progress nominations.

We ask that the draft Strategy be revised to address the practicalities and timeliness of formally recognising and listing significant heritage at both the local and state levels, which may require resourcing.

Protection of heritage

Currently the NSW Heritage Act 1977 provides no direct protection for heritage listed at the local level. As made clear throughout the draft Strategy, the heritage referred to is listed state significant heritage. This is heritage, often researched and nominated by a local council or a community, under set criteria of cultural significance.

To realise the benefits of heritage (Objective 3), the draft Strategy proposes to strengthen the protection of local heritage by improving how it interacts with the State heritage system (Action 3.2). The action proposals are aimed at better supporting local councils to protect area character while allowing for growth and change, strengthening opportunities for heritage to contribute to local character of precincts and neighbourhoods, including new development, supporting implementation of housing reforms to achieve a positive benefit for heritage and improving development certainty and timeframes by embedding heritage upfront in local strategic planning.

Whilst the action proposals aim to improve coordination, consistency, and support for local heritage management, they are largely policy-based and non-binding. It is not clear how they can be operationalised to necessarily support the vision of protecting heritage or its underlying principles of benefitting wellbeing, understanding heritage through community voices and being conserved for everyone. They do not impose stronger legal protections or recourse for communities struggling to retain heritage and sense of place. This means that significant heritage can and is being lost to competing pressures such as developer profit-seeking.

We emphasise that if the revised heritage strategy is to embrace and reflect diversity (Objective 1) and realise heritage benefits (Objective 3), the Strategy cannot be so confined to state listed heritage. The local planning system is subject to competing pressures, and heritage conservation often succumbs, despite heritage protection provisions of the EP&A Act, LEP, DCP and other policies.

In Camden's case, the LEP height standard is often breached, in one notable case by 60% in a Heritage Conservation Area. It was confirmed in a response to our GIPA request that there are no checks and balances restricting interpretation of heritage provisions in assessing development. It is well understood that the planning system does not necessarily protect heritage at the local level.

We ask that legislative and enforceable mechanisms be included in the Strategy to better manage and protect locally listed heritage, including heritage conservation areas, as listed in the NSW Heritage Inventory.

Recognition and protection of Aboriginal heritage

Formalising an inclusive and respectful approach at the NSW state level is an important step towards recognition and recording of Aboriginal cultural heritage. True and practical respect for indigenous cultural and intellectual property rights and recording of Aboriginal cultural heritage is long overdue and, to date, a national failing. The destruction of significant Indigenous heritage, such as Juukan Gorge in the Pilbara in 2020, must never be repeated. We fully agree with and support the principles *Dhawura Ngilan*⁶, the significance of country and the importance of truth telling.

The NSW Government has committed to drafting new Aboriginal Cultural Heritage legislation, but as yet is the only state that does not have a specific Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act. The National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974 is currently the primary legislation for the management of Aboriginal cultural heritage in NSW. The draft Strategy explicitly recognises the inadequacy of the NPWA, which is not led by Aboriginal people and is inadequate for protecting intangible heritage, cultural landscapes, and ongoing connection to Country.

The draft Strategy places considerable emphasis on integrating Aboriginal cultural heritage more comprehensively into the state's heritage framework which marks a shift from a predominant focus on post-colonial history. The stated aim in the opening *Aboriginal cultural heritage statement* (p. 2) is to elevate Aboriginal perspectives and commemorate their complex and often difficult stories in the NSW heritage system. References to Aboriginal heritage throughout the draft Strategy indicate this involves:

- Broadening the definition of heritage to recognise the deep-time connection of Aboriginal people to the land and their cultural practices.
- Acknowledging diverse cultural practices to encompass knowledge, traditions, beliefs, history, places and objects that are of significance to Aboriginal peoples.
- Recognising and protecting Aboriginal cultural heritage sites and integrating Aboriginal heritage considerations into broader land use and planning decisions.
- Engaging Aboriginal communities in decision-making processes.
- Promoting community engagement, educating the broader public and supporting initiatives that celebrate and revitalize Aboriginal cultural practices.

It is not clear how comprehensively Aboriginal perspectives can be recognised under the draft Strategy. As previously raised, the draft Strategy limits recognition and protection of heritage to the State Heritage Register. The *Aboriginal cultural heritage statement* (p.2) also indicates that the focus of the draft Strategy is to work under the *Heritage Act 1977* in relation to state-significant Aboriginal cultural heritage places and items on the State Heritage Register.

⁶ Heritage Chairs of Australia and New Zealand March 2021 *Dhawura Ngilan A Vision For Aboriginal And Torres Strait Islander Heritage In Australia* <https://www.dccew.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/dhawura-ngilan-vision-atsi-heritage.pdf>

At this point it is not clear what necessary timeframe or comprehensive mechanism will be included in a revised Heritage Act to seek opportunities to listen to indigenous voices, and thereby ensure capture of significant heritage in the Register.

It is also not clear whether, upon recognition of indigenous voices and deeming cultural significance to be of local rather than state value, that NSW councils will be required to list it as such. Aboriginal heritage that is locally listed, although recorded in the State Heritage Inventory, as with other locally listed heritage, is offered little or no protection at the state level.

As stated under Objective 4 in the draft Strategy (p.22) only 58 items are state-listed primarily for their importance to Aboriginal people. Currently there is no requirement on local councils to listen to Aboriginal people, assess, recognise and protect Aboriginal culture. A quick review of locally listed heritage of Campbelltown and Camden revealed no local listings and only one listed by Wollondilly (Aboriginal scarred trees at Camden Park).

We submit that this lack of local listings is another reason for greater integration between the state and local systems, and greater mandatory direction to Councils about recognising and protecting heritage at the local level.

We ask for clarification about the mechanism and timing of listening to indigenous voices, and how state and local heritage systems are to be integrated in relation to recognition and protection of Aboriginal heritage and cultural practices.

Housing reform

It is entirely predictable that the NSW housing reforms, first announced in December 2023, would create confusion within the planning system and lead to conflict with established communities operating under long-understood heritage protections. Such conflict has great potential to be seen in the community as reducing the diversity and benefits of heritage (Objectives 1 and 3).

The National Trust⁷ has made clear its position that:

The current one-size-fits-all housing reforms put forward by the NSW Government are the biggest threat to the heritage of NSW that have ever been proposed.

No one disputes the housing crisis and the urgent need for action, but the community fears that these reforms lack due cost benefit analysis to determine where additional housing would be best located taking into account the potential cost to valued heritage and amenity.

The housing reforms have the potential to degrade the integrity of cultural landscapes and create anomalies in historically significant settings. Diminishment of historic streetscapes, conservation areas and settings of local and state listed items along with loss of tree canopy is not in the public interest and vigorous protest can be expected.

In terms of Sydney being a desirable tourist destination it is also not in the economic interests of the state or nation.

Additional housing in a historic area needs to be developed in a way that respects its existing character, sense of place and liveability. It needs to be carefully tailored to the specific location. Any infill development needs to be sensitively designed to be consistent with scale and bulk of existing building stock and streetscapes. Any adaptive reuse needs to follow the Burra Charter. We reiterate that the overarching focus of the Heritage Act should be the identification and protection of heritage in NSW (including local heritage). The community expects heritage protections at the local level to be respected as reflecting the community's views on heritage value and what it values as "home".

We submit that local and state heritage protections need to be strategically retained and underpin housing planning reforms.

We ask that the draft strategy be revised to specifically address and balance the potential conflict between heritage conservation and additional housing.

⁷ National Trust February 2024 *Housing Reforms in NSW* Available at <https://www.nationaltrust.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/NT-Housing-submission.pdf>

Adaptive Reuse

Whilst we understand that adaptive reuse of heritage items can be necessary for sustainability and ensuring their protection, we are concerned about the interpretation of the concept.

Under the Burra Charter, where the use of a place is of cultural significance it should be retained (Article 7.1), any adaptation should involve minimal change to significant fabric, only after considering alternatives (Article 21.2) and new works such as additions to heritage items or other changes are only acceptable where they respect and do not obscure cultural significance (Article 22).

In Camden the concept of adaptive reuse and employment of LEP 5.10 (10) *Conservation incentives* have been argued by developers to gain approval for development and additional development of listed items that is not consistent with the Burra Charter articles (which have been adopted into Camden DCP) and heritage conservation.

In the case of state-listed Gledswood homestead, which is zoned for tourism, the community remains shocked that consent was forthcoming to adapt it into a child care centre, which required many modifications to both house and garden under NSW Childcare Guidelines. The use of Gledswood as an early settler homestead is arguably culturally significant, one of interest that would boost regional tourism (Objective 3 action). Adaptive reuse has not benefitted the whole community or realised the benefits of heritage (Objective 3). Childcare centres are usually purpose built due to stringent safety, child welfare and educational development requirements and have little relationship to Gledswood's original use.

We submit that the term adaptive reuse should not be employed to allow changes to a single heritage item and its setting, conservation area or cultural landscape that diminishes cultural significance.

We ask that the term adaptive reuse be qualified and defined in terms of the Burra Charter articles.

Conclusion

As covered above, we have highlighted a number of concerns and requests for amendments to the Strategy. We note that Strategy does not commit to a clear vision of recognition and protection of heritage, but rather one of our valuing it as an integral part of our culture.

The idea that the Heritage Act could be revised to accommodate competing pressures, such as housing reform, rather than being primarily focussed on recognition and conservation of heritage is of concern. This approach to the Strategy leaves it open-ended (over 5 years) with imprecisely defined objectives within that timeframe, which are not underpinned by measurable and reportable progress of actions towards them.

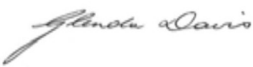
Most heritage items are recognised at the local level (and often sit within cultural landscapes) but protection provided, under the EP&A Act, LEPs and DCPs, is not necessarily as expected by the community. We stress that greater integration of local heritage items within the state heritage system and associated mandatory state direction in relation to protecting local heritage would lead to our heritage becoming more valued and integral to our culture. Seeing it lost haphazardly and incrementally sends the message that it is not important.

We have asked that the Strategy be amended to define its vision in terms of recognition and protection of all heritage, that the timeframe of its implementation be shortened with reportable actions, where possible broken down into their smaller achievable components with allocated timeframes and progress reports. Similarly, we have asked for clarification about the mechanism and timing of listening to indigenous voices, and how state and local heritage systems are to be integrated in relation to Aboriginal heritage, including cultural landscapes.

The proposed inclusion of the concept of cultural landscapes in the Heritage Act for the first time is welcomed. Again, we would like clarification about timeframe and criteria. Cultural landscapes, which can deepen our understanding of connection to country and the history of NSW, once recognised and listed can better generate economic benefits for communities and be protected against loss of significance.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide further input into the Heritage Strategy and Review of the NSW Heritage Act.

Yours sincerely,



Glenda Davis, President