

THE NATIONAL TRUST OF AUSTRALIA (NEW SOUTH WALES) POLICY ON PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN PLANNING AND ASSESSMENT

PREAMBLE

Since its inception in 1945, the National Trust has liaised constantly with government at all levels in regard to the enactment of planning, development and heritage legislation. The Trust, which has over 12,000 members, has established a range of expert technical and local committees keen to participate in the plan making and assessment processes in NSW.

The Trust, as a public membership organisation, represents the deep interest and concern of the community in the land planning process. However, the Trust cannot represent all voices in the community at all times and, as part of its role, is committed to ensuring that wide public consultation is an integral part of the state and local government planning processes.

The Trust has welcomed the increased focus upon public consultation that has evolved over recent decades, particularly in relation to large developments. However, all too often, the experience of these consultation programs has created a perception that they operate as development information sessions, with little consequent action to address any expressed concerns. The Trust seeks proper participation in the process.

The Trust believes that it is incumbent upon government bodies to canvass public opinion prior to undertaking any significant alterations to existing planning processes and regulations and that these opinions must be addressed; early participation by the community can bring constructive ideas and local knowledge to the table and can provide significant heritage information for consideration. Where variations to existing planning standards are considered, particularly in relation to individual development proposals, merit assessment must include public participation and involvement in the approval process.

It is important to recognise that early public participation can minimise conflict by discovering significant unlisted NSW heritage for listing consideration.

POLICY

1. The National Trust will advocate that planning and assessment should be as open and transparent to the public as possible and that it should be based on sound, publicly available evidence.
2. The Trust will urge that the public must play a key role in planning and assessment as all development projects are part of the public domain and State Heritage Register listed items, locally listed heritage items, conservation areas and undiscovered heritage are a significant part of the public domain.
3. The Trust supports early and ongoing public participation at all levels of plan making, including strategic plans, local plans, general and site specific development control plans, spot re-zonings, development assessment and development modification assessment.
4. The Trust will urge governments (state and local) to develop effective and convincing public participation processes and such participation should occur as early as possible to enable genuine discussion before positions are entrenched and investment is committed and threatened.

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