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# Communiqué of the Heritage Forum hosted by the National Trust of Australia (NSW)

Wednesday 9 June  
2021





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## Communiqué of the Independent Forum on the Review of the NSW Heritage Act: 9 June 2021

Issued by: National Trust of Australia (NSW)

### OVERVIEW

1. An **INDEPENDENT FORUM** of 277 experts, professional heritage organisations, community groups, individuals and National Trust members was hosted by the National Trust of Australia (NSW) with support from Australia ICOMOS, the Australasian Society for Historical Archaeology, Australian Archaeological Association, the Historic Houses Association and Engineering Heritage Australia on 9th June 2021 in **RESPONSE** to the Parliamentary Review of the NSW *Heritage Act, 1977*.
2. The Forum was aimed at **GENERATING** cross-industry collaboration to discuss key issues facing NSW's heritage, to develop key responses to the Review's Discussion Paper and to **IDENTIFY** what elements are necessary for a Heritage Act to be robust, comprehensive and effective.
3. The Forum **RECOGNISED** the significant contribution that cultural heritage places make to our identity, creating a sense of place and representing the State's story, its people and its shared connections.
4. The Forum highlighted the **IMPORTANT** role cultural heritage places have in domestic and international tourism and their **CONTRIBUTION** to a vibrant state economy.
5. The Forum **EXPRESSED CONCERN** that a major review of existing historic heritage legislation had been proposed at a time when a twenty-year promise to enact independent Indigenous heritage legislation has not been fulfilled. There was **CONSENSUS** that contemporary legislation to protect and conserve Indigenous Heritage must remain a **PRIORITY** over amending heritage legislation.

### THE REVIEW

6. The Forum **AFFIRMED** the fundamental importance of the role of the *Heritage Act, 1977* to identify, protect, promote and conserve cultural heritage places in NSW and **IDENTIFIED** the following issues as **CRITICAL** to the success of the Review:
  - Any proposed amendments should result in **BETTER HERITAGE OUTCOMES**, rather than a weakening of heritage protection.



- While the Heritage Act and its regulations may benefit from small updates and amendments, its **OBJECTIVES AND PRINCIPLES** remain **APPROPRIATE AND RELEVANT**.
  - That cultural heritage is at **IMMENSE RISK** from State Significant Developments, which effectively **TURN OFF** and **OVERRIDE** the provisions of the *Heritage Act, 1977*.
  - Greater **RESOURCING** to enable the Act's effective implementation is **FUNDAMENTAL**, so that Heritage NSW can show **LEADERSHIP**, effectively **IDENTIFY** the state's heritage places, and manage their **SYMPATHETIC CHANGE**.
  - Heritage is a **SHARED RESPONSIBILITY**, involving government at all levels, owners, corporations and community groups to identify, protect, conserve, present, and transmit the state's **HERITAGE VALUES** to future generations.
  - The NSW Heritage Council should be an **INDEPENDENT PUBLIC CHAMPION** of heritage comprised largely of **RECOGNISED HERITAGE EXPERTS** and organisational representatives.
  - Government agencies should be **EXEMPLARY OWNERS AND MANAGERS** of cultural heritage assets and need to resource their respective heritage maintenance and management role, and **TAKE RESPONSIBILITY** for the cultural heritage of **STATE SIGNIFICANT** places.
  - Support for **LOCAL GOVERNMENT** is **VITAL** for adequate identification, protection and conservation of the state's 40,000+ locally listed heritage places.
  - The process of **IDENTIFYING** and **LISTING** cultural heritage places should be separate from the process of **MANAGING CHANGE** at cultural heritage places. It should **NOT INTRODUCE** further categories of places.
  - The Heritage Act does not prevent sympathetic re-use of heritage places. When applied well, it **ENHANCES** strong economic development and delivers good heritage outcomes.
  - Owners of heritage places should receive useful **ADVICE**, effective **FINANCIAL INCENTIVES** and adequate **CONSERVATION GRANTS** to ensure well informed ownership of heritage places leads to desirable outcomes.
7. The Forum **EXPRESSED** gratitude to the National Trust of Australia (NSW) for hosting the Forum with supporting organisations Australia ICOMOS, the Australasian Society for Historical Archaeology, the Australian Archaeological Association, the Historic Houses Association and Engineering Heritage Australia.
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