



THE NATIONAL TRUST OF AUSTRALIA (NSW)

Position Paper on Willow Grove and St Georges Terrace

Background

Willow Grove was listed on the National Trust Register in 1985 and St Georges Terrace was listed on the Trust Register in 1984. Both were listed on the Parramatta Local Environmental Plan 2011. Willow Grove is significant as being a rare survivor of high Victorian residential development in this area of Parramatta, while St Georges is the only such terrace in Parramatta. Under the most recent proposals for the new Parramatta Powerhouse Museum, the NSW Government has proposed to “dismantle and relocate” Willow Grove to an undisclosed location in North Parramatta, and “retain and preserve” St George’s Terrace.

National Trust position

The Trust have long advocated that both Willow Grove and St Georges Terrace must be retained and featured in any new museum development proposal in a meaningful way, such as occurred at the Museum of Sydney site.

The proposal to “relocate” Willow Grove has been identified as being poor heritage practice. The National Trust take the following position on Willow Grove:

- Willow Grove should remain in its original position, and be sensitively repaired. It could form part of the new museum.
- The proposal is a form demolition, not relocation. The process of dismantling will destroy much of the original fabric. Any attempt to dismantle these materials could easily result in their catastrophic failure.
- Any “moved” building will of necessity comprise mostly of new materials. The relocated building would thus be a new building, with perhaps some old verandahs and doors attached. This level of fabric replacement is not good heritage practice and is not in accordance with industry best practice including the ICOMOS Burra Charter.
- Moving Willow Grove from its present site will reduce its cultural and historic significance, and its relocation will negatively impact the significance of any new location in historic North Parramatta.
- The costs associated with such a proposal will be considerable, and will bring little to no benefit to the heritage and people of Parramatta.

The partial retention of St George’s Terrace will also represent the very worst of contemporary attitudes and responses to heritage - devoid of meaning, the remaining terraces will look simply like a historical imposition rather than a celebration of Parramatta’s heritage, or indeed a considered component of new museum. The National Trust take the following position on St Georges Terrace:

- St Georges Terrace should be retained and sensitively repaired based on historical research. It could form part of the new museum.
- The Heritage Impact Statement (HIS) for this proposal did not adequately assess the impact of the proposal on the significance of the place. This needs to be re-assessed.
- The new Powerhouse Museum building is not “responsive and sympathetic” to St Georges Terrace (as claimed in the HIS) - it is the same design that originally proposed its demolition with only minor amendments, none of which adequately address this impact.

Action to Promote the Trust’s Position

The National Trust will continue to advocate for the retention and repair of Willow Grove and St Georges Terrace in their original locations.

For approval by the National Trust Board