

The National Trust of Australia (ACT)

Annual Report 2024-25



Reimagining our role in the heritage landscape



President's Report

It is with much pleasure that I present to you on behalf of Council the Annual Report of the National Trust of Australia (ACT) (the Trust) for 2024-25.

Following the ACT Assembly elections in October 2024, Chris Steel MLA was appointed Minister for Heritage. Mr Steel has demonstrated great interest in the Trust. We met with him earlier this year to discuss joint priorities. He opened our 2025 Heritage Open Day during the Canberra and Region Heritage Festival and our annual Heritage Symposium in August.

I wish to acknowledge the tremendous support given to us by the previous Minister for Heritage, Rebecca Vassarotti.

We are very grateful that the ACT Government has continued our annual funding grant, albeit at a reduced level due to current budgetary exigencies. This assists the Trust to conduct a number of its important activities, including the Symposium, Open Day, Heritage Oration and the ACT Heritage Awards.

We continue a productive relationship with the ACT Heritage Council and thank outgoing chair Duncan Marshall for his willingness to engage with us on key heritage matters. We look forward to working with the members of the incoming Heritage Council, including its new Chair Cathy Skippington.

Our keynote Trust events continued to be popular, including our 2024 ACT Heritage Oration, delivered by well-known environmental campaigner, Dr Bob Brown, our Heritage Festival Open Day at Tuggeranong Homestead, our Canberra

and Region Heritage Symposium, and annual ACT Heritage Awards.

We continued our work in heritage advocacy, as detailed in the Heritage Committee report, and we maintained our popular program of walks, talks and tours and published more in our series of Self-guided Heritage Tours brochures.

We value our participation in the Australian Council of National Trusts, which continues to thrive under the leadership of Lachlan Molesworth.

During the year we appointed Linda Keyser as our Executive Director, a position which carries with it ex officio membership of Council. Linda is already making an enormous contribution to the Trust and helping us achieve our many important objectives.

Thank you to Gary Watkins who retired as our Manager after long and valued service in this role, and previously as a Council member.

Thank you to members of Council and its Committees for your commitment to the Trust, and to all Trust members for your continuing support.

On behalf of Council, I wish you a happy and prosperous 2026.



Gary Kent
President

In Review: Advocacy

The Trust continued to advocate for Canberra's heritage through a number of projects and other initiatives during 2024-25.

Dr Bob Brown, the former Senator and well-known environmental campaigner, delivered the 2025 Heritage Oration at the National Film and Sound Archive before an appreciative audience of nearly 200. He spoke passionately on the topic the state of environmental protection in Australia.

Our Heritage Symposium on 17 August 2024, with the theme 'Planning for Heritage', also delivered key conservation messages, and included an excellent keynote address by Dr James Lesh of Deakin University on Values in Cities: Urban Heritage in Twentieth-Century Australia.

During the year the Trust published the report prepared for it by GML Heritage Pty Ltd, a Thematic Study on Modernist Houses in the ACT. Funded by the ACT Government through its annual Special Grant to the Trust, this report has been circulated widely and will form the basis of future work to ensure the heritage significance of these houses is appropriately recognised and protected



The Special Grant has also allowed the Trust to 'advocate through engagement' with the release of new or updated versions of selected Self-guided Heritage Tours brochures. Brochures released during 2024-25 included Yarralumla and Oaks Estate. Further brochures are in preparation and will be published in 2025-2026. Copies of these new brochures are available on the Trust's website and in hardcopy from the Trust's office.

With a firm commitment to the next generation of heritage practitioners, we continue to build on our relationship with ANU Cultural Heritage students, including providing financial support for a catalogue of their exhibits in FADX.

The Trust engaged with, or responded to, a range of heritage matters. These included:

- Ongoing dialogue with Defence Housing Australia in relation to heritage protections for the Belconnen Transmitting Station
- Gold Creek Homestead
- Heritage listing of the Kingston shops
- Light Rail Stage 2b
- Heritage bus shelter in Forrest
- National heritage listing of Canberra
- Albert Hall heritage
- Reid Heritage Precinct

We continued to participate in the ACT Government Environmental and Planning Forum.

Thank you to the members of the Heritage Committee for their dedication to the work of the Trust.

Gary Kent
Chair, Heritage Committee

In Review: ACT Heritage Awards



The annual National Trust (ACT) Heritage Awards were presented on 10 September 2024 by the ACT Minister for Heritage, Rebecca Vassarotti.

Winners in each category were:

Architecture & Built Conservation

The National Film and Sound Archive for the innovative refurbishment of three rooms in a heritage-listed building, enhancing its original character.

Heritage Landscapes & the Natural Environment

Preserving Gorman's Heritage Trees, a project focused on germinating seedlings to replace aging trees at the Gorman Arts Centre, promoting future heritage preservation.

Local Community Projects

The ACT Weeds Manual, a comprehensive guide for weed identification and treatment, benefiting environmental protection efforts.

Heritage Education & Promotion

Spectres of Architecture in Canberra, an exhibition and website documenting erased architectural histories, serving as an educational resource.

Industrial Heritage Conservation & Restoration

Restoration of a full Fleet of ex-Southern Aurora Carriages, recognising efforts to restore historic train carriages for public experience.

The Trust's Council also made the following Awards:

Lifetime Achievement Award

Dr Mike Pearson

Outstanding Advocacy

Jane Goffman

In Review: Tours & Events

It has been another busy year for the Tours & Events Committee as we continue to develop our walks, talks and tours programs.

The Heritage Festival, as usual, was a hive of activity with multiple events concentrated into the short three-week timeframe. These included three of our flagship events:

- The Heritage Polaris cycling event attracted 85 teams (178 participants) of young and older riders, navigating to 40 heritage sites around Canberra. (*cover image*)
- The Heritage Oration held at the National Film and Sound Archive, which drew a large audience to hear from renowned conservationist, Bob Brown.



- The 2025 Open Day at the heritage-listed Tuggeranong Homestead opened by the Minister for Heritage, Chris Steel,

featuring a talk by journalist and author Ross Coulthart on the work of Charles Bean, heritage stalls and lots of fun activities including lively line dancing. More than 800 visitors enjoyed the event despite it being election day!



During the Festival we held several Heritage Walks and other tours to explore lesser-known parts of Canberra such as Casey House and the first suburbs of the new capital city with their distinctive Federal Capital Commission houses.

Variety is important so during the year we had tours to places as diverse as the Noel Butlin Archives at ANU, Ollies' Garage in Fyshwick and the cemetery at Michelago!

Two very successful coach tours took us away from Canberra to our local region for three nights in Eden and a day trip to Cooma.

Regular Heritage Walks continued, many linked to our new Self-guided Heritage Tours brochures, to places such as Oaks Estate, Kingston, Barton and Hall.

Other events included the Heritage Symposium, Annual General Meeting, our Christmas party, and the Kingston shops centenary celebration.

We foster strong relationships with heritage partners to extend and diversify our offerings. We thank the Australian Garden History Society, ACT Historic Places, and residents' groups as well as the many individuals that support our program with their expert knowledge.

We are always keen for people to help plan and organise the future program; please contact the National Trust Office and let us know of your interest.

Mary Johnston
Chair, Tours and Events Committee

"A splendid day out. thank you so much for this event"

"It was a good day with lots of discussion and interest from the heritage-oriented public"

In Review: Communications

Significant advances were made in the Trust's communications during 2024-25.

e-newsletter

The new look e-newsletter 'Trust News' was launched in February. Powered by the communications platform Mailchimp, the newsletter facilitates one click access to booking sites, archival records and the like.

The 'On This Day' feature article highlights and celebrates significant heritage events, places and people.

As well as our Trust events, we actively promote heritage partner events to ensure our members stay up to date with the latest heritage news.

[View this email in your browser](#)



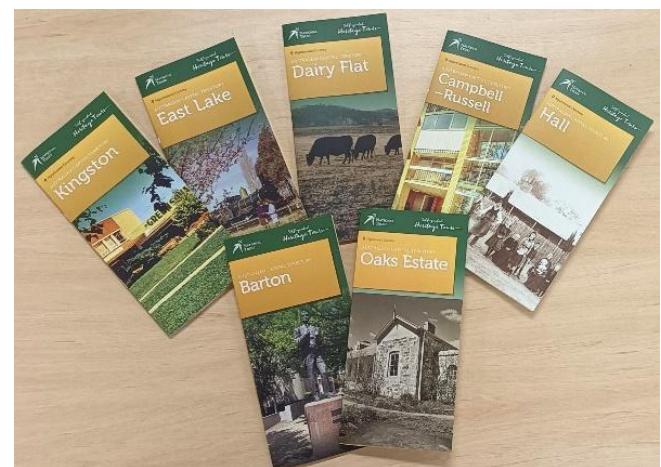
e-hive cataloguing

In an ACT grant funded project, the Trust has uploaded over 120 documents relating to Trust Classification files onto the cataloguing platform e-hive. The documents can be accessed by the public in digital form with the option for original hardcopy documents to be viewed in the Trust office.

The project is ongoing, with a large repository of documents, photos, maps and other items to be added.

Digitisation serves to preserve these items and forms part of the Trust's conservation agenda.

Self-guided Heritage Tours brochures



Three more in the series of Self-guided Heritage Tours brochures were released during 2024-25. These brochures provide an immersive experience for members, residents and tourists alike to learn about the fascinating and unique history and heritage of our suburbs as they walk the trails of featured places.

Going forward, production of these brochures will not be funded under the ACT grant and a model of subsidisation will be implemented.

In Review: Membership & Volunteering

Membership continues to grow after the COVID-19 slump, with household membership now slightly higher than the pre-COVID numbers.

Continued growth in 2024-25 can be attributed to an uplift in digital communications, bringing more people into contact with Trust activities.

A focus on quality experiences for members and guests through diverse engagement activities is also a contributing factor.

Challenges ahead include engaging more young people in heritage related activities and targeting their areas of interest and concern, ensuring the Trust remains relevant in an ever-changing society.

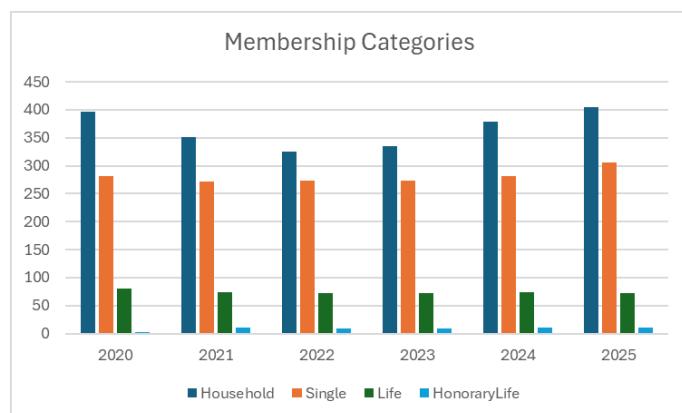
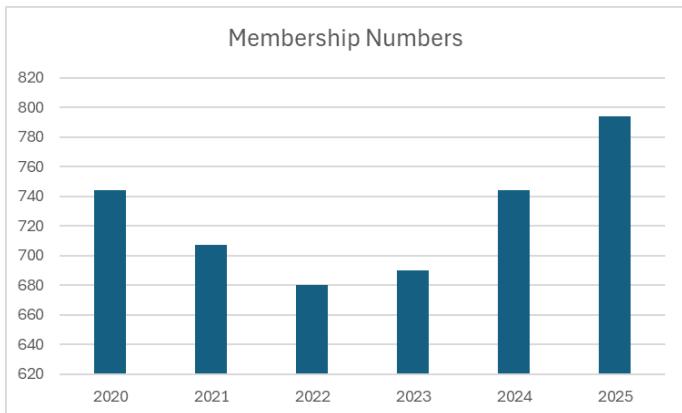
The Trust's membership team in NSW do a great job supporting members with renewal reminders and support for mislaid cards and last minute pre-overseas trip sign-ups.

Volunteering

As with most not-for-profit organisations, the Trust is constantly on the lookout for volunteers to assist with the many activities it undertakes.

We are truly grateful for the small band of volunteers, many of whom have been dedicating their time over decades to Trust heritage, conservation and education activities.

Our end-of-year grant acquittal report to the ACT Government reported just under 2,000 volunteering hours on funded activities alone. In addition, many hours of voluntary advocacy research and operational support are afforded by our committee volunteers – in all, we benefitted from more than 3,000 volunteer hours. The contribution of Trust volunteers exponentially increases the impact of taxpayers' money and we pride ourselves on the Trust's ability to value add.



3,000+
Volunteering
hours

In Review: Finances

The 2024-25 financial year saw the Trust with a net surplus of circa \$55k, after allowing for the membership income timing difference (refer Financial Statement note 2) funds in the bank and nil commercial liabilities.

The relationship with the ACT Government continues to be successful for both parties and has allowed the Trust to invest in an experienced Executive Director who has brought a new level of energy and enthusiasm to the Trust's activities.

As Figure 1 shows, in the 2024-25 period 50% of the Trust's income was derived from the ACT Heritage Grant. Changes to funding therefore have a significant impact on the level of activity the Trust can maintain.

Sustainability remains at the forefront of Council's strategic planning.

Following are the audited statements and financial notes for the period 1 July 2024 to 30 June 2025 as prepared by our appointed auditors PKF Canberra.

Scott McAlister
Treasurer

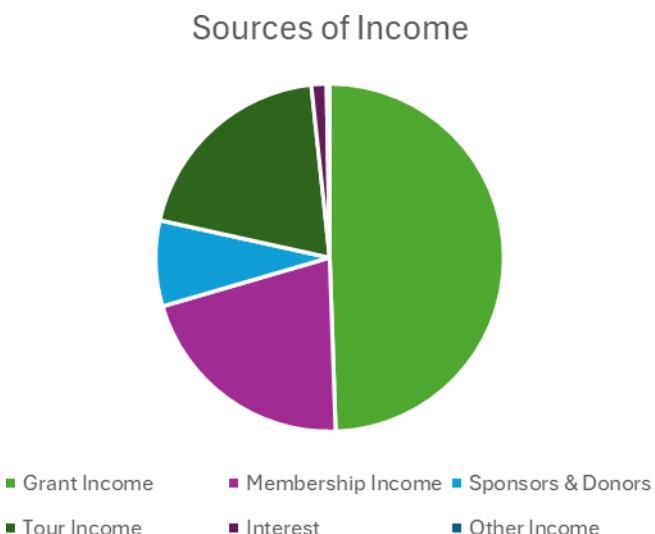


Figure 1: Sources of Income 2024-25

Prior to 30 June 2025, the ACT Government advised that due to budgetary constraints funding would be halved for the 2025-26 financial year.

The outcomes achieved and covered in other areas of this report highlight that, when the Trust is well funded, it makes a significant contribution to the ACT community.

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