



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE CHANGE AND BIODIVERSITY
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Submission Cover Sheet

Inquiry into ACT's heritage arrangements

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ACT Legislative Assembly Standing Committee on Environment, Climate Change And Biodiversity

Inquiry into ACT's Heritage arrangements

Hall Heritage Centre

Hall Heritage Centre is a small, relatively new, community-based heritage centre with a strong focus on historic 'Ginninderra' - commensurate with the catchment of Ginninderra Creek. While there had been a recognised education museum within the school since 1986, after the school was closed in 2006, this was taken over by the Village and District Progress Association and the focus was broadened to encompass the history and heritage of the wider district. Our role is essentially educational.

ACT Heritage Grants program

Our main point of contact with the ACT Heritage agency has been the ACT Heritage Grants program. This program has been of the greatest importance to us, enabling us to mount exhibitions, undertake training, provide disability access, build a collection management system, undertake cataloguing and conservation of the Gillespie Collection – and much more.

Our first grant success in 2009-2010 enabled us to commission a Conservation Management Plan for the school museum. Since then we have been awarded eighteen further grants. (total value of grants \$147,460, an average value of \$7761). In addition to these ACT Heritage grants we have won eleven grants from five other organisations, totalling \$55,217.

Without access to the ACT Heritage grants program, Hall Heritage Centre would have become a mere shadow of what it is today, and we are pleased to recognise the great value of that program. We observe however that total funding available for the program seems to have stood still at around \$350,000 for many years, which means effectively that less and less is getting done. We surmise that the returns to government and the community from the current annual quantum would more than justify a doubling of the size of the program.

Heritage Festival

While the Heritage Grant program has been of central significance to our survival and achievements, we have also been a regular and reliable contributor to the annual Canberra and District Heritage Festival, and are appreciative of the efforts of Heritage Unit staff who have sustained the Festival as a major annual focus for heritage activities. As ever, we have found opportunities to cooperate with other bodies, and this year will mount displays in conjunction with St Michael and All Angels Anglican Church (75th Anniversary) and the National Sheepdog Trials Association (80th Anniversary)

Canberra Tracks

We have also been involved in various ways with 'Canberra Tracks' (particularly the signs placed in Hall village) and share the important educational purpose of this program of showing suburban Canberrans what preceded the Capital Territory – the stories of Indigenous and colonial Australia. This is the objective of our web database 'Rediscovering Ginninderra'.

Despite these engagements with the governmental heritage structures and provisions, overall these remain somewhat opaque to us. The formal association of heritage matters with ACT planning and development is unclear and confusing, but seems often to be to the disadvantage of the heritage cause.

Comments related to the Committee's Terms of Reference

The Committee will inquire and report on the ACT's heritage arrangements, with particular reference to:

1. the effectiveness and adequacy of the operations under the *Heritage Act 2004* including First Nations heritage, and approvals provided under the Act;

We are unable to comment usefully

2. the effectiveness of the structure, administration, and operation of the ACT Heritage Council, including the adequacy of governance arrangements between the ACT Heritage Council and ACT Heritage Unit;

Manifestly there have been serious issues in relation to the structure, administration, and operation of the ACT Heritage Council. These are gradually being brought to light.

3. the adequacy of resourcing for the ACT Heritage Unit;

As a committed actor in the heritage field we would naturally support allocation of increased resources to the Heritage Unit, and in particular an expansion of the Heritage Grants program. We recommend that the program be doubled in size to \$700,000 over the next four years.

4. the operation of heritage legislation in other Australian jurisdictions;

We are unable to comment usefully

5. how the ACT's heritage arrangements might be improved to guarantee the ACT Heritage Council achieves its statutory functions; and

We recommend that the position of the Chair of the Council be afforded higher status within the ACT Government

6. any other related matters with respect to the ACT's heritage arrangements.