



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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From: [Trevor Lipscombe](#)
To: [LA Committee - ECCB](#)
Subject: Submission: Inquiry into ACT's Heritage Arrangements
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1. Independence of ACT Heritage Council

It is imperative that the Heritage Council is an independent body whose decisions cannot be overruled by ACT Government officers or politicians. The ACT Heritage Council is styled as being an independent body, and it should remain as such.

2. Adequate resourcing of ACT Heritage Council

The huge backlog in processing heritage applications, resulting in long delays between nomination and listing decisions, needs to be addressed. The size of the backlog is in part a function of the available number of expert heritage assessors, but it is also of the complexity of the nominated site or precinct.

Increasing demand for heritage advice related to urban infill projects, greenfield development, and residential works has increased delays, and the urgency of these matters has meant that other nominations etc have experienced even more extended delays. Perhaps this means the machinery of the ACT Heritage Council needs two sections, with one focussed on timely assessment of commercial or public infrastructure development applications, and the other embracing matters not involving development applications and pressures. Time targets for addressing both categories need to be set, and adequate funding made available to ensure these targets can be met.

Further use of the many resources of expertise available locally, at no or minimal cost, could assist and speed the path of expert assessors. Perhaps if a virtual 'Centre of ACT Heritage Expertise' was established, heritage assessors could more quickly access relevant information to process applications and improve output. The ACT Heritage Library has a vital role in collecting stories and in preserving the ACT and region's heritage materials and documents. Perhaps it could become the nucleus of a 'Centre of ACT Heritage Expertise'?

3. Encouraging public interest and awareness

The Council is charged with 'encouraging public interest in, and awareness of, heritage places and objects in the ACT'. This is a key role but there is little evidence that this is happening. The Council has a low profile and makes very few appearances in local media. It is important that the general public are aware of its work and its importance.

The ACT Heritage Register website requires a complete overhaul to elevate it from a confusing list of heritage sites etc to a user friendly and promotional ACT Heritage Information Platform incorporating site plans and photographs, heritage videos and oral histories.

4. The perils of a reactive approach to heritage listing

The general approach when proposals for heritage listing are received appears to be reactive rather than proactive. There are many examples of places being listed that are part of a wider grouping, when it would be useful to consider listing all of that wider grouping for listing - often the whole is greater than the sum of the parts.


Examples are:

Green Hills Afforestation Area - this important entity in itself, the first site to be planted in Griffin's Inner Hill scheme, includes Glenloch Cork Oaks (ACT Heritage List), Himalayan Cedars (not listed), and Roman Cypress Hill (Commonwealth Heritage List). See 'The Green Hills: Griffin and Weston's Forgotten Arboreal Backdrop, Canberra Historical Journal, No. 90, March 2023, page 41.

Griffin's Coloured Hill Scheme - Red Hill Historic Plantings (ACT Heritage List) might have been considered in conjunction with the only other surviving realisation of this scheme, Mount Mugga Mugga (not listed). More broadly Griffin's Inner Hills Scheme envisaged 'The mountains retained in their natural state, as nearly as possible, as parks, are treated as the termini of the principal axes of as many important vistas as possible...'. The realisation of this vision by Griffin and Weston is arguably one of the greatest achievements in the realisation of the Griffin city design, but one that is not recognised by any heritage listing.

Submitted by:

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