

Saving Our Community's Heritage:

ACTION GUIDE



NSW Heritage Network - Linked to Protect

PART A:

ENCOURAGING THE PROTECTION OF YOUR COMMUNITY'S HERITAGE

As a citizen and resident, there are things you should know and can do to help establish a protective 'climate' for local heritage assets:

1. Your Local Council is the first line of protection for your local heritage.

Get to know your local Councillors. Attend Council meetings, if possible.

All Local Councils in NSW should have a Local Environment Plan (LEP) – and a schedule of the heritage items in the LEP should be available online at Council and the Heritage Office sites.

It is worth checking your Local Council's position and documentation regarding local heritage. Whilst they should be looking after your community's heritage - they may not be.

Write letters of support to Council praising, for example, good restoration work. Send a copy of your letter to the owner as well.

Encourage your Council to provide Heritage Grants.

Encourage your Council to set up a Heritage Committee if they don't have one.

2. Education is a powerful tool in protecting local heritage.

To begin, your own knowledge base is important and online resources through sites like *Trove* provide a wealth of information. Your research will help shape your arguments for protecting local heritage items. Knowing their story is very important in winning hearts and minds.

Examples of heritage buildings which have had adaptive re-use may help Councillors, developers and the local community to see heritage as a living asset, rather than a liability.

Explore other ways to further educate your community and Councillors, such as inviting decision-makers and interested community members to look at specific heritage properties and environmental sites.

Supporting *Heritage Week* activities in your community is a positive way of building community appreciation of local heritage.

Supporting your local Historical Society (if one exists) to develop local heritage walks and to record local history; this will also expand local knowledge and may contribute to a local "heritage economy".

Establishing a Heritage Group in your local area if there isn't already one operating, will increase the profile of local heritage.

Checking real estate sales for heritage property listings will mean you are aware of impending changes that may be positive, or detrimental for a heritage asset.

3. Knowledge of relevant Council staff is essential.

Get to know your Local History Librarian. Build a relationship with your Council's Heritage Advisor. Identify sympathetic Councillors and establish a positive working relationship. Encourage all Councillors to support the retention of heritage buildings.

4. Your community is your greatest strength and your greatest asset.

Know who the other pro-active people in respect of heritage are in your local community. They will probably form the basis of your group if you need to mobilise quickly for a campaign.

Your oral and social history must not be neglected. Many older people in our community have led fascinating lives and have great stories to tell about buildings, their homes or what they did when they were younger. Their recollections may support your preservation arguments.

Encouraging local businesses to maintain and promote their heritage properties, may help reinforce heritage landscapes in your area.

PART B:

IF YOUR HERITAGE IS UNDER THREAT

Campaign Strategies:

Forming a Group

A critical mass of like-minded people willing to unite behind the 'cause' is essential.

Having an identity as a group is also crucial. It provides a focus for the issue you are interested in and a rallying point for the cause.

A formal group with skills in areas such as law, engineering, graphic design, journalism and IT is an option. Alternatively, an informal group may be desirable, however be aware of issues such as insurance and liability. Formal groups have the option to incorporate, which provides important protective mechanisms.

Communication is essential. The frequency of meetings will be dictated by the urgency of the issue and email groups are an effective substitute in some situations.

Above all, once you become aware of an issue, move quickly. Heritage buildings have been known to be lost as a result of "mysterious events".

Building your Knowledge Base

Once you have identified an issue it is essential to know exactly who you are up against. Be

skeptical of what you are told by Government bureaucrats, politicians, developers or others with an 'interest' in the project you are objecting to.

Identify the level of heritage significance of the item under threat. Is it of Local, State, National or International significance? Be aware that in the 1980s, Councils recognised items as having regional significance. The Heritage Office no longer recognises this category.

Undertake additional research into the historical background of the heritage item you wish to protect - tap into the Local History Librarian at your Council, as well as many community members who may be historians. Detailed and accurate information is important in writing letters/ making representations.

Humanise the issues - work the social context into your key points.

Know the facts to counter misinformation. Have authoritative sources available to validate your facts.

State Government owned heritage items must be listed on their S170 Register. This means that State Government Departments are responsible for maintaining their heritage items in an adequate condition. Be aware that some Government Departments have failed to list all their items on the S170 Register.

It is important to note that if State Significant Development or Infrastructure is planned, State Heritage protections will be 'switched off' and will not apply.

Identify the specific planning processes and steps for assessment of the heritage matter as determined by Council (Local), Department of Planning and Infrastructure (State Government), and Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities (Federal Government).

Obtain all documentation relevant to the heritage dispute. For example there may be a Master Plan, which has not been released publicly. This Plan may provide vital information, which is being withheld from the community. Obtaining copies of such documents can significantly affect the outcome of your campaign.

You Need an Objective and a Plan

Before you start your campaign, frame your group's goal and make sure everyone is united to achieve that outcome.

Once a clear goal is signed up to by the group, you are ready to start planning your strategies, tactics and the tasks that will get to that goal.

Aim to maximise the number of people to join your campaign (remember campaigns can lose momentum). Ensure that your campaign has visibility with powerful media images, short videos, photographic displays, press releases, a web page, YouTube, Twitter, and Blogs. Maintain an updated Facebook page. Remember to be careful as to what you say or put in writing!

More specific actions may include:

- Vigorously lobbying Councillors and Members of State and Federal Parliament as appropriate.
- Letter writing, which remains a powerful tool, along with emails and other forms of social media.
- Requesting meetings to explain the reasons for your opposition to a project. Be prepared to negotiate on acceptable outcomes.
- Informing relevant people in existing heritage societies, resident action groups and Progress Associations within your community with a potential interest in the outcome; for example business groups, of the issues and arguments in favour of protecting and retaining the item under threat. Encourage them also to lobby, and be involved in letter writing to the appropriate government authorities.
- Consider joining a larger resident action network such as the *Better Planning Network*.
- Letter box drops in the local area may help to alert other residents.
- Petitions can provide a focus for activity and a rallying point for the community.
- Consider engaging a heritage architect/consultant to help counter the Council/Department/developer's Heritage Impact Statement. There are many heritage consultants/architects across Sydney who will complete a report for a fee. This investment may be required if the Council/Department/developer report has, for example, a pre-determined position that "the building/structure is recommended for demolition".

You Need a Communication Strategy

Get the local press on side – build up a good working relationship with them. Articles and Letters to the Editor help to gain publicity for your issue.

Seek wider press coverage if it is a State or Federal matter. In this case it may be worth contacting Urban Affairs journalists at Sydney Morning Herald, Daily Telegraph/The Australian. Contact radio networks as well as TV stations.

Be persistent and courteous – it is often difficult to get media coverage for heritage issues and generally it is the Editor's decision.

For events and important announcements, prepare a Media Release and forward it in electronic format. Phone the journalist to confirm receipt.

Letter writing remains a powerful tool and an indicator to politicians of the significance of an issue. Members of Parliament's contact details are available on the Federal and State Parliamentary websites. Local Councillors' details are on their Council website.

Spread the information in the community about the heritage dispute. Talk to neighbours and friends, and spread the issue by word of mouth. Copies of newspaper articles on a Notice Board in the workplace can be helpful.

Organise a protest rally outside the heritage property. Invite well known activists in the heritage field to attend and contact the Press. Barricades or sit-ins may attract media attention. Well-constructed banners and posters are essential.

Never forget the power of personal contacts – which may result in others including heritage specialists, planners and environmental lawyers wanting to be involved. It is also important to leverage any political contacts in Council or Parliament. Lobby these contacts personally.

Make sure you brief your local State/Federal Member of Parliament as early in the campaign as possible and keep them informed.

Have an "elevator speech" – a 2-minute grab to gain their attention. Not all local members will be supportive – you may have to develop strategies to work around

Leadership

Leader/s of heritage campaigns benefit from both political experience and plenty of time. Running a campaign is very time consuming.

The following skills and knowledge are highly desirable:

- heritage knowledge – including relevant legislation;
- knowledge of the political processes;
- ability and confidence in public speaking;
- ability to read a plan;
- ability to co-ordinate a group of local residents, often at short notice to work as a team;
- ability to liaise with the press and have press contacts;
- good people skills.

What do you do if all else fails?

If your campaign is unsuccessful, there are some steps worth taking before the group disbands.

Write to the organisation/Department/business outlining why they need to respect their heritage under their care and control in the future.

Point out that communities value their heritage and do not want to see their heritage needlessly destroyed. Custodians of our heritage need to be reminded of this.

Make sure you report outcomes to all stakeholders, including those following the issue.

Keep all your documentation in relation to the heritage fight.

A community event to pass on any photos/documents to the Local History Librarian for your Council area, may make some final contribution to the wider community debate regarding heritage and will be important for research in the future.

Contributing Authors:

Part A: Encouraging the Protection of Your Community's Heritage, by Anne Field and Peter Duggan.

Part B: If Your Heritage is Under Threat, by Anne Field and Peter Duggan.

Useful Links, compiled by June Bullivant OAM.

Image Sources:

1. Magazine article photograph, 1971. Beside one of the rock pools within Kelly's Bush, are Kath Lehany (Secretary of The Battlers for Kellys Bush) with Tigger, Betty James (President), Miriam Hamilton and Monica Sheehan. Not pictured, Christena Dawson (Treasurer); information provided by her daughter, Clr. Rosmairi Dawson (Ind - Lake Macquarie City Council), September 2013, <http://jamesryan.net.au/2013/09/15/at-kellys-bush-with-jack-mundey-and-two-of-the-original-13-battlers-for-kellys-bush/>
2. SMH article, 31 March 2012, *Newsmaker: Green Bans*, by David Humphries, <http://www.smh.com.au/environment/conservation/newsmaker-green-bans-20120330-1w372.html>
3. Event, 14 September 2013, "*Inspirational Past, Hazzardous Future: Kelly's Bush*", <http://davidshoebridge.org.au/2013/09/16/kellys-bush-inspirational-past-hazzardous-future/>

USEFUL LINKS:

Government

NSW Office of Environment and Heritage, Heritage Council of NSW:

www.environment.nsw.gov.au/Heritage/heritagecouncil/index.htm

- Local Government, all Councillors and General Manager;
- Local Council Heritage Advisory Committees;
- Circulate to all NSW Members of Parliament;
- Strategic people in Federal Government, Heritage, Environmental, 'Green-minded' groups.

Organisations

National Trust: www.nationaltrust.org.au

Historic Houses Trust of NSW: www.hht.net.au

Royal Australian Historical Society: www.rahs.org.au

Society of Australian Genealogists: www.sag.org.au

Community Networks

Cape Banks Family History Society Inc. (Database): www.capebanks.org.au/societies.html

Granville Historical Society: www.granvillehistorical.org.au

Print Media & Television

Australian Broadcasting Corporation Email: heritageproject@your.abc.net.au

The Daily Telegraph Email: yoursay@dailytelegraph.com.au

Environmental Defenders Office: www.edo.org.au/edonsw/site/default.php

NSW Ombudsman: www.ombo.nsw.gov.au

Publications

History: www.insidehistory.com.au

Family History: www.aftc.com.au

Heritage Advocate Groups

CAWB - Community Action for Windsor Bridge: CAWB, PO Box 241, Windsor NSW 2756

Email: cawb@live.com.au

Web: cawb.weebly.com

Facebook: www.facebook.com/pages/CAWB-Save-Windsor-from-the-RTA/221553417934703?fref=ts

Greater Western Sydney Heritage Action Group-Heritage Watch: PO Box 320, Granville NSW 2142

Email: junembullivantoam@gmail.com

Web: www.heritagewatchnsw.org.au

Facebook: www.facebook.com/pages/Greater-Western-Sydney-Heritage-Action-Group-Heritage-Watch/380565678690794?fref=ts

Inheritance Society Inc.: PO Box 431, Sans Souci NSW 2219

Email: inheritance@tpg.com.au

Web: inheritance.org.au

Online Petitions

change.org: www.change.org/start-a-petition

- Thompson Square, Windsor NSW: www.change.org/petitions/tony-burke-mp-save-australia-s-first-and-oldest-town-square-from-destruction
- Lennox Bridge, Parramatta NSW: www.change.org/petitions/nsw-state-government-save-the-1836-david-lennox-heritage-listed-bridge-parramatta

This publication is freely available to download from the following websites:

NSW Heritage Network Inc.:

Web: www.nswheritage.net

Anne Field:

Web: www.saveheritage.com.au

Greater Western Sydney Heritage Action Group:

Web: www.heritagewatchnsw.org.au

Inheritance Society Inc.:

Web: inheritance.org.au

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Facebook: www.facebook.com/GranvilleHistoricalSocietyIncNswAustralia



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