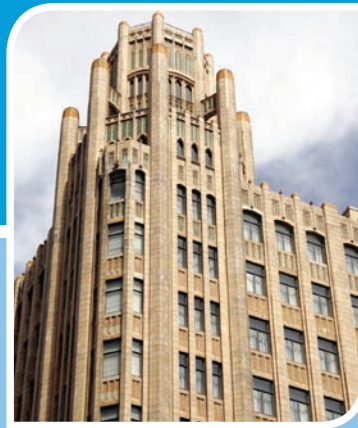


Improving Heritage Conservation

Giving Heritage An Advocate In Cabinet



IMPROVING HERITAGE CONSERVATION

It is vital that our natural, cultural and indigenous heritage is conserved for future generations.

Heritage items are today and tomorrow's links to our community's yesterday. Conserving them and experiencing them connects our community and future communities to our history – and we are culturally and educationally richer for it.

Heritage conservation in New South Wales is primarily determined through the provisions of the Heritage Act.

The cause of heritage conservation lacks an independent advocate within government.

Excessive red tape in decision-making impedes heritage conservation and frustrates the business/economic development of the State.

GIVING HERITAGE AN ADVOCATE IN CABINET

Conserving our heritage, whilst ensuring the growth of the NSW economy, will be a priority for the NSW Liberal/Nationals.

In NSW the Minister for Planning is also the minister responsible for the protection of heritage.

In 2007, the Heritage Office was relocated into the Department of Planning compounding the conflict of interest faced by the Planning Minister and adding to the perceived lack of independence surrounding heritage conservation in NSW.

With one exception, every other State and territory ensures heritage has an advocate at the Cabinet table by appointing someone other than the Minister for Planning as the minister responsible for heritage.

In most jurisdictions, including federally, heritage is located within the environment portfolio.

The NSW Liberal/Nationals will ensure that heritage conservation will be given a strong voice in government and strength through independence.

Proposal

A NSW Liberal/Nationals' Government will –

- appoint a Minister for Heritage and Minister for Environment and Climate Change; and
- relocate the Heritage Office out of the Department of Planning to the environment portfolio.

STRENGTHENING THE ROLE OF THE HERITAGE COUNCIL, IMPROVING TRANSPARENCY AND REMOVING RED TAPE

It is critical for the economy of NSW and for the preservation of heritage that decisions on proposed heritage conservation be made expeditiously.

Currently in NSW it can take years for the Minister for Planning to make decisions about whether items are to be included on the State's Heritage Register.

The Heritage Act requires that there be 15 members on the Heritage Council which can be unwieldy and lead to unnecessarily complex decision-making.

The Minister for Planning is empowered to make decisions about heritage listing after receiving recommendations from the Heritage Council.

Labor's Planning Ministers have made it a practice to refer Heritage Council recommendations to Ministerial Review Panels appointed personally by the Minister.

Ministerial Review Panel recommendations add an unnecessary level of red tape and can be used by the Minister to circumvent Heritage Council recommendations.

To improve heritage conservation outcomes and provide greater certainty to all stakeholders, the NSW Liberal/Nationals will improve the effectiveness of the Heritage Council, remove delays to heritage decisions, and provide transparency about heritage decision-making.

A NSW Liberal/Nationals' Government will –

- reduce the number of appointees to the Heritage Council to no more than 9 members (to be selected generally from each of the categories specified currently under Section 8 of the Heritage Act provided no more than one is selected from each category);
- abolish Ministerial Review Panels to ensure only the Heritage Council makes recommendations to the Minister for Heritage on proposed additions to the State's Heritage Register;
- introduce time lines for the heritage assessment process, including for the production of recommendations from the Heritage Council and decisions by the Minister for Heritage; and
- require the Minister for Heritage to publish reasons for his/her decisions about Heritage Council recommendations.
- ensure the Minister for Heritage makes public any recommendation from his/her department as to the heritage conservation priority of any item that may be subject to development proposals; and
- require the Minister for Planning to make public the reasons for his/her determination on planning approvals involving items subject to heritage conservation orders.