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The Hon Rob Valentine MLC
Chair, Legislative Council Inquiry
Legislative Council of Tasmania
Parliament House
HOBART TAS 7000

Dear Mr Valentine

RE: Legislative Council Inquiry into Historic Heritage Tourism

The Tasmanian Heritage Council is pleased to make this submission and have input into the Legislative Council's Inquiry into historic heritage tourism. It regards Tasmania's historic cultural heritage as a fundamental feature of our State and a critical element of our appeal to visitors. We would also like to note that Tasmania has a significant and noteworthy collection of Australia's pre-1830s convict and colonial historic heritage places, and it is important that this status is recognised.

Our responsibilities under the *Historic Cultural Heritage Act 1995* are 'to promote the identification, assessment, protection and conservation of (Tasmanian) places having historic cultural heritage significance'. This purpose, taken from the Act, reflects the value and benefit of historic heritage to Tasmania from a social, economic and environmental perspective, and in respect to this Inquiry is noteworthy in the contribution it makes to the tourism industry, as a core visitor appeal.

Tasmanian Heritage Council

The Tasmanian Heritage Council is appointed under, and responsible for implementing, the *Historic Cultural Heritage Act 1995*. In addition to establishing and maintaining the Tasmanian Heritage Register and considering works to places entered on the Heritage Register, it has a function of assisting the '*promotion of tourism in respect to places of historic cultural heritage significance*'.

We are a statutory body that consists of 15 members, drawn from areas of expertise directly related to the protection and management of historic cultural heritage significance along with the representatives of a number of community organisations and bodies with an interest in this field. The Tourism Industry Council of Tasmania is one key interest group represented at our meetings.

Our role includes recognising historic heritage places that reflect the first European explorer's connection with this land, prior to European settlement, through to the current day and more recent examples of contemporary heritage. While we do not have statutory responsibility for Aboriginal heritage, we do acknowledge the original owners of this land and their rich cultural heritage.

We have structured our submission in a way that provides the Inquiry with an overview of the two key statutory roles of the Heritage Council, as required by your terms of reference, and then highlight some key points that we would like to raise to be considered in your Inquiry's deliberations.

Tasmanian Heritage Register

- The Heritage Register was established in 1997. It contains over 5,500 places of historic cultural heritage significance to this State. While originally based on the sealed plans of the Cities of Hobart and Launceston, former National Trust register and the Register of the National Estate, more recently attention has been given to identifying and filling notable themes and gaps.
- In late 2014 a review of the entries contained in the Heritage Register commenced. It aims to enhance the integrity of the Heritage Register's entries, as an audit completed last year indicated that not all of the entries meet the registration criteria outlined in the Act. It is expected this process will reduce the number of entries it contains and focus it on the places that best represent Tasmania's most significant places. This process will give the Heritage Register greater credibility as our primary repository of information on places of historic heritage value and as a statutory tool used to identify and protect these places under the resource management and planning system.
- This and the recent development of an historic heritage layer in the Land Information System (Tasmania) will help us to make more information available online to the general public and visitors on these entries. We would hope that access to this type of information would assist visitors to more easily find information about places of interest and assist them to undertake their own research, which will overtime also help enhance the visitor experience on offer.

Development and Use

- A core role of the Heritage Council is to act as the State's statutory consent body to determine if heritage works proposed on a place entered on the Heritage Register will impact on the historic heritage values of the place. As part of this process we regularly receive development applications from heritage property owners, site managers, tourism operators and developers.
- The staff of Heritage Tasmania assist us in this task. As part of this work, considerable effort is placed on providing a prospective applicant with free pre-application and pre-development advice, and ensuring works guidelines are readily available that give prospective applicants guidance on how to minimise impacts, assist them to understand, work with and highlight a place's identified heritage values and assist them to navigate the development application process.
- This process benefits current and potential owners or operators to understand how historic heritage places can be developed in a way that best protects, utilises, interprets and presents them. It can also help facilitate development, assists the applicant achieve their desired outcomes and maximise the resultant heritage tourism or visitor experience that is being offered.

Areas of Interest

The Heritage Council has identified the following areas as matters that it would like to draw to the attention of the Inquiry and welcome the opportunity to discuss them in more detail.

- There appears little doubt that Tasmania's historic heritage contributes to our State's visitor appeal and the economy. While some sites like the Port Arthur Historic Sites, have done some work to quantify its value, we feel that there would be considerable benefit in having the tourism industry work with interested partners to quantify its benefit in dollar terms.
- Regretfully, tight economic times have meant that the Heritage Council has needed to cease its Heritage Conservation Funding Program. This means the owners of places on the Heritage Register are no longer able to access financial support or conservations grants from us, and there are few other options available to them. It is hoped that as the economy improves that there will be opportunities to explore how grants and other incentives might be delivered in the future.
- Where a group can demonstrate that there is a community benefit arising from a heritage project they can seek grants or support from their local planning authority or the Tasmanian Community Fund. Places of significance may be able to access State Government funding and places on the National Heritage List, potentially eligible to be entered on the NHL or inscribed on the World Heritage List may also apply for Commonwealth funding. Regional and tourism development funding can be of considerable assistance. However, these funding sources are not always part of regular or predictable programs and the level of co-contribution expected can be prohibitive.
- The Heritage Council recognises the importance of incentives to help realise the potential of our heritage to be developed and used, to help refresh existing, or introduce new, product. We also recognise that incentives not only assist with urgent conservation works or catch-up maintenance, but can help to facilitate adaptive reuse, provide for interpretation and greatly enhance the visitor experience on offer. We have an interest in doing some work to investigate the need for and the types of incentives that property owners, site managers and developers would benefit from in the future. At present our only incentive remains the provision of free conservation advice.
- The Heritage Council believes that the importance and value of Tasmania's urban and rural historic precincts and cultural landscapes cannot be overstated as a key asset and appeal for visitors. The importance of heritage precincts like Battery Point, Cataract Gorge, Cygnet, Evandale, Latrobe, Oatlands and Stanley; the industrial Hydro landscape of the West Coast; the cultural landscape of Bushy Park; and the evocative landscapes of the rural villages, churches and historic views across the Midlands. These are important destinations in their own right and a base for visitors to stay, enjoy local hospitality and experience what's on offer.

- The Heritage Council believes that much more can and should be done to recognise, protect, present, interpret and manage Tasmania's heritage precincts, so that their importance and value is acknowledged, their uniqueness protected and they are able to continue to be appreciated and enjoyed by this and future generations. The Heritage Council welcomes the opportunity to contribute to this work as part of the proposed development of a single historic heritage code for local planning schemes by the Planning Reform Taskforce.
- The Heritage Council is keen to encourage the development of strategies and plans that help to pull work in this area together. The work being undertaken by some of the regional tourism bodies, for instance, on identifying key gaps in the market and finding ways to help tourism operators to refresh existing product and introduce new experiences will continue to be important.
- Where possible, greater collaboration between key stakeholders is to be encouraged, given the strong linkages that have been developed amongst natural heritage providers. While the Heritage Council is not able to lead such effort, it is keen to help support work proposed in this area, as it would help pull together a rather fragmented group of isolated operators and bodies. For limited effort, the benefits of creating such a network to showcase exemplars, share insights, plan and foster collaboration and foster supportive partnerships could be invaluable.
- The success of having five Tasmanian sites included in the *Australian Convict Sites World Heritage Property* cannot be under estimated. This status has the capacity to draw visitors to Tasmania, as a small and unique island state that is part of a much wider story of the forced migration of people. It appears that more could be done to maximise the benefits of this inscription. The effort of the Tasmanian site managers and the other Australian sites is commendable, but this needs to be supported and encouraged, to ensure that the investment in these sites benefits them and will generate a spin-off benefit to Tasmania's other convict and heritage sites and the State as a whole. It is hoped that the appointment of an Executive Officer, funded by the Commonwealth and based at Port Arthur, will assist these sites to better realise their potential in this regards.

Conclusion

Tasmania's historic heritage is an important and unique feature of our State, it distinguishes our local communities from one another and gives our State its character and visitor appeal. It is important the Heritage Council continue to help promote its value, and support its continued development and use.

There is great capacity for Tasmania to engage with, embrace and draw upon our heritage to enhance the visitor experience in new, dynamic and appealing ways. It is hoped the ready availability of material objects, historic records, diverse collection of heritage places and precincts and the stories they embody can continue to be drawn on and used to maximise this experience and appeal.

While the Heritage Council would welcome the opportunity to do more, the level of resources available are limited and out of necessity focus on our key statutory roles. It is hoped that the Inquiry's deliberations and the discussions it triggers will help us to identify the key areas where the Heritage Council might best focus its efforts in the future and help us engage more in this important work.

The Heritage Council is keen to encourage innovation and we are proud that we have a role in helping to facilitate the development and use of our historic heritage and contribute to its identification, assessment protection and conservation. Please contact me if you have any questions that arise from our submission to your Inquiry on 0418 358 868 or at Chair@heritage.tas.gov.au.

Thank you for initiating this Inquiry and for considering the Heritage Council's input.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'B. Torossi', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Brett Torossi
Chair

2 March 2015

cc Matthew Groom MP,
 Minister for Environment, Parks and Heritage

 Mr Kim Evans,
 Secretary, Department of State Growth

 Mr John Whittington,
 Secretary, Department of Primary Industries, Parks Water and Environment