

**REPRESENTATION TO THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL SUB- COMMITTEE ON  
THE MANAGEMENT, PRESERVATION, TOURIST MARKETING AND  
PROMOTION OF BUILT HERITAGE ASSETS IN TASMANIA**

1. Built heritage is of extreme importance to Tasmania. Because of its slow development and missing the boom periods of the 1970s and 90s, Tasmania has a large collection of heritage buildings that survived those booms and the attitude of the time that if it was old it should be pulled down and replaced by something new.

This heritage is not only of Georgian architecture. It includes some wonderful examples of Gothic, Victorian and Edwardian architecture in city buildings, of Queen Anne and bungalow houses and Art deco. It not only includes houses, but office buildings, warehouses, mills and barns.

2. Tasmania is unique in the large percentage of such buildings which have survived to modern times, but it also is a disadvantage because a disproportionate percentage of these buildings are in the state with the least financial resources to devote to their preservation. Yet the existence of these buildings is a wonderful asset and the olde world ambience that they contribute to is a major part of the charm that attracts tourists to our state.

It is claimed that the main points of difference between Tasmania and other states is good food, fine wines and our heritage. Really, though, every other state can make a claim for fine food and fine wines. You don't have to come to Tasmania to experience that. But with heritage it is different. Tasmania is the only state that provides a large collection of these buildings. They create the atmosphere that is Tasmania and which visitors love. That is why their preservation is important.

3. One problem for many of our heritage buildings is that they often occupy desirable sites in the inner parts of our cities and towns where there are high land values and competition from those who desire land to make new developments. Most Tasmanian councils are small in size and are strapped for funds. Many times they have the choice between preserving an old building that is providing little in the way of rates or employment in the town, or a new development that will vastly increase the rate yield from the property and employ many people. Not many councils can afford to take the alternative of preserving the old building. Probably only in the cities of Hobart and Launceston can a municipal council afford to opt for the preservation of the old building when faced with such a choice.

4. This dilemma will increase in future years as the Tasmanian Heritage Council divests itself of buildings on the Tasmanian Heritage Register. One can understand the THC's desire to reduce the number of buildings it is responsible for, but this divestment sets at risk many quality buildings. Originally it was proposed to have a three tier hierarchy of heritage buildings based on national, state and local heritage registration. There are provisions for the protection of buildings at the national and state level, but at the local level the protection is very limited. Almost all councils provide protection only for those on the state heritage register and have no provision whatsoever for the protection of other buildings of local importance. Most councils do not have the will, funds or expertise to develop their own local heritage register. When buildings are ejected from the state heritage register the developers will have a field day, and we will see the destruction of many fine buildings in our smaller

towns and suburbs. There will be no planning control to prevent this. There is a necessity to implement local heritage registers in each municipality, so that some protection is provided for buildings of local heritage importance. This needs to happen before those buildings not considered by the THC as being of state significance are removed from the Tasmanian Heritage Register. Councils also need professional assistance in establishing these registers. And something will be needed to overcome the attitude of those on municipal councils who see heritage buildings as financial millstones and barriers to progress and economic development.

5. Property owners cannot in the long run be compelled to preserve heritage buildings if they do not want to. One only needs to see the example in Launceston of the buildings next to the Hub Café Bar in the Esplanade, or the old CH Smith Building, to see the futility of such an approach. Owners of heritage buildings are faced with huge problems. They need to sacrifice comfort, spare income and leisure to live in such buildings or earn a living from them. Maintenance costs on these buildings are huge and there is a lack of the specialised tradesmen to help maintain them. What is needed at all levels of government is encouragement and help.

6. An example of such help is with the Southern Midlands Council. Here the appointment of a part-time Heritage Officer, the development of a heritage plan, the celebration of the old buildings in the town, the restoration of the Carrington Mill and the holding of workshops to educate and help the owners of old buildings to restore them sympathetically, has turned the economy of Oatlands around, and made it a much more pleasant village to visit.

It should be possible for support and encouragement to be given by all municipal councils through a sharing of resources. This could be given in the same way that the Government Arts program has roving curators to help small museums with their collections. Similarly, an expansion of Heritage Month to ensure all councils celebrated their built heritage would increase public awareness of the importance of our built heritage.

7. Heritage buildings play a very important role in attracting tourists to Tasmania. Not only are they passive attractions as backdrops to the scenery, but they contribute to the tourist economy through their use as accommodation, restaurants, museums and information centres. Most of the businesses operating in heritage buildings are small scale, often on small budgets, relying on volunteers to survive. Yet the role of small-scale attractions as a whole is often underestimated. Chris Tassell a few years ago surveyed the heritage-based businesses of the north-east of Tasmania, and found that together they contributed more to the Tasmanian economy than Port Arthur. His contribution to the deliberations of your committee would be valuable.

8. Heritage-based tourism does not get the understanding and support from Tourism Tasmania that it should. There is a lack of appreciation of the fact that a large number of visitors love our heritage buildings and the way our history has been preserved. Most of the support for heritage from Heritage Tasmania is restricted to a few sites illustrating our convict history. While this is important, this emphasis is to the detriment of other themes in Tasmanian history that give a more positive view of Tasmania's past and illustrate the important role Tasmania played on the development of Australia. There is also far too much emphasis on the "trail" that links Hobart, Strahan, Stanley, Launceston, St Helens and Port Arthur.

9. One of the problems facing small-scale heritage attractions is the cost of advertising. Small operators find it difficult to pay the costs of regularly advertising in the tourist magazines and placing their brochures in information centres. The magazines and tourist guides increasingly promote only those facilities that advertise in them. No longer do they have comprehensive information on all the tourist venues in a locality. Not only do such guides and magazines become increasingly useless for visitors as indicators of the tourist attractions in an area, but they especially make it hard for visitors to know what heritage attractions are available.

The Government and municipal councils can help overcome this problem. Tourist Tasmania can offer access to advertising in their booklets by offering small heritage operators advertising at concession rates that their budgets can afford, and by making sure the tourist attractions in an area are included in the editorial content, whether they have advertisements or not. Councils can also assist by co-ordinating advertising of their tourist attractions in the municipality and getting operators to contribute to the cost of joint advertisements. Several operators joining together for a joint advertisement can be beneficial in revealing a density of attractions in a given area as well as being an affordable way for individual operators to get their attraction known.

10. Genealogy is one of the fastest growing and addictive pastimes, made even more so in recent times by programs such as "Who do you think you are?" and a large proportion of visitors to this state come here to trace their family history. Due to its early place in Australia's history, Tasmania is very often the starting point for family historians.

Almost every town has a group of volunteers who research, collect and preserve the history of their area and share it with others. Many operate tourist facilities, often from historic buildings, where they meet and provide facilities for visitors as well as interested locals to learn more about the place and its people.

The George Town & District Historical Society Inc has over 70 financial members and since 2004 has assisted the local Council by operating a community and family history room in the historic George Town Watch House seven days a week. Every week we have visitors whose main reason for visiting is to trace their family history. This not only involves finding out the facts about the family, but they are keen to walk where their ancestors walked, know how they lived, visit the places where they lived and see the buildings they would have inhabited - as homes, working places, recreational places, etc.

In the George Town area that could be a home, one of the old hotels, cable houses or semaphore station, the Low Head lighthouse or pilot station, or maybe the old mining town of Lefroy. They are also interested in visiting the cemeteries to see the last resting place of an ancestor or family member. If they are able to enter or even stay in some of these places, the experience is even further enhanced. When visitors stay in a town, they contribute more to the economy and any positive experience is bound to attract more visitors when that experience is shared with others. Regular surveys of visitors to the Pilot Station Museum show the majority of our visitors come because of 'word of mouth', not because of advertising, in fact inaccuracies in some of the advertising are an ongoing concern.

These experiences happen all over Tasmania and it is important that governments recognise this growing part of the tourism market and provide funds to support and encourage those (mostly volunteers) who are providing this valuable experience and service for visitors.

This quote from Dr Snowden's report for the Australian Federation of Historical Societies backs this up and the whole report is worth reading:

Two resources which emphasise the value of cultural / historic heritage tourism are Dr Dianne Snowden's [Heritage tourism in Australia : a guide for historical societies / Dianne Snowden](#) Snowden, Dianne [ Archived website : 2008 ] See excerpt below:

**What is heritage tourism?**

Heritage tourism, sometimes called cultural tourism, is now a major industry.

The Australian Heritage Commission has defined heritage tourism as 'activities and services which provide visitors with the opportunity to experience, understand and enjoy the special values of an area's natural, indigenous and cultural heritage'. (Australian Heritage Commission 2001).

Heritage tourism involves travelling to experience authentic representations of stories and people. It emphasises experience.

Another report from Western Australia shows how that state has embraced Heritage Tourism despite its relatively sparse built heritage in comparison with Tasmania.

**A Heritage Tourism Strategy for Western Australia**

<http://stateheritage.wa.gov.au/docs/heritage-tourism/heritage-tourism-strategy.pdf?sfvrsn=6>

Recognition by the Heritage Council that tourism could have positive impacts on heritage conservation and understanding emerged in 2001, paralleling developments elsewhere in Australia. The creation and implementation of a Heritage Tourism Strategy is consequently a joint initiative of HCWA and Tourism Western Australia (Tourism WA) and is supported by an officer employed by the Heritage Council.

Even [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Heritage\\_tourism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Heritage_tourism) reinforces the benefits of heritage tourism and importance of "experience".

Heritage tourism involves visiting historical or industrial sites that may include old canals, railways, battlegrounds, etc. The overall purpose is to gain an appreciation of the past. It also refers to the marketing of a location to members of a diaspora who have distant family roots there.

Peter Cox, Lorraine Wootton,

on behalf of the George Town and District Historical Society.