



National Trust of Australia (Tasmania)  
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## National Trust of Australia (Tasmania)

**Submission to the Joint Standing Committee on Public Works**

Midland Highway Safety Upgrades – St Peters Pass to South of Tunbridge



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Chair, Joan Rylah MP  
Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works

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Dear Madam,

In response to the advertised application (Heritage) to widen the Midlands Highway at St Peter's Pass, The National Trust of Australia (Tasmania) wishes to make the following comments / recommendations;

This section of the Midlands Highway contains the most important elements of the Midlands Highway in its original form, known to Tasmanians throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, from 1817.

It embodies the atmosphere, plantings, curving of the road, proximity of Inns, watering places for travellers and the traditional half way point of the road from Hobart to Launceston. This was opened up c. 1817, followed soon after by the first Inn at the half way area of Antill Ponds in 1820, the building of the extant Woodbury House from 1823 – 1828, thence the extant Kenmore Arms at St Peter's Pass (1829).

The 1.6km length of highway from St Peter's Pass (Kenmore Arms), thence the area to the front of Woodbury House at Woodbury is a treasure of Tasmania and of National Significance.

We would ask in the strongest possible terms that this be retained.

The flowering hawthorn hedges leading to, surrounding and beyond the *Kenmore Arms* at St Peter's Pass has for generations charmed Tasmanians, visitors and travellers with its stone walls, fountain, elms and hawthorn. This tunnel like approach and seasonal change is seminal to an understanding of Colonial, 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century Tasmania.

With its high flowering hawthorn hedges, clipped Hawthorn in the form of animals (from at least the late 19<sup>th</sup> century) and Soldiers Memorial Plantings of Poplars this is the most beautiful remaining section of highway. The clipping of hedging into animal forms was suggested first by Roman garden writer Pliny the Younger in the first century AD. His writings were influential to early 19<sup>th</sup> century educated settlers.

These unique plantings and clipped forms must be retained as visual proof of the education of settlers and plantsmen, as well as adding to the pleasure of the Highway. This section of road thence continues to the half way point of *Woodbury House*.

P. Frazer-Simons was commissioned by the Australian Heritage Commission to identify listings for National Estate significant gardens and landscapes in Tasmania. These were published in *Historic Tasmanian Gardens* published 1987. Woodbury House is researched and described on page 190.

We would please request that the curtilage of Woodbury House, its poplars, elms and 1828 flowering hawthorn hedge be retained. Woodbury House is a rare example of the first generation of permanent farmhouse in the midlands in the early 1820s. Woodbury Farm was granted as a 2000 acre grant to free settler Robert Harrison, with building works commencing in 1823, completed by 1828.

A print of Woodbury House, published in 1828 shows the house as today, with the hawthorn hedges to the present locations. These would have been planted in 1823 to be mature by 1828.

This evidence makes the setting of Woodbury House amongst the earliest documented examples of Colonial hedging to survive in Australia. Woodbury House *will* be adversely affected and its heritage values *permanently* diminished if the proposed removal of plantings and further moving of the Midlands Highway closer to its boundary is allowed to proceed.

Woodbury House is extraordinarily complete and rare, with its 1828 shearing shed, barracks, stables in this prominent location. The landscape has not been altered. The row of silver poplars and elms were planted in memory of it's builder, Robert Harrison.

The National Trust asks in the strongest possible terms, that these elements be retained. It would recommend a dual carriage way, with safety wires between as has been carried out elsewhere to good effect recently on the Midlands Highway improvements

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Matthew Smithies". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Matthew Smithies  
Managing Director  
National Trust of Australia (Tasmania)