



**Minister for Local Government; Heritage;
Citizenship and Multicultural Interests**

Your ref: Petition 148
Our ref: 38-12271

Hon Brian Ellis MLC
Chair
Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs
Parliament House
PERTH WA 6000

Dear Mr Ellis,

Petition No. 148 – Perth Waterfront Project

I refer to your letter of 13 April 2012 requesting my comments on the terms of the petition and points raised from the principal petitioners which are within my portfolio.

In relation to my Heritage portfolio, I note the points raised in the petitions are:

- Document No 4628 - *the plan destroys the heritage listed and culturally important Esplanade Reserve, much of which will be sold off.*
- Document No 4629 – *the plan does not recognise the cultural heritage values of the important Esplanade Reserve, much of which will be sold off.*

The cultural heritage significance of the *Esplanade Reserve* has been recognised by its entry the State Register of Heritage Places under the *Heritage of Western Act 1990* (the Heritage Act) in 2002. The Register Entry document notes that the place has cultural heritage significance for the following reasons:

- the place has considerable historic value as part of major reclamation work commenced in the 1880s along the Swan River foreshore to create a network of public open spaces and river amenities aimed at integrating the city environment with the river;
- the place has very high historic value as the site of the Perth city Anzac Day parade and service since 1916, and the nearby Sir Talbot Hobbs Memorial has been the saluting base for these services since 1940;
- the place has very high historic value as the site of the proclamation of self-government for the State in 1890, and is the site of the Allan Green Conservatory which commemorates the State's 150th anniversary of foundation;
- the Perth Exhibition was held at *Esplanade Reserve* in 1881;

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- the place is important historically as a traditional rallying point for public protest marches;
- the place provides a contrasting setting for the backdrop of the city environment and with the adjacent open spaces, stretching between the Narrows Interchange and the Causeway, collectively defines the southern edge of the city;
- the place is very highly valued for continuing social and cultural associations, as a venue for sporting activities, special events, performance and memorial services, as well as for its function as a public forum;
- the place is a broad expanse of public open space, enclosed by some mature plantings which frame the view of the place. The Moreton Bay figs (*Ficus macrophylla*) on Barrack and William streets are of particular importance as they represent early avenue plantings;
- by virtue of the names of various structures located within the place and nearby, it is associated with Alf Curlewis, Allan Green, Sir J.J. Talbot Hobbs, and Florence Hummerston;
- the place contributes significantly to the Perth community's sense of place, as it links the river with the city centre; and,
- the aesthetically pleasing kiosk has been situated on the site since 1928, and is of significance to various sections of the community.

The Heritage Council of Western Australia (the Heritage Council) is responsible for establishing and maintaining the State Register of Heritage Places. It also provides statutory advice to decision-making authorities on development proposals that may affect the cultural heritage significance of a registered place.

Recognising this statutory role, the Department of Planning has actively engaged with the Heritage Council throughout the development of the plans for the Perth Waterfront Project. This engagement has included:

- The Heritage Council Chair representing the Heritage Council on the Western Australian Planning Commission's Central Perth Planning Committee.
- The State Heritage Office representing the Heritage Council on the Department of Planning's Perth Waterfront Project Work Group.
- Seeking the Heritage Council's advice on:
 - the development of a Heritage Management Strategy for the Perth Waterfront.
 - the proposed landscape design and interpretation elements to be included in the public realm.

Consistent with the requirements of Section 11 of the Heritage Act, the Department of Planning has also sought the Heritage Council's statutory advice through the formal submission of development proposals on behalf of the decision-making authority, which in this case is the Western Australian Planning Commission.

The character and composition of *Esplanade Reserve* is known to many Western Australians, however, there are numerous stories that contribute to its rich cultural heritage which cannot be read in its current form and presentation. I understand a key principle of the Perth Waterfront Project is to re-connect with, reveal and encourage engagement with the many fascinating stories associated with this place, which has changed and evolved its form and use over time. Key storylines that convey to various audiences an understanding of the place's significance will be communicated through an integrated interpretive system in the public realm including:

- Aboriginal occupation
- River use
- Land reclamation
- Recreation
- Public events and forum
- Memorials and historic associations

Visitors and users of the public realm will engage with the many sub-themes associated with these storylines through provocative and incidental interpretive elements and detailed interpretation at key nodes throughout the site. Later collateral interpretation may include visitor guides and maps, and the use of smartphone technology to deliver a rich variety and depth of cultural heritage information.

The Department of Planning has advised the Heritage Council that the delivery of the interpretation plan is funded, and will be included in the contracts for construction of the public realm. The Department is currently completing the detailed interpretation plan, and this will be formally submitted to the Heritage Council for advice as part of the development approvals process for the Project.

Whilst much of the *Esplanade Reserve* will be affected by the Perth Waterfront Project, the *Reserve* will remain in the State Register of Heritage Places. This recognises that the cultural significance of the place is not limited to the extant fabric that has changed over time, and ensures the stories associated with this important place are not lost to future generations.

This will also maintain a statutory framework for development that gives consideration to cultural heritage values under the advice of the Heritage Council. Design guidelines to be developed by the Department of Planning in liaison with the Heritage Council for both the public realm and the proposed private lots will address the cultural heritage significance of the place, and how this should be expressed in these areas. Purchasers of the private lots will be required to enter into a Heritage Agreement with the Heritage Council, which legally binds them and any subsequent owner to ensuring appropriate interpretation consistent with the guidelines is included in any development and maintained into the future.

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There are, of course, many views on the Perth Waterfront Project's effect on the cultural heritage significance of the *Esplanade Reserve* and how this should be managed. However, the cultural heritage significance of the place and how this can be transmitted through the development to ensure current and future generations can understand and appreciate its importance to the history of Perth, has indeed been a key consideration in planning for and delivering this transformational project, which will add a new layer of history to the Perth waterfront.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John Castrilli'.

G M (John) Castrilli MLA

**MINISTER FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT; HERITAGE;
CITIZENSHIP AND MULTICULTURAL INTERESTS**

24 APR 2012

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