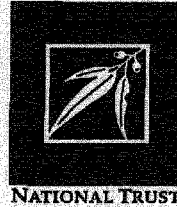


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**The National Trust
of Australia (New South Wales)**



SUBMISSION NO. 50

31st October, 2003

The Committee Secretary
Standing Committee on Environment and Heritage
House of Representatives
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600
AUSTRALIA

Secretary: *John Sam***RECEIVED**

31 OCT 2003

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
STANDING COMMITTEE ON
Sustainable Cities 2025 Inquiry

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Dear Sir / Madam,

The National Trust of Australia (NSW) is pleased to provide the following comments to the Sustainable Cities 2025 Inquiry.

Since its formation in 1945 the National Trust has advocated and campaigned for the conservation of Australia's built, cultural and natural heritage. In the mid 1970s the Trust was the first body to commence programs for the regeneration of urban bushland through weed control and encouragement of natural ecosystem recovery on a contract basis.

This program has grown over the years and, particularly within the Sydney Region, has proven that natural ecosystems can be conserved and maintained to enhance and diversify urban environments despite the huge development pressures.

Even on a worldwide basis there would be few such initiatives for the long term conservation of natural ecosystems within highly urbanised environments that have proven so successful and which could serve as models for the sustainability of cities into the future.

The conservation of our historic built environment as long promoted by the National Trust also provides useful examples of effective sustainability in the urban context. There is general preference by developers for the euphemistically termed "green field" sites and for new construction rather than the adaptive reuse of existing buildings and structures. In seeking to conserve significant buildings, their history, their gardens and settings the Trust is essentially promoting the concepts of reuse, conservation and sustainability.

Despite the developer preference for starting afresh rather than adaptation there have been notable examples where the sensitive conservation, reuse and adaptation of existing building fabric has resulted in cost savings and higher property resale values. There are demonstrable financial benefits in adopting this approach.

Sydney, in particular, has been a voracious user of sand and aggregate for new development over the past twenty five years. This has led to the loss of most of the historic Kurnell sand dunes and one of the earliest colonial landscapes in western Sydney. A new proposal has now been put forward to extract sand at Newnes Junction directly adjoining the Blue Mountains World Heritage Area.

The National Trust is a not-for-profit, non-government, community-based organisation working to conserve our built, natural and cultural heritage.

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There needs to be much greater emphasis on the reuse, recycling and adaptation of building stock to cut this demand. Additionally new techniques for the recycling of demolition materials themselves needs to be addressed and promoted.

If this situation is not corrected then our expanding urban centres will continue to "feed upon" their surrounding natural landscapes. These cities will, in effect, be unsustainable. Their distinctive natural environments and landscapes that provide each urban area with a separate character will be destroyed.

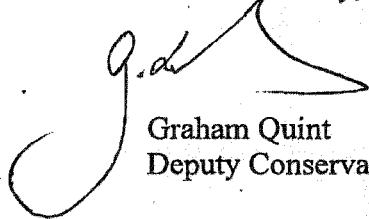
If our cities are to be sustainable then we need to maintain transport facilities particularly railway infrastructure, industrial facilities such as ports and agricultural land. Farming land, railways and ports have historic, industrial archaeological and landscape values. Too often there is little government control or enthusiasm for funding or maintaining such infrastructure. Residential and commercial development is often allowed to sterilise land and sites which should be maintained for food production, transport and industrial use.

New residents then campaign against the traditional historic uses as not appropriate within or adjoining a residential area. While there is now increasing public awareness of the value and importance of retaining historic and architecturally significant residences there is little understanding and appreciation of industrial facilities and processes.

We can appreciate the work of a blacksmith and the beauty and fascination of a steam railway engine but that appreciation and understanding does not generally extend to other equipment such as early electrical power generators or twentieth century manufacturing or primary production industries.

Truly sustainable cities are built up over many generations respecting and conserving their past, both the good and the bad. Over-development and constant makeovers (renovation and modernisation) destroy the soul of our cities, their long term memory, sense of place and uniqueness in the world - all components of the Australian heritage which the National Trust seeks to conserve.

Yours faithfully,



Graham Quint
Deputy Conservation Director