

SUBMISSION 23



ACT Heritage Council

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Mr Quinton Clements  
Secretary  
Joint Standing Committee on the National Capital  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Mr Clements

### Review of NCA

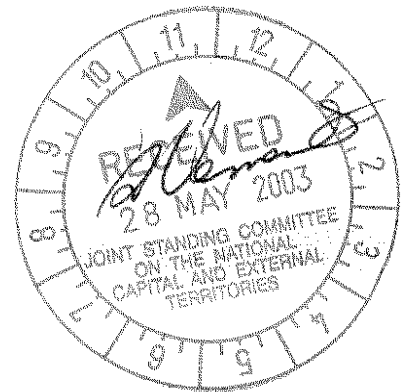
Please find attached a submission from the ACT Heritage Council to the Committee's inquiry into the NCA.

I would be happy to provide further information if required.

Yours sincerely

Dr Sandy Blair  
Secretary  
ACT HERITAGE COUNCIL

23 May, 2002



## Joint Standing Committee on the National Capital and External Territories – Inquiry into the National Capital Authority

### SUBMISSION BY ACT HERITAGE COUNCIL

- The ACT Heritage Council has a good working relationship with the National Capital Authority with regards to heritage issues in the ACT.
- The ACT Heritage Council welcomes the NCA's recent moves to prepare conservation plans for heritage places under its control, such as the High Court and National Library Precinct, and encourages the adoption of best practice in this field. While the Heritage Council has no jurisdiction on National Land, areas such as the Parliamentary Zone contain many heritage buildings and sites that are of great importance to the Canberra community, and are an intrinsic part of the ACT's cultural heritage.
- The ACT Heritage Council does, however, contend that the NCA should take a more proactive role in identifying and integrating heritage values into its planning processes. In its preparation of Development Control Plans (DCPs) the NCA relies on existing heritage registers, such as the Register of the National Estate (RNE), ACT Heritage Register, and National Trust Register, as the basis for identifying places with heritage value. While the reference to these registers is strongly supported, it needs to be recognised that they are not based on a comprehensive survey of the heritage values of the areas concerned. In the case of the RNE, it has also to be recognised that the Australian Heritage Commission has taken an administrative decision to limit its heritage listings to Commonwealth owned land, leaving designated land in a limbo as regards heritage responsibility.

As currently prepared, DCPs can ignore either individual places of heritage value that are not already registered, or area-wide heritage characteristics worthy of protection in the planning process. An example is the specification of uniform minimum building height limits along the main avenues, regardless of the actual lower building heights of the existing residential and commercial development that may have potential heritage importance. This is a directive to developers to demolish existing buildings.

The Heritage Council contends that best-practice standards should be applied to the planning of Canberra, and that the NCA should include the preparation of a 'heritage overlay' as one element of its DCP development. This would entail an historical review of the area of any DCP, be it a suburb, avenue or other land area, followed by an assessment of the heritage values of the buildings, landscape and urban design characteristics of the area. In order to provide an adequate context for such an assessment, it may be necessary to extend the study beyond the area that is actually administered by the NCA (for example to include a whole suburb, rather than just the national or designated land components, or the curtilage around a site or building of heritage importance).

While heritage registers would form one valuable source of information for the development of a heritage overlay, it would be necessary to carry out an independent review of all potential heritage values within the subject area.



The heritage overlay would then be a basis for the DCP that becomes the guiding document in subsequent ACT planning processes on designated land.

- The Heritage Council recognises that it has no jurisdiction over National Land and Designated Areas. However, the Heritage Council provides a key information source for ACT residents and visitors about heritage places, and the absence of listings of heritage places of major importance, because they are in the National or Designated category, makes little sense to the community. The Heritage Council would like to have NCA support for the gradual assessment and listing of places in National Land and Designated Areas, even though these places will not trigger ACT planning processes. The one-stop shop approach for heritage place information in the ACT seems logical and achievable. The implications for this process in terms of the Territory Plan have yet to be worked through in the context of the current review of legislation in the Territory.