

Double Bay Residents' Association

Protecting Sydney's Stylish Bayside Village

Late Correspondence re. Item No: 12.4 Subject: DELIVERY PROGRAM 2018 - 2022 & OPERATIONAL PLAN 2020/21 PROGRESS REPORT JANUARY - JUNE 2021

Double Bay Residents' Association, 23 August 2021

We were pleased to read about the progress that is being made to save the heritage of our municipality in the Council's *Delivery Program 2018 - 2022 & Operational Plan 2020/21 Progress Report*.

The importance of accelerating these good efforts, however, has recently been highlighted by the loss of significant heritage items like 46 Vaucluse Road Vaucluse and the lodgement of a DA to demolish a listed "character building" - the Victorian Terrace at 14 Bay Street. (photo below). The recent approval of a DA for 19-27 Cross Street, Double Bay also illustrates how planning controls need to be strengthened to protect the urban interface between Heritage Conservation Areas (HCAs) and surrounding development.

19-27 CROSS STREET, DOUBLE BAY - MIXED USE DEVELOPMENT

DEVELOPMENT APPLICATION
JUNE 2021 - DA MODIFICATIONS



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The Double Bay Residents Association recently made a submission to the Upper House Inquiry into the review of the Heritage Act 1977. Below is a summary of our most important recommendations:

- Lobby the state government for more resources to allow councils to employ more heritage officers. Too much reliance on reports provided by heritage consultants is risky because their level of expertise is unvetted and typically they work for two masters: developers and the council. This situation carries a potential conflict of interest risk.
- Make heritage audits a prerequisite for the development of new strategic planning proposals, especially if councils are planning to upzone areas for more density.
- Designate more HCAs to protect the heritage and character of the local area. In our municipality, this umbrella approach has proved effective because it manages owners' expectations about what they can or cannot do with their property. It's also less taxing on council resources because time does not have to be spent individually assessing every building in the area for a separate heritage listing. Overall, HCAs ensure that the look and feel of an area are preserved in perpetuity.
- Relax the criteria for listing buildings and HCAs to allow for more areas of local character to be eligible for protection against inappropriate development. New York City has established a heritage framework that protects the exteriors of private residential buildings while allowing for the updating and remodelling of their interiors. Adopting a similar model would help to preserve the look of the streetscape and the overall heritage character of the area. The current process of listing heritage items at state and local levels is too bureaucratic, prescriptive and takes too long.

- Strengthen controls so that “character buildings” identified in the Woollahra LEP are afforded protection against demolition. Today’s character is tomorrow’s heritage.
- Set up a heritage advisory committee at the council level and provide grants for community-based heritage societies and/or residents associations so they can actively support council efforts to protect heritage.
- Encourage sensitive adaptive reuse of heritage items. Howard Tanner, the renowned architect and former Chair of the Heritage Council, said in his [submission](#) that:

Adaptive reuse is vital, as all buildings require a suitable use that provides income which allows for maintenance. A great deal more lateral thinking - leading to considered outcomes - is required in this area, with early discussions between authorities and owners, and forums where reasonable options can be properly discussed and resolved. The 'you can't change a thing' attitude, or 'you can only match existing details' represents unsophisticated thinking.

- Actively encourage owners to nominate their properties for heritage listings. Incentives like additional view protection for harbourside properties would help in this regard. Councils should also explore how they can promote and take advantage of rarely used provisions in the Heritage Act 1977 - for example, grants, interest-free loans through the Heritage Incentive Fund, relief from stamp duty, land tax and council rates. In all likelihood, a heritage listing will increase property prices in an area by approving aesthetics and liveability. A Productivity Commission study, for example, found that [in parts of Sydney's north shore, a heritage listing can add 12% to a home's market value](#).
- Strengthen compliance measures so that developers do not let heritage-listed buildings deliberately fall into a state of neglect or breach heritage orders. Councils and/or Heritage NSW should be given stronger powers to delay or stop a development from progressing if heritage orders/conditions are breached. The building/site should have to be repaired/restored before development is approved or construction work recommenced.