

GUARANTEE OF SERVICE

Our Mission

The mission of the Heritage Office of the NSW Department of Planning is to help the community conserve our heritage. Heritage is evidence of our history. Conserving our heritage helps us to understand our past, and to contribute to the lives of future generations. It gives us a sense of continuity and belonging to the place where we live.

The Heritage Office works with communities to help them identify their important places and objects. It provides advice on how to look after heritage items and supports community heritage projects through funding and advice. The office also maintains an online heritage database of all statutory heritage items in NSW.

Background

The Heritage Office was formed in July 1996 as a separate agency reporting to the Minister responsible for heritage. It was established to provide administrative and technical support for the Heritage Council of NSW. In 2006 the office was integrated with the Department of Planning. The Heritage Office is led by an Executive Director who is responsible for the overall effective management of its resources and is responsible for all activities and operations.

The Heritage Office has a total of 42 positions. It has three major work teams organised for the purpose of supporting the office's major objectives and strategies.

What we Do

The Heritage Office provides specialist advice to the Minister responsible for heritage, the Hon. Frank Sartor MP, the Heritage Council and the wider community about the management of heritage across New South Wales.

The office is responsible for the development and implementation of best practice management of items of heritage significance to the State. It maintains the State Heritage Register, a places and objects of particular importance to the people of New South Wales.

The office also maintains an online heritage database of all items on statutory lists in New South Wales. The database can be searched via the website at: www.heritage.nsw.gov.au

The Heritage Office also produces publications on heritage policy and heritage guidelines, and supports community heritage conservation projects around New South Wales through the Heritage Incentives Program and liaison with community groups.

The Heritage Office also administers, under delegation to the Executive Director of the Heritage Office, the Commonwealth *Historic Shipwrecks Act 1976* in relation to historic shipwrecks adjacent to the NSW coast.

Service Delivery Strategy

Our service delivery strategy is defined by the Heritage Council and Heritage Strategic Plan 2005-06 with its four key goals of:

- the community knows the heritage of NSW
- the community values the heritage of NSW
- the community cares for the heritage of NSW
- we excel in managing our responsibilities and resources.
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Guarantee of Service Standards

- We will endeavour to always provide accurate, consistent information and advice in a polite and courteous manner.
- We will endeavour to complete all statutory referrals within the allotted statutory period.
- We will process all Section 167 requests within three working days.
- We will respond to telephone enquiries within 24 hours.
- We aim to reply to 85% of general correspondence within two weeks. Complex matters may take longer to finalise, but an interim reply will be issued if this is the case.
- A contact name and telephone number will be provided in all correspondence.
- We will undertake systematic reviews of our website on a quarterly basis.
- We will create an environment that is conducive to open communication,

including active listening and a commitment to working towards an understanding of the issues and concerns

Publications

We have a wide range of publications to suit different people's needs and produce a regular newsletter, called *Heritage NSW*, which is widely distributed free of cost (and is also available on the Heritage Office website). We try to make our publications as easy to read and useful as possible.

Many of our publications are free and available on the Internet. All new guidelines and policies are made available on the Internet. If there is a charge for any publications you want, we will tell you before we send them so that you can decide if you still want them. To help students and others who need information about the heritage of NSW we have a website. Printed publications are also available for those without Internet access and can be ordered by post, fax or phone.

Library

The Heritage Office has a research library which is available for use by the public, by appointment on Thursdays and Fridays.

Respect for People

The Heritage Office has a code of conduct that governs the manner in which we conduct our business. This is available on the Heritage Office web site. The code of conduct also covers issues such as integrity, ethics and conflicts of interest. Staff of the Heritage Office are to treat members of the public and their

colleagues fairly and consistently, in a non-discriminatory manner with proper regard for their rights and obligations. In this regard, they should perform their duties in a professional and responsible manner.

They should also ensure that their decisions and actions are reasonable, fair and appropriate to the circumstances, based on a consideration of all the relevant facts, and supported by adequate documentation.

Integrity and Public Confidence

The public has a right to expect that public sector organisations are of the highest integrity and competence which treat all citizens fairly, reasonably and equitably.

Staff should protect the reputation of the Heritage Office. They should not engage in activities, at work or outside work, which would bring the Office into disrepute.

Conflicts of Interest

As defined in our code of conduct staff of the Heritage Office should avoid any financial or other interest or undertaking that could directly or indirectly compromise the performance of their duties.

Conflicts of interest should be assessed in terms of the likelihood that officers possessing a particular interest could be influenced, or might appear to be influenced, in the performance of their duties on a particular matter.

All conflicts of interest are reported by staff and recorded in a register kept for that purpose.

Acceptance of Gifts or Benefits

The Code of Conduct requires that no staff of the Heritage Office should accept a gift or benefit if it could be seen by the public, knowing the full facts, as intended or likely to cause the officer to do their job in a particular way, or deviate from the proper course of duty.

It is expected, however, that token gifts or benefits may be accepted in circumstances approved by the Executive Director, provided that there is no possibility that the recipient might be, or might appear to be, compromised in the process.

As a general rule a line may be drawn in situations where a gift could be seen by others as either an inducement or a reward which might place an officer under an obligation. A register of all gifts and benefits is kept by the Heritage Office.

What if I want to complain or make a suggestion about any of your services

We aim to provide the best possible service we can for everyone in NSW. Your views are important to us.

If you have a complaint about any of our services, or any suggestion about how we could better meet your needs, please let us know. Similarly, please let us know when we've provided you with excellent service! That way we will be able to continue to improve.

Verbal complaints will be handled courteously. Written and major complaints will be forwarded to the Executive Director with a draft response within seven days of receipt and the Executive Director will then reply to the complainant within a further seven days. A record is kept of all complaints and complements received.

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Planning**

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