

Coffs Coast Independent

12.05.08

Dear Editor,

I see Coffs Council has released its Heritage Strategic Plan 2006-2011 for public comment, has a Heritage Executive Committee, a Council heritage adviser and is producing heritage brochures, commissioning and installing heritage plaques and so on [CCI 8.05.08].

The first question Coffs rate payers should be asking is what is the total annual and cumulative costs for all of this. The second question is whether the process has been the usual incestuous money making venture for heritage fanatics, in which minority heritage fanatics put pressure on Council and Councillors to divert rate payers money from essential works such as infrastructure on activities that make their mates in various heritage organisations, heritage consultancies and heritage businesses a lot of money - normally at the expense of owners of private property that has been heritage listed.

In 2006 the Federal Productivity Commission Report into Built Heritage exposed these heritage rorts most especially at local Council level. The Expert Panel reviewing the NSW Heritage Act had their report made public in March 2008 and they made a slew of recommendations which curtail out of control heritage industry .

The NSW Society of Heritage Owners [sohonsw@gmail.com] warn the rate payers and Councillors of Coffs to be alert and cautious about what we call heritage fraud, which is rampant in NSW local government. Private properties are being heritage listed by Councils without valid assessment using acceptable heritage listing tools such as the Burra Charter and owners for the past 30 years have very limited and very expensive options to fight such heritage fraud. The heritage propaganda that is normally contained in Council brochures - which are invariably about the benefits of heritage listing and never covers the negatives to the same depth - would have done Goebbels proud. Most Council heritage committees are overwhelming comprised of heritage fanatics whose sole agenda is to increase heritage listings irrespective of genuineness.

For the sake of balance and inclusion SoHONSW strongly recommends all NSW Councils must have a representative of heritage owner's organisation on all committees.

C. Hayward

Society of Heritage Owners NSW