

South Coast Register

30 April 2008

Dear Editor,

I see Mr Quint the NSW National Trust's Conservation Director is [yet again] issuing heritage propaganda that has the effect of misleading Councillors and the Huskisson community. Mr Quint stated that the Husky Pub was "listed on the Register of the National Trust of Australia in 2004." [SCR 23.4.08] The National Trust does not have the power to heritage "list" anything in NSW, nor do they have any legal authority to declare something is 'heritage' in a way that has any authority over owners, Council or the community. It is pure bluff as Mr Quint knows but failed to state.

The National Trust for example arrive at some of their heritage 'classifications' via members voting or lobbying. No assessment by qualified, unbiased persons applying professionally accepted criteria to justify such a rating. Just heritage hobbyists, heritage buffs and National Trust members voting according to their sentiments or other equally irrelevant criteria. By contrast, bodies with the lawful power to heritage list are required to apply internationally accepted criteria to heritage list, conduct themselves in an unbiased manner or opt out and have their methods open to public and professional scrutiny.

The National Trust of NSW should be strongly criticised for regularly purporting to heritage classify items and present it in such a way that seriously misleads the general public. Equally offensive is campaigns where property owners are repeatedly harassed by heritage fanatics.

An example of heritage extremism is the NSW President of the National Trust Dr Zeny Edwards moving a motion to heritage classify the sky and issuing a Press release declaring a "war" over heritage. I kid you not.

The same NSW National Trust also lobbied hard to have rural dirt roads, such as the one at Point Plommer on the mid North Coast, retained as unsealed 'heritage' dirt roads, despite pleas to the contrary from the locals. Rural locals' lives were being made miserable by the unsealed road. Air borne dust was damaging the respiratory systems of their children and animals, thickly coating their homes and adhering to wet washing - not to mention the toll from vehicle accidents. The NSW National Trust demonstrably have put their deluded notions of 'heritage' ahead of considerations of human safety, or the well being of children, animals and property. When the NSW Heritage Council refused to heritage list an item such as some Pettit and Sevitt 40 year old project homes on Sydney's North Shore, elderly owners were financially and emotionally scarred with repeated, harassing re-nominations of the same properties. The Boyd family for example had the trauma of spending inordinate amounts of their time and money rebuffing 4 separate attempts to heritage list their home.

The situation was so dire in Tasmania that last year the Tasmanian government enacted a law specifically to disallow their National Trust from purporting to heritage list anything there.

Do not be lulled into accepting the validity of any heritage claims made by the National Trust of NSW without independent verification - and not from one of their members.

The Society of Heritage Owners NSW [contactable on sohonws@gmail.com] welcomes the Mr Sartor the NSW Minister for Planning's heritage law reforms, asks that the recommended reforms be implemented immediately and be expanded to include banning any persons or organisations, other than those with the statutory authority, from purporting to heritage classify, list or rate any item.

C. Hayward

Society of Heritage Owners NSW