

Coal River Working Party Meeting

7th April, 2014 1:00pm – 3:00pm

University Council Board Room, IDC Building, University Drive

Minutes

Start: 1:00

1. **Welcome to Country:** Acknowledgement to Country by Gionni di Gravio.

Present: Gionni di Gravio (chair), Ann Hardy (minute-taker), Russell Rigby, Ron Barber, Maree Shilling, Ken Shilling, Keith Parsons, Charles Martin, Brian Roach, Russell Rigby, Doug Lithgow, Jane Ison, Julianne Tilse, Howard Dick, Lesley Gent, Damien Egan, Bob Jones, Marilla North, Brian Walsh, Kerry Grant, Margaret Henry, Robert McLardy, Sarah Cameron, Jeff Julian, Amir Mogadam, Alistair Rolls.

2. **Apologies:**

Emeritus Professor John Fryer, Emeritus Professor Maree Gleeson, Cynthia Hunter, Ruth Cotton, Member for Wallsend Sonia Hornery, Robert Watson, Coralie Watson, Anne Creevey, Kerrie Brauer, Ruth Cotton, Robert Watson, Ben Greaves, Tim Adams, Nola Hawken, Dene Hawken.

3. **Confirmation of Previous Minutes:** The minutes for 3rd March 2014 was confirmed by Howard Dick and seconded – Brian Roach.

4. **Business arising from previous minutes:** At the last meeting there was a discussion about whether there was a current Conservation Management Plan (CMP) or Plan of Management guiding use and conservation of the Nobbys Headland. Ann Hardy contacted Rebecca Johnston from Newcastle Port Corporation who advised NPC is the current owner of the site and the following CMPs exist: “Macquarie Pier and Nobbys Head Conservation Management Plan” 1994 prepared by Suters Architects Snell & “Macquarie Pier, Nobbys Head and Southern Breakwall Conservation Management Plan” (Revised) November 2000 prepared by Suters Architects for Newcastle Port Corporation. There is a copy of the 2000 CMP available at the Newcastle Regional Library, otherwise a copy of the document can be requested through GIPA. Information on this process can

be found on Newcastle Port Corporations website at :

<http://www.newportcorp.com.au/site/index.cfm?display=283974>

5. Presentations-

a) Presentation by Prof. Howard Dick on the Draft Revised DCP (6.01) - a)

Howard Dick is Conjoint Professor, Faculty of Business & Law, University of Newcastle and gave an overview of his submission on the proposed changes to the Newcastle LEP and DCP. The following is a summary:-

Heritage value will appreciate over time with sympathetic planning, especially in the older precincts from Civic to the East End. The proposed increase in heights in Newcastle East are unsympathetic, and INCONSISTENT WITH THE VISION of the Draft Revised DCP (6.01). Fundamental to the Newcastle sense of identity and pride in the city is the way the inherited built environment (Heritage) connects with the present, especially in the historic East End precinct between The Hill and the Foreshore. The proposal has a CONFLICT WITH HERITAGE VALUES The draft proposal recognise the importance of heritage values to the character of each precinct and set out sound principles. Yet the outcome of the DCP revisions is not to protect the heritage character of the city centre but to degrade it in highly visible and unsympathetic ways. The proposed changes will add a 14-storey building with a tower to mimic the Cathedral to the left on Newcomen Street, a solid building face to run along the Mall, then to the right two more 15- and 19-storey towers on the DJ site, in all 3 towers will dwarf all existing buildings in that historic precinct and greatly distort the profile of The Hill and the Cathedral. FLAWED LOGIC AND DOCUMENTATION of the revised DCP is manifest in the muddled sequencing of the so-called 'character areas'. Confirmation of this indifference to history and heritage is the promotional 'fly through' video released on 7 March 2014 to show potential property investors what the city might look like in 2030

[<http://www.theherald.com.au/story/2135324/newcastle-transformation-to-start-in-december-video/?cs=12>]. There is no sign of heritage whatsoever the features of The Hill and the cathedral are a mere glimpse. Past and present have both been obliterated. BAD URBAN DESIGN - Scale is fundamental to heritage character. The proposal is well stated but misses the macro perspective whereby the whole is more than the sum of the parts. The rich architectural detail of many heritage items is a distinctive characteristic of the Newcastle city centre. The Department of Planning & Infrastructure should be well aware of literature on heritage planning.

PERVERSE MARKET DISTORTIONS- The existing height codes have been factored into market valuations and were current at the time GPT acquired its holding in 2007. By pushing to double the allowable building height, GPT is seeking to change the market in its favour in order to achieve a windfall gain. UNCONSCIONABLY BRIEF EXHIBITION PERIOD The DCP documents were placed on public exhibition 5 March to 21 March, barely a fortnight for proposals that will transform the face the city is unconscionably brief, minimal time for it to be discussed through the community with opportunity for informed comment. ABUSE OF PLANNING PROCESS Planning should try to achieve community consensus over DCP guidelines. The current proposed amendment should be rejected, because existing height codes were enshrined in legislation after a professionally sound process and with community support. Howard suggests it is bad public policy to inflate property values by subverting the codes to generate a windfall for GPT and permanently distort the market in what the Department itself recognises to be a sensitive heritage precinct.

A discussion took place, Keith Parsons advised that the Hunter Regional Committee of the National Trust has objected to changes to building heights in Newcastle East. The current proposal is a dismantling of the 1990 Nctle DCP by urban architect designer Barry Maitland. Barry Maitland recently spoke on 1233 ABC radio about the proposed changes to the Newcastle LEP, available at

<https://soundcloud.com/1233newcastle/should-newcastles-cbd-have> The proposal suggests that the former David Jones building will only have its facade kept, all internal structures to be demolished, and erection of 19 storeys. The National Trusts submission is available on their blog. Exhibition period has recently closed.

Margaret Henry reminded that during the Griener Government the Honeysuckle area was to be the new CBD, more recently Newcastle West has been proposed, however this latest amendment suggests Newcastle East as the CBD. Damien Egan mentioned the urban revival in the UK during 1990s, the 'Bill Bower' effect, funding to art galleries was a battle, as well as funding for proper restoration of older buildings using professional architects, what resulted were buildings that were refurbished sympathetically and gained considerable value contributing to the character of townships. Doug Lithgow advised that planners may need to go back to the planning template developed by Barry Maitland in the 1990s, this was a sound and sensible model.

b) Presentation by Julianne Tilse- 'Riparian Life- A visual navigation of the changing nature of the Hunter River Estuary'.

Julianne is a PhD candidate at the University of Newcastle and her area of interest is the Hunter River. She has taken 8000 photographs of the river and its surrounds over several years, her research includes artworks she has created depicting many locations along the river. Julianne is also interested in social history, people and civilisation of those at the Hunter River, and the connection between with lower estuary and other communities. The river has been a faithful friend to many and prior to 1801 red cedar was plentiful. The flora has inspired many artists, such as the Scott sisters during the 1840s to 60s who lived at Ash Island. Julianne has lived next to the river for 25 years, and has witnessed the depletion of native trees that have not been replaced. The stream of the river has changed dramatically and is still changing. There has been 200 years of modification of the river and has affected the environment significantly, however has also gifted natural resources. Julianne also noted that Aboriginal relics are evident along the river bank, such as rock carvings. Brian Walsh mentioned Aboriginal grinding grooves also exist on a rock near Tocal and visible at low tide. The CRWP thanked of Julianne for sharing her current research.

c) Presentation by Amir Mogadam – Assessing Heritage Significance - Amir spoke about heritage significance and specifically on the National heritage nomination process. He advised that he attended an ICOMOS conference recently at the National Library and witnessed similar issues raised by the CRWP, mainly regarding difficulties in getting nominated places on the national heritage list. Amir suggested the CRWP take a more strategic approach, one that strongly satisfies the heritage criteria for listing and easily argued. By taking a strategic approach other heritage items around the city can be considered, items at all levels of listing. Types of heritage are tangible and intangible and the Coal River Precinct has a mix of each, also natural, historical and Indigenous heritage can be addressed. A nomination must have a well-developed argument or proof of the history of a place, furthermore the nomination needs to be concise with any supporting documents in an Appendix. It is also important to keep comments brief about heritage values, try reduce to one page. Need to revise current nomination. Historical research has to be done prior to nomination, compiled information about rarity and description about how items are rare. For example the flag held at Christ Church Cathedral has a unique history and is significant to the nation, it was the first Australian

flag raised in WWI. Must clearly use supportive language to describe why something is significant.

Alternate strategy may be submitting a nomination for a single item/building, focus on particular item, and gradually build up nominated places to form a cluster of heritage sites. A cluster of listed sites is more likely to gain listing as a larger historic landscape or precinct. Also a good idea to promote stories associated with a nomination. Amir gave the example of the city of Fremantle that listed single sites, gradually extended to include an entire historic landscape.

Sarah Cameron voiced her concern and frustration about the suggested change of strategy, stating that the Coal River Precinct is already on the SHR, and acknowledges there may be 'politics' involved but believes the CRWP should not give up on nomination to have the Coal River Precinct on the National Heritage List.

6. Reports and Updates:

- a) Updates- (Gianni di Gravio)** – Gianni advised that himself and Ann Hardy were invited by Tim Adams from *Unwelt* to visit 9 Watt Street, Newcastle where an archaeological excavation has been underway for several months. Tim was interviewed about the site and a YouTube video is available on CRWP blog.
<http://coalriver.wordpress.com/2014/04/08/9wattst-tattersalls/> Gianni suggested that some of the historic bricks from the site could be donated and be a fundraiser for the Vera Deacon Regional History Fund. Gianni will approach Tim Adams to find out if this is a possibility.
- b) National Trust (Ann Hardy)** – Ann advised that she is continuing to work on the Newcastle Lost & Found App. Also the nomination to have King Edward Park listed on the State Heritage Register is slowly progressing.
- c) Update (Sarah Cameron)** - Newcastle council is currently reviewing the Cooks Hill Heritage Conservation area, at this stage the community can participate in an online survey.

7. General Business

- a) Redhead Smelting works-** Brian Roach found an interesting article whilst doing research at the Mitchell library, the source relates to the smelting works at Redhead. Sarah Cameron also advised that there is a Conservation Management Plan associated with the Redhead copper smelter, authored by Damaris Bairstow.

8. Close: 3:00

Date of next meeting: Monday, 5th May, 2014 in the IDC Building, 1-3pm.