

## **Planning for conservation Canberra Residential Heritage Precincts**

### **Section 1**

Heritage listing by the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) Government entails both public and private obligations to preserve that which has been identified of heritage worth and significance. There are some 12 Heritage-Listed largely residential housing precincts in the ACT. All have statements of Significance and Heritage Guidelines. None have a current Conservation Management Plan (CMP) in place for the total precinct, although this is required under the ACT Heritage Act 2004. Residents believe that the heritage value of their precincts is being compromised by the lack of a CMP. The recent Marshall Report<sup>1</sup> which reviewed the ACT Heritage Act has highlighted this situation and other deficiencies. The National Trust of Australia (ACT) included Reid in its 'Heritage at Risk' list in 2010.

There is a leadership role for the National Trust of Australia (ACT), working with the ACT Heritage Council, ACT Heritage Unit, and interested residents in the three Heritage Precincts to overcome more than 20 years of inertia and press for implementation of CMP's. Reid, Blandfordia 5 and Corroboree Park are three of the larger housing precincts which are proposed to be used as a template for the preparation and implementation of a CMP for all ACT Housing Precincts. A comprehensive Heritage study involving a Conservation Plan was prepared for Reid c1989 and a Streetscapes Study for Reid was prepared in 1994. A CMP has been prepared and implemented for part of Blandfordia 5 and one is underway for aspects of the Reid precinct. With additional effort and goodwill, drawing on public and interested private stakeholders, up-to-date CMP's could be prepared for the three precincts, with the aim of implementation no later than by the year of Canberra's Centenary in 2013. The National Trust of Australia (ACT) proposes to undertake the leadership and advocacy role proposed for these studies. This has greater emphasis and need given the nomination of Canberra for the National Heritage Register.

### **Section 2**

The objective is to develop and promote a strategy to achieve implementation and Conservation Management Plans (CMPs) for a target group of three of ACT's Heritage-Listed residential housing precincts, preferably by no later than the year of Canberra's Centenary in 2013. The key output would be an audit of the conservation areas and completion of up-to-date draft CMPs, which have broad stakeholder support, for the whole of the Reid, Blandfordia 5 and Corroboree Heritage Precincts, for implementation by the ACT Government. A plan of action has been prepared to achieve the objective by the National Trust of Australia (ACT), drawing on voluntary contributions of expertise and, where necessary, a heritage grant and other financial resources.

A further outcome will be conservation details of managing change in these areas and what works and achieves conservation objectives and what does not retain heritage values.

### **Section 3**

The strategy to implement this will draw upon the existing information which is summarized below and highlights that while there is a history of identification and some protection, the real concern is that the current measures are not working and new initiatives are required.

Heritage listings, statements of significance, heritage guidelines exist but there appears to be a lack of compliance control by the ACT Government resulting in deterioration of Heritage fabric, including demolitions. The National Trust "Heritage at Risk" nomination for Reid, the

Review of the ACT Heritage Act, and the Marshall Report (2010)<sup>2</sup> all identified concerns with current practice.

#### **Section 4**

- **Reid**

Studies to be referred to include the Brine/Taylor Report (c1989)<sup>3</sup>, Shibu Dutta's Reid Streetscapes (1994)<sup>4</sup> and the current ad hoc CMP study for ACT Roads (in preparation). ACT Parks is undertaking ad hoc tree removal and proposed plantings and impacts on heritage values are not being appropriately assessed. Other details are in the listing of Reid by the National Trust of Australia (ACT) as 'Heritage at Risk'. Additional work is underway by the Reid Residents' Association (RRA) on preservation of Reid streetscapes, an e-book initiative to promote conservation of Reid and Reid garden design with the University of Canberra and Australian Garden History Society (AGHS).

Comments and recommendations in the Marshall Report reviewing the ACT Heritage Act 2004 also identify issues to consider. There is ongoing development and other pressures on the suburb. Residents generally meet heritage commitments but it is less clear what the ACT Government does to meet its heritage preservation commitments.

- **Corroboree Park**

A conservation analysis of the precinct was undertaken in 2000 and CMP for the Community Centre was prepared in 2002. Pressure is growing for changes to housing and gardens as it is an inner city suburb. Concerned residents have urged ACT Parks to improve care for trees in the park, but trees in streets and private gardens are ageing and being lost. Residents generally meet heritage commitments but it is less clear what the ACT Government does.

- **Blandfordia 5**

There appears to be an ad hoc CMP for ACT Parks in preparation, but no CMP for the whole precinct. There remains ongoing development and other pressures. Residents generally meet heritage commitments but the ACT government could do more to preserve the area hence the need for a holistic CMP for the precinct.

#### **Section 5**

The initiative is yet to be realized but has a strong community interest and will benefit the ACT Heritage Council and the ACT Government as it will herald a detailed review and identify what planning processes and design guidelines really work (or do not) to conserve these residential areas and the heritage values of these precincts.

This need is strengthened by the fact that Australia's National Heritage Council is considering Canberra for Australia's National Heritage Register and to have this landmark review and document will ensure best management practices can be implemented.

This could have flow on benefits for all Australian residential conservation areas. Although the project is only beginning the initiative is significant with long-term ramifications and worthy of promotion.

## **Section 6**

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## **Section 7**

<sup>1</sup> Marshall, Duncan, Australian Capital Territory Heritage Act Review, prepared for Minister for the Arts and Heritage, Canberra 2010

<sup>2</sup> Review of ACT Heritage Act and the Marshall Report (2010)

<sup>3</sup> Brine, Judith M C et al, Reid conservation area: conservation plan, unpublished report prepared for the Heritage Unit, ACT Administration, Faculty of Environmental Design, University of Canberra, 1988-89 (unpublished).

<sup>4</sup> Dutta, Shibu, Reid streetscape study, National Trust of Australia (ACT), 1994

### ***Additional sources***

Australian Construction Services, Department of Administrative Services in association with The ACT Heritage Unit, Conservation Study Blandfordia Number 5, Murray Crescent Precinct Griffith. August 1990 (unpublished).

Dutta, Shibu, The Heritage of Reid, Reid Residents' Association Inc, Canberra, 2000

Peter Freeman Pty Ltd, Corroboree Park Community Centre, Ainslie ACT Conservation Management Plan prepared for Northside Community Service Inc August 2002 (unpublished).

### ***Author Profile***

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