HERITAGE PROTECTION FOR HAWKESBURY TREASURE

A small national park in the Hawkesbury region has earned additional protection for its unique heritage and historical values.

Minister for Planning, Tony Kelly, said the 954 hectare Scheyville National Park on the edge of the Cumberland Plain near the Hawkesbury River and Pitt Town Bottoms has been added to the State Heritage Register for its high level Aboriginal, archaeological, natural, built and cultural heritage significance.

It is significant because it:

- Was used by the military for training during World War I and II;
- Was greatly valued by the original custodians, the Dharug people, for its plentiful food supplies;
- Contains a number of historic and indigenous cultural heritage features and places that tell the story of the development of the Cumberland Plain from pre-colonial settlement to the present day;
- Contains the largest surviving element of the first commons declared in the colony and has close ties to the earliest days of European agriculture in NSW; and
- The woodlands and wetlands represent the most extensive remnant of the Cumberland Plain vegetation that once dominated Western Sydney, which today provide habitat for endangered vegetation and birdlife.

The Park has ties to Governor Phillip King, William Francis Schey (after whom the area was named), Sir John Overall, Brigadier Ian Geddes and noted public figures Tim Fischer and Jeff Kennett who trained there during the Vietnam War.

The Park also retains significant and special associations to a number of groups including:

- Former Dreadnought Boys, young British migrants who were trained in agriculture and domestic work at Scheyville until 1910;
- Members of the 73rd Searchlight Company, a highly specialised force that trained at Scheyville during World War II while waiting for its ranks to fill;
- Members of the 1st Parachute Battalion, the first airborne combat battalion to exist in the Australian armed forces which trained at Scheyville during World War II;
- Post WWII migrants to Australia who passed through the Migrant Holding Centre at Scheyville; and
- Former Officer Training Unit cadets which undertook intensive training programs at Scheyville during the Vietnam War.

Member for Riverstone, John Aquilina, welcomed the announcement.

“State heritage listing not only celebrates the values of the Park, but also further protects it because the Heritage Council of NSW must be consulted if any work is to occur,” Mr Aquilina said.