

Wednesday, 3 November 2010

Heritage Council seeks public feedback on proposed de-listing of Knuckey's Store

The Heritage Council of NSW is calling for public input on a proposal to remove Knuckey's Store in Wellington from the State Heritage Register.

The store's owner, the Wellington Soldiers Memorial Club, has requested the de-listing on economic grounds following a fire in 2008 which caused extensive damage to the building.

Members of the public have until 30 November to make a submission.

Chair of the Heritage Council Gabrielle Kibble said the Heritage Council would like to learn more about how the community currently views the significance of Knuckey's Store before making a recommendation on the de-listing proposal.

"Public feedback is a key element of the process for listing or de-listing an item from the State Heritage Register," Ms Kibble said.

"In this instance, there may be more than one option for the store's future and that is something the Heritage Council needs community input on.

"Some of the questions we would like to hear from the public on include:

- 'Has the fire and the store's subsequent deterioration altered its significance?';
- 'Was it the store that was important or the place where Aboriginal people could congregate?';
- 'Would a memorial of the store be sufficient to convey its heritage significance?'

"I encourage all interested members of the community to have their say during the exhibition period."

In November 2002, Knuckey's Store on Swift Street, Wellington was listed on the NSW State Heritage Register.

At the time, the building was said to represent the "archetypical corner store, an early retail outlet serving the community of Wellington for over a century." It also had social significance as a meeting and resting-place for the Wellington community.

The store's owner was known for his good relationship with local Aboriginal people. These people were able to congregate at the store and obtain their rations there.

In 2008, the building caught fire and, while the rear wings of the building were damaged, the fire was put out before much damage had occurred to the most important element, the corner store.

The Wellington Soldiers Club has indicated that the funding required to carry out the repair works necessary to make the building available for some future use, would make it uneconomical.

The club also maintains that there is no viable use for the store and therefore no opportunity to recover further expenditure.

Following amendments to the Heritage Act in 2009, an item may be de-listed if the Minister is of the opinion a place is not of State heritage significance, or that the long-term conservation of the item is not necessary, and where one or both of the following apply:

- that the listing renders the item incapable of reasonable or economic use; and/or
- that the listing causes undue financial hardship to the owner.

The following two future options for Knuckey's Store have been suggested to date:

Option 1

Knuckey's Store is removed from the State Heritage Register and entirely demolished with a memorial erected to explain the historical significance of the rations store.

Option 2

Knuckey's Store remains on the State Heritage Register, its back wings are demolished, its heritage curtilage is reduced and insurance or other funding is used by the owners to repair the corner store itself, which could then be available for small-scale commercial use or as a memorial.

Ms Kibble said that there could well be other options and all comments received on the proposal will be carefully considered by the Heritage Council.

Following its consideration, the Heritage Council will make a recommendation to the Planning Minister, who will make the final decision.

Further information on the proposal, including how to make a submission, can be found on the Department of Planning's Heritage Branch website at www.heritage.nsw.gov.au

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