Response to Wentworth Courier on Heritage Council role on White Paper

Date: 25 June, 2013

Questions:
1. Will the Heritage Council lose its approvals role for development applications concerning items on the state heritage register?
2. Does the department believe the white paper gives enough weight to heritage matters?
3. Several leading heritage experts are calling for heritage to be incorporated as a state planning policy. Is this change being considered?

RESPONSE GIVEN

The Department has told the Heritage Council there would be little change to its role deciding on development applications relating to State heritage items.

The White Paper and supporting draft legislation proposes a far more co-ordinated approach in regard to decisions or advice by State authorities on development applications. This is in line with recommendations from the Council of Australian Governments to improve integration and reduce delays in this area.

Agencies in 2011-12 took on average 50 days to comment on development applications, up from 47 days in 2010-11.

Under the legislation, the Department of Planning and Infrastructure will have a reserve power to co-ordinate and resolve this feedback from State agencies.

However, we’ve made it clear when discussing this issue with the Heritage Council, that it would only be when there are delays or where the council’s decision conflicts with another agency.

As mentioned above, this means there would be little change.

There will be a protocol with the Heritage Council to implement this approach.

The Department of Planning and Infrastructure believes the White Paper recognises the importance of heritage conservation.

Heritage will be considered upfront when the planning vision for an area is set, not as an after-thought once a development application has been lodged which is often the case at the present time.

The listing of new State heritage items is not touched at all by the new planning system and is covered under separate NSW legislation, the Heritage Act.

Issues such as heritage which apply across a number of planning policy areas will be addressed in one or several planning policies, for example, housing supply and affordability and environment and conservation.