

RESPONSE TO DRAFT HERITAGE STRATEGY 2019-2030

I support the principles and content of the proposed heritage strategy, including the widening of the scope to include indigenous and natural heritage in the municipality. In preparation of the draft, a number of issues have been identified and positive actions are proposed to address many of these issues over the ten year span to 2030. I am concerned, however, that the protection of valued heritage assets relies on the cooperation of property owners, and that the document does not more openly discuss the competing pressures that threaten heritage conservation. Once a building is demolished or significant heritage fabric is removed, it cannot be replaced.

The first step in preparation of the new heritage strategy was a review of the 2015-2018 Heritage Strategy and Implementation Plan. What were the findings of this review and how has that influenced the current draft? Was there a rigorous evaluation of the Implementation Plan? What was achieved, and what was identified as needing to be carried forward and incorporated into the new strategy? There is passing reference to challenging time-frames, but what does this mean in practical terms?

Under the heading Legislative and Policy Context the second paragraph on page 4 attempts to summarize the role of the Yarra Planning Scheme in a single sentence. Given the key role of the planning policies and controls, perhaps this should be expanded to emphasize the responsibilities placed on Council to review and implement the planning controls. It should also explain that owners and the broader community have legal responsibilities to conserve important heritage assets.

At the State level, Plan Melbourne 2017-2050 Direction 4.4 merely requires a 'respect' for heritage. What is needed is advocacy and strong legal protection for Yarra's valued heritage assets. As noted, 70 percent of the municipality is covered by Heritage Overlays, however some of these areas have higher concentrations of contributory buildings than others. The Strategy will be of most value to Council if it can ensure that that Council decisions are not overturned at VCAT because there are conflicting strategic planning objectives, or if important heritage assets that have not been given due recognition or protection in the Planning Scheme.

The key community concerns and directions identified on page 7 are broad. They appear to be encompassed by the 26 Priorities for Implementation. Greater incentives for owners to maintain heritage assets are required.

In the light of what has happened in respect of the Corkman Irish Pub in Pelham Street Carlton, it would be good to see some mention in the Strategy of strengthening Council's powers over inappropriate demolition. This would include 'demolition by neglect'. With some of the highest land values in the municipality coinciding with areas of intrinsic heritage value, Council must state that it is prepared to spend money to pursue offences under the Planning and Environment Act.

Release of the draft is timely because of the status of concurrent reviews of built form and heritage controls in several key activity centres. The review of the precinct citations and improved coordination of heritage and other overlay controls must be addressed now. I therefore support the eight Priority Areas listed on page 12. Increased budget allocations in the early years of the new strategy could save

the Council the time and expense of actions at VCAT and improve the certainty of outcomes for landowners and the broader community.

Community education and advocacy are also important. The belated recognition by Council officers supporting street art that the painting of previously unpainted surfaces requires a planning permit may have avoided the spread of 'murals' on brick walls to deter graffiti. The removal of paint controls from the Heritage Schedule did not override this specific provision. It is also now obvious that curated public art cannot in itself deter tagging and vandalism.

I appreciate the opportunity to comment and provide feedback on the Draft Heritage Strategy. I look forward to its adoption and implementation at the earliest opportunity.

██████████

Fitzroy