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## **EDUCATION IN HERITAGE – KNOWING THE STORY OF YOUR PLACE**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The concept of heritage is changing and developing. Where once it was the recognition of the grand building it is increasingly becoming a field that covers the grand and the simple, places, landscapes and objects, the tangible and the intangible.

Ballarat recently hosted the 10<sup>th</sup> League of Historical Cities Conference. As part of our preparations a range of work was undertaken including surveys (based on the Allen Survey for the Heritage Chairs of Australia), economic and social benefits of heritage studies, reformulation of the Heritage Advisory Committee to include education and tourism as well as management of place and the preparation of heritage education slides and teachers notes aimed at upper primary level children.

The paper will look at the lessons learnt about the management and promotion of heritage and how local government can have involvement in collecting, interpreting and telling the unique story of its place.

**KEYWORDS:** heritage, education, management, promotion.

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

Ballarat is a regional city of 80,000 people located in Central Victoria and was one of the main ‘Goldrush’ towns in Australia, home to the Eureka rebellion. Gold and heritage are key to the identity of the City with the challenge to recognise other eras of development in its history. The City of Ballarat is facing the challenge of how best to identify and protect its diverse heritage including methods to better engage and empower its community.

In 2006 Ballarat hosted the 10<sup>th</sup> International League of Historical Cities Conference. This provided the opportunity to reflect on its role in relation to the protection and promotion of its history and heritage. This focus on heritage led to a range of projects being undertaken but also highlighted gaps in both technical knowledge of our heritage and community perceptions of heritage and council’s role in its management.

Key heritage issues addressed in 2006 include:

- Approval of an amendment which introduced an additional 19 heritage precincts into the Ballarat Planning Scheme
- Undertaking a study into the Social and Economic Benefits of Heritage to Ballarat
- Undertaking a study into an additional 6 heritage precincts and exhibition of an amendment to implement them into the planning scheme
- Restoration of statues and flagstones within the Sturt St gardens
- Preparation of a heritage education kit for primary schools
- Reformulation of the Ballarat Heritage Advisory Committee to include representation focus on education and promotion in addition to the traditional focus on management

Ballarat faces a challenge. Heritage is key to our identity and a major factor in the tourism sector of its economy. When applied to our goldfields and Victorian and Edwardian suburbs, or the grand buildings of the central city it has been well received. The City is facing a greater challenge when it comes to managing more recent heritage or sites which are not seen as 'attractive'. Council has recently faced a sustained opposition to promoting a heritage control as something that prohibits renovation or internal alterations. This has highlighted that heritage is not well understood by the general public and that we need to audit the success of our community information and develop an information strategy that provides information relevant to different segments of the community.

This paper is a practical look at the challenges experienced by the City of Ballarat in managing its heritage and how it can improve into the future. The paper will cover:

- What is heritage?
- What is Ballarat's Heritage
- Collection Management
- Why is heritage important to Ballarat
- Challenges faced by the City of Ballarat
- Starting a partnership approach
- Where to from here

## **2. HERITAGE MANAGEMENT IN BALLARAT**

### **2.1 What Is Heritage?**

Heritage as a concept changes and develops over time. Initial controls were quite architectural in nature – focusing on key buildings and works of architects of note. Over time thematic histories and criteria were widened and recognition of precincts and landscapes were developed.

In Victoria the Victorian Heritage Act and Strategy looks at broadening our understanding of heritage to the stories of place – the objects, collections, places, landscapes and sites that tell our story.

In Ballarat we are starting to talk about heritage as the places, objects or customs that tell the story of Ballarat. The challenge we face is to move from a focus on the built form putting the flesh on the bones. What does a place or an object tell you about Ballarat, its people and its priorities.

## **2.2 What Is Ballarat's Heritage?**

Ballarat is synonymous with gold. That is the image the City and operators such as Sovereign Hill has long promoted. Gold was key to the development of Ballarat but it was the institutions and industries established to serve goldmining that had a lasting impact on its development. Foundries, established to make parts for mining equipment, branched out into decorative 'lace' making for the verandahs Ballarat was famous for and train making. The School of Mines provided a skilled workforce to the town and to mining towns around Australia.

Foundries have been replaced by industries such as Mars and McCains but our industrial heritage and its foundations has been overlooked and not understood. In Bunbury Western Australia there is a Ballarat Engine as an attraction but many Ballarat residents are unlikely to know the reason why it is named "Ballarat" or that the Phoenix Mall and Phoenix Building (council office) in the centre of town are named for the Foundry in which the trains were produced.

Traditionally Ballarat has focused on the grand public buildings which has not developed a wider understanding of heritage in the community. The education kit refocused that by showing that heritage could be Ballarat's Cultural Heritage includes its historic buildings, monuments and collections of information on how people lived. It reinforced that cultural heritage can be photos, paintings, stories or books or the cultural practices of a community.

The kit consists of teachers notes and a series of seven powerpoint slide sets which can be used as a group or individually which cover:

- Overview of heritage
- Examples of heritage
- Uses of heritage buildings
- Skills used in heritage
- Examples of unusual heritage places
- Life in other eras – work, medicine and school
- How people lived – food cooking, travel, housing

The slides show images from the local area and challenge children to identify what places, objects or practices would tell the story of their family or town. It helps children learn about what life was like for children in other times by using known sites in Ballarat to demonstrate how daily activities, such as school, were different over time.

Ballarat has a range of heritage icons, a list of buildings and landscapes such as Lydiard Street, Town Hall, Ballarat Botanic Gardens and Statuary or the Mechanics Institute. Are these sites "gold" heritage or sites built from gold money? Many of our icons are recognized for their exterior where institutions like the mechanics institute, Ballarat Fine Art Gallery and the Town Hall house key collections. We recognise the exterior – not the collections or the story of why they were created.

## **2.3 Collection Management**

This is relevant to Ballarat. Ballarat's heritage is more than a collection of buildings and landscapes. One of the few objects on the Victorian Heritage Register is the "Eureka flag" which is housed in a Victorian Heritage Register listed building the Ballarat Fine Art Gallery. Ballarat has many excellent community and government collections which provide valuable research and education opportunities, including the Ballarat Mechanic Institute; Gold

Museum; Public Record Office; Australiana Collection Central Highlands Library Service and many local historical societies and topic specific museums.

The challenge for local government is how do we look after the collections within our City? Unlike the state heritage controls (Heritage Act 1995) the controls available to local government (Planning and Environment Act) do not apply to objects or collections. For Ballarat the approach has been to realize that Council's function is wider than just planning and statutory controls. We are collectors, we own and manage heritage listed buildings, objects and infrastructure and we have staff with skills in education, marketing and curating. Council can work with community collectors to improve their access to information, training and funding.

The City's collection can be viewed as the hidden treasures that provide an insight into our past. The collections are often run by community organizations with limited budgets and skills. Council, through its Heritage Advisory Committee, is looking at ways to assist these groups through training and marketing.

#### **2.4 Is Ballarat's Heritage Important?**

Heritage is often a controversial issue with claims including that heritage lowers property values, heritage increases costs or the benefits of heritage to the community are outweighed by costs to the individual. Over the past decade an increasing number of valuation studies or benefit cost analysis have been undertaken. As Council had exhibited a planning scheme amendment to apply heritage controls to wide areas a economic and planning consulting firm, SKM, were hired to investigate the social and economic benefits of heritage to Ballarat. To support this study Council undertook, with permission from the Heritage Chairs, a survey based on the survey utilised in the Allen Report – Valuing the Priceless.

Key findings within this document are:

- the population of Ballarat 18 and over would be prepared to pay some \$6.7 million per annum for a modest improvement in heritage protection.
- The City's collection of listed properties provide it with a real competitive advantage over competing regional centres, in terms of brand, identity and cultural soul, all of which attract visitors and residents alike.
- Retention of this advantage requires the City to continue to protect, maintain and use appropriately its owned buildings and encourage and facilitate protection and use of other publicly and privately held heritage properties through heritage listing and programs of renovation or restoration.
- Investment in promotion of their uniqueness and value to the community is also necessary to maximise their value, as is encouragement of supporting industries within the region.
- Well maintained and marketed heritage listed residential properties are likely to sell at a premium.
- For commercial buildings subject to an appropriate reuse there is unlikely to be a negative impact on value based on heritage controls alone
- The public will gain a net benefit from Heritage properties through a sense of civic pride in their city where these properties are adequately preserved
- A region with a strong representation of heritage buildings should gain a net benefit from increased tourism attracted by the heritage properties and precincts.

Heritage gives Ballarat a sense of uniqueness – an identity in a global economy where

“sameness” can prevail. Heritage tourism is the main category of tourism in Ballarat and is worth \$615,000,000 per annum to the Goldfields region which consists of Ballarat, Bendigo and Castlemaine. With key tourism sites such as Sovereign Hill it was not surprising that there was a greater acceptance in Ballarat that heritage was important to the economy than was found nationally by the Allen report.

### **3. CHALLENGES OF MANAGING HERITAGE**

Ballarat from 1980 to 2000 had very few sites outside its commercial core within the heritage overlay. Loss of residential buildings in the inner city coinciding with the ‘Save Our Suburbs’ movement led to the completion of the Ballarat Heritage Study and a the a change to the planning scheme to protect 19 residential precincts in which 12,500 residents were notified and 40 objections received. This amendment included documents that varied the state set control so that planning permits were not required for demolition and some extensions to non significant buildings.

When an additional 6 areas in predominantly interwar – post war areas where advertised recently 450 notices were sent out to owners and 400 submissions received (many by parties not affected by the amendment) contending that properties would not be able to be sold, the value would drop and that the heritage control would stop modernisation despite the fact that internal controls do not apply, paint controls to not apply and design guidelines are included for extensions to buildings.

This highlights that Ballarat needs to:

- Explain heritage controls and the language contained within them - such as significance.
- Provide easy access to information and advice including skilled trades and sourcing material.
- Better explain our story from a focus on gold to the legacy that different generations have left to us.
- Show the benefits of heritage to our social and economic well being and promote our role as custodians of heritage.
- Provide interesting material on our heritage to improve knowledge and understanding.

The SKM report outlines a range of other opportunities for Council including supporting education in heritage trades, providing information and improving the range of incentives available. Feedback from submitters who had read the significance statements was appreciative. It showed that when what is significant is understood you are more likely to want to work to enhance that significance.

When a connection to a place is developed support of its preservation is more likely to be accepted. Buildings on their own do not necessarily build that connection. A modest miners cottage is not ornate or grand. It is modest. What does it say about life on the goldfields? What would life be like – how has our housing changed? While changes can occur to modify the cottage by telling the story of life at the time, as including in the heritage education kit, a connection to why miners cottages are important to Ballarat is established.

We have marketed our gold legacy successfully but the challenge is to merge our role in curating, arts, open space, collection management, planning, design, tourism and economic development functions so that we protect the story of our development, ensure our people know and appreciate story of Ballarat and encourage the public spirit that saw the creation of our heritage and legacy continue so that we add to the legacy through excellence in design, great public spaces and recording the stories of place not just its fabric.

This is not a simple process. It will take time and cannot be achieved alone. The primary schools education program was the first step at building a wider understanding of what heritage is and how students can find clues to the past in their environments.

#### **4. PARTNERSHIPS**

Council is not alone in managing heritage. Our community manage their stories and places. The Victorian Heritage Strategy is focusing on strengthening our communities and was the basis for reformulating the Ballarat Heritage Advisory Committee. The committee has 3 community representatives (including a builder) and invited positions from University of Ballarat (trade skills, curating and building management), Tourism Victoria, Commerce Ballarat, the Real Estate Institute of Victoria, National Trust, Department of Education, Heritage Victoria, Department of Sustainability and Environment, Conservation Volunteers Australia, Sovereign Hill, Gold Museum, Central Highlands Historical Society and the Ballarat Fine Art Gallery.

Whilst this list is only a small representation of the groups and interests in heritage it represents a cross section of views and a range of skills relating to heritage education, the promotion of heritage and the management of heritage. The group is looking at opportunities for co-operation including demonstration projects in trade skills with the University of Ballarat; promotion of research opportunities within the City; building curating and cataloguing skills and providing information tailored to the community, developers, real estate agents and tourism providers in understanding our heritage.

Council can act as a conduit of information. It can support community groups in accessing training and funding opportunities or in who may be able to assist them. It can pass on knowledge and in turn receives feedback on community perception as well as information about buildings or sites.

#### **5. WHERE TO FROM HERE - PROJECTS**

Council is about to undertake a heritage and urban design strategy to outline objectives, actions and priorities for Council in relation to heritage. Projects identified by the Ballarat Heritage Advisory Committee and by the Social and Economic Benefits of Heritage to Ballarat Study include:

- support University of Ballarat's Classical Trades education program
- provision of web based material on access to trades, advice in applying for permits, Ballarat Building styles, case studies and how to research sites.
- Developing information on Ballarat's treasures and stories.
- Preparation of a Citywide heritage study
- Preparation of management plans for key sites
- Providing a regular range of events as a lead in to the heritage festival such as back of house events

- Undertaking a collection policy
- Undertake training on how to manage your collection
- Interpretation – better information available such as heritage trails, podcasting and research guides.
- Supporting oral histories and collecting the stories of place.
- Speak to interest groups, property owners and business about what information they need
- Provide information on different levels – schools, owners, business, tourist – general and segments. \
- Improve our incentives. Review loan and grant program and investigate rate incentives, ways to improve access to trades and the promotion of cultural activities and opportunities.
- Utilise Council’s monthly magazine to show the community benefit of heritage and to highlight stories with a heritage aspect.
- Celebrate good outcomes through awards or recognition programs.

## **6. CONCLUSIONS**

The City of Ballarat has commenced the process of reviewing and extending its operations in relation to heritage from purely administering planning controls to looking to the promotion of its heritage, educating the community in heritage and why it is important to Ballarat and supporting projects to fill education gaps whether it be trade skills or curatorial skills for community volunteers.

As heritage becomes more of an emotive issue in the community the need for Council to formulate a co-ordinated strategy in relation to heritage so that it can clearly communicate the importance of heritage to Ballarat; can develop heritage controls and programs that are flexible, fair and easily understood and works with the community to maximise the benefits that heritage brings to Ballarat whilst supporting the custodians of heritage.

Our challenge is to work with our community to collect their stories and to build a better understanding of our City so that people protect the past but also create the heritage of the future.

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