

7 May 2020

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Re: Draft Hepburn Heritage Strategy 2020-2030

Dear Ms Blacket,

Thank you for providing an opportunity to provide comment on the Hepburn Heritage Strategy 2020-2030 draft document.

The National Trust of Australia (Victoria) [National Trust] is the state's largest community-based heritage advocacy organisation actively working towards conserving and protecting our heritage for future generations to enjoy, representing 28,000 members across Victoria. The National Trust maintains a Heritage Register of Significant Places, including buildings, landscapes, gardens and trees. Within Hepburn Shire Council there are currently 70 built heritage places, 37 trees and 2 gardens included on the Register.

As Victoria's premier heritage and conservation organisation, the National Trust has an interest in ensuring that the wide range of natural, cultural, social and Indigenous heritage values of the municipality are protected and respected, contributing to strong, vibrant and prosperous communities.

We commend Hepburn Shire Council for progressing this important strategy, with a view to ensuring the continued identification, protection, conservation, interpretation, and celebration of the municipality's heritage.

We congratulate the Shire on its achievements since the 2014 Heritage Review Strategy, including the implementation of the findings of the Hepburn Significant Tree Register – Statements of Significance Report 2015 by introducing planning controls to protect significant trees within the municipality.

While we support the Draft Heritage Strategy and Action Plan, this submission provides some comments for consideration as the document is finalised. We welcome further discussion and consultation with council regarding our points outlined within this submission.

1. General comments

We recommend including an Acknowledgement of Country of the Traditional Owners of Hepburn Shire Council at the beginning of the document. We recommend that this Acknowledgement is drafted in consultation with the Dja Dja Wurrung and other relevant Traditional Owners.

We note that capitalisation of Dja Dja Wurrung has not been used consistently throughout the document and this should be corrected.

While we are generally supportive of the Shire's description of 'What is a heritage place' (p6), we feel that it does not capture the intangible values that can contribute to the significance of a heritage place. We recommend that this be amended to provide a more comprehensive and holistic statement on what can contribute to heritage significance. We note that the recent Greater Shepparton City Council Heritage Strategy 2019 and the Ballarat City Council Heritage Plan 2017 provide good examples of this.

2. Aboriginal Cultural Heritage

We note the action to undertake regular engagement with the Dja Dja Wurrung (p25) and recommend that more specific actions regarding ongoing engagement should be referenced in the Draft Action Plan.

We note a recent review of the Southern Grampians Shire Heritage Strategy outlined a commitment to ongoing engagement with Gunditj Mirring Registered Aboriginal Party and other relevant Traditional Owners in early planning for Council led projects; in raising community awareness about Aboriginal Cultural heritage and history; and in facilitating cultural heritage activities for the Southern Grampians Shire Reconciliation Festival, National Heritage Week and NAIDOC Week. We suggest that similar actions/targets could be developed and incorporated into the Hepburn Shire Council Heritage Strategy and Action Plan. We also point towards the City of Melbourne's ambitious Aboriginal Heritage Action Plan and Reconciliation Action Plan as key examples of best practice in the identification, protection and celebration of Aboriginal cultural heritage at the local level and for local communities.

3. Future Studies

We strongly support the action to undertake a comprehensive Thematic Environmental History Analysis and undertake a Heritage Gap Study. Given the timeframe that has passed since the Creswick Shire Heritage Study (30 years) this study is unlikely to be up to date, or adequately identify and protect the range of heritage places within the municipality, or the community's expectations regarding the identification, protection and celebration of these places. We recommend that this is undertaken as an urgent priority.

4. Social Value

We acknowledge the Shire has identified a list of heritage gaps (Attachment B) which future studies should address in the assessment and identification of significant heritage places within the municipality. We strongly recommend that places of social and cultural significance are also identified as a gap. This typology can include pubs, hotels, theatres and other places of community

meeting and congregation. In our role as community advocates for significant heritage places, we note the importance of 'social significance', which in many cases, particularly through the re-development/VCAT process, is generally cast as being of 'lesser' or 'secondary' importance than architectural or aesthetic significance. This consideration should be cast against our evolving understanding of tangible versus intangible cultural heritage, and how this relates to built fabric. Members of the community do not necessarily have an understanding of 'architectural' or 'aesthetic' purity or intactness, but care more about the history, character and identity of where they live, the places that are important to them, and how to preserve this. As such, we believe the identification, protection and celebration of places of social and cultural heritage significance, including intangible values and places that have a lower level of architectural purity and intactness should be prioritised.

5. Australian Heritage Festival

We were pleased to see reference of the Shire's support of the Andersons Mill Heritage Weekend which is held annually during the National Trust Australian Heritage Festival as an outcome of the 2014 Heritage Review Strategy.

We would encourage the Shire to include an additional action to become more involved in the Australian Heritage Festival throughout the municipality. The Festival is Australia's largest grassroots, community-led heritage festival, and is held every year in April and May. The Festival provides an equitable opportunity for communities to express and engage with their history, heritage and culture. We would also like to take this opportunity to invite the Shire to discuss with us further regarding how the Shire can become more involved with the program, including as part of our 'Friend of the Festival' program.

6. Heritage Advisory Committee

We strongly support the action to work with key heritage community groups to ensure best practice heritage outcomes. We also recommend that the Shire investigate the establishment of a Heritage Advisory Committee and would be pleased to provide further comment to support this action.

7. Victorian Heritage Register

We support the Shire's intention to continue to nominate places of State significance to the Victorian Heritage Register. We would like to take the opportunity to direct the Shire to the National Trust's Advocacy Toolkit. Advocacy Guide No. 1 provides guidance on nominating a place or object for inclusion in the Victorian Heritage Register. We strongly encourage the Shire to share this resource with their community networks.

8. Implementation, monitoring and review

We support the Shire's intention to review the strategy and associated Action Plan every four years as recommended in the *Municipal Heritage Strategies: A guide for Councils*. As recommended in the *Municipal Heritage Strategies: A guide for Councils*, we suggest including a column for 'Resourcing', 'Target Date for Completion', and 'Progress/Outcomes' be added to the

Heritage Strategy Action Plan. In terms of resourcing, we also recommend that a department should be identified with the responsibility to advocate for yearly budget allocation to ensure that all actions can be appropriately funded. It is noted that the Heritage Strategy is a document to be used by Council staff, Councillors and the community, therefore the addition of the heading 'Progress/Outcome' will provide different stakeholders a brief understanding of any progress to date and desired outcomes.

We strongly recommend that the Shire continue with transparent, ongoing and meaningful consultation with stakeholders and the community with regard to the actions documented in the plan.

9. Conclusion

Overall we support the adoption of the Hepburn Shire Council Heritage Strategy and Action Plan, noting some suggested amendments put forward in our submission. We welcome future opportunities to provide comment and feedback on the various actions outlined in this draft Heritage Strategy and Action Plan.

For any enquiries regarding this submission, please get in touch with this office on 9656 9818 or with me directly at freya.keam@nattrust.com.au.

Kind Regards,



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