

Heritage Listing: Benefits for owners



Have you noticed headings like these in the property section of your local newspaper: “Full of Character”, “Loads of Charm”, “Remembering Yesteryear”? Chances are, these headlines are referring to a historic house, an elderly terrace or a charming cottage. They may even refer to a heritage-listed property. There is growing evidence to support the view that heritage listing has a positive impact on property values, and real estate advertisements are starting to reflect this.

The main reason why people purchase heritage buildings is because they like them. And they like them for all sorts of reasons. It may be because of their character, or their well established gardens. They may have wonderful settings or pose the challenge of renovation, which so many people relish.

Owning a heritage-listed property brings other advantages:

- Heritage listing provides certainty for owners, neighbours and intending purchasers. This is important when people are looking for a particular environment within which to live and work. It explains why certain suburbs, towns, villages and rural properties are sought after.
- Protection of an item also requires the local council to consider the effect of any proposed development in the area surrounding heritage items or conservation areas. This is positive as it ensures an appropriate context for heritage items.
- It confirms a heritage status that is a source of pride for many people. This status can be very useful for commercial owners in their advertising.

- The assessment process leading to listing often unearths new information on the history and style of the place.
- Through flexibility clauses in local environmental plans, owners of heritage items can request councils to agree to land use changes, site coverage and car parking bonuses unavailable to other owners.
- Listing gives owners access to the free heritage advisory services provided by most councils in NSW.
- Listing provides potential savings through special heritage valuations and concessions. If the property is listed in a local or regional environmental plan (individually or in a conservation area) the owner can request a “heritage restricted valuation” for land tax and local rate purposes from the Valuer-General. If the property is on the State Heritage Register there is an automatic heritage valuation for both local rates and land tax purposes. Heritage restricted valuations mean that valuations of property are made on an existing development basis rather than on any presumption of future development.
- Listing gives access to local heritage fund programs run by many councils in NSW, particularly in rural areas, to provide small grants or loans to assist heritage projects.



Brownlow Hill is a rare colonial farming estate and is listed on the State Heritage Register. Photograph by Colleen Morris.

- Listing on the State Heritage Register makes the property eligible for consideration under the Commonwealth's annual Cultural Heritage Grants Program, which is open to both private owners and community groups.
- Heritage listing enhances applications to other bodies where the building or site might be eligible for funding.

Debunking the myths about heritage listing

It can be easy to point the finger at heritage listing when problems arise, but the benefits can far outweigh any perceived negatives.

- ✓ Listing places no legal restriction on the sale or leasing of properties.
- ✓ Heritage buildings are best cared for when they are lived in and loved. This means they must be useable. Houses may need new bathrooms and kitchens; commercial buildings may need new services and fire protection.
- ✓ Listing does not exclude changes or additions or new buildings on the site, provided that these do not detract from the heritage significance of the listed items. This is consistent with what most owners want for their heritage properties. It is also consistent with advice from real estate agents that well looked after heritage properties are among the easiest to sell and can bring the highest prices.
- ✓ Listing does not exclude the adaptive re-use of a heritage item. Sometimes this is a sensible way of ensuring the future use of an important place. Examples include the conversion of a warehouse to residential use or the adaptation of a house to offices.
- ✓ Other than normal maintenance, it is not expected that owners take any additional measures or undertake restoration work. Action against owners is only pursued in situations where an owner is deliberately allowing a property to deteriorate and where discussions have failed to resolve the issue.
- ✓ Maintenance of heritage items and gardens does not require formal approval.
- ✓ Some owners occasionally open their heritage properties to the public, usually on an entry fee basis, either for themselves or charity. However, as with all private property, heritage listing does not allow the general public the right to visit the property without the express permission of the owner.



Photograph by Paramount Studios

How to find out if a property is heritage-listed:

In NSW there are two types of statutory heritage listing. A property is a heritage item if it is listed in:

- the heritage schedule of the local council's Local Environmental Plan;
- the State Heritage Register, a list of places and items of particular importance to the people of NSW.

There are also many non-statutory heritage lists, such as the National Trust Register and the Royal Australian Institute of Architects' Register of 20th Century Buildings.

Although these registers do not provide legal protection, they help to alert the community to the intrinsic heritage value of particular places.

To find out if a property is heritage listed, access the Heritage Office website: www.heritage.nsw.gov.au.

Alternatively, you can check with your local council to find out if a property is identified in the Local Environmental Plan.

The National Trust maintains a list of heritage properties available for purchase on its website: www.nationaltrust.com.au.



NSW
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For further information or advice contact:

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