Wollongong Heritage Strategy 2019-2022
Protecting and conserving our City’s rich Heritage
February 2019


This document is intended as Council’s Operational Delivery Plan. It contains some items that are subject to the securing of funding and grants and will be subject to regular review and evaluation based on available resources, funding and other operational requirements.
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Background

Development of a Wollongong Heritage Strategy

In 2010 Wollongong City Council re-established the Wollongong Heritage Advisory Committee (now known as the Wollongong Heritage Reference Group).


Updating the Heritage Strategy

The Wollongong Heritage Strategy 2019-2022, has been developed following a review of the 2014-2017 Strategy and Action Plan, with input from the Wollongong Heritage Reference Group, various Council Divisions and following a public exhibition process.

This document provides continued direction to Council, and the Wollongong Heritage Reference Group, in relation to heritage outcomes for the strategy period.

Wollongong City Council respects and acknowledges those who came before us, the Traditional Custodians of the land on which our City is built, and all of those who have contributed to the City of Wollongong.

We will do this by working with the community to: identify; acknowledge; conserve; protect; document; record; interpret; promote; and manage, the significant: places; objects; records; stories; and memorials, of our past, for the benefit, enjoyment, and appreciation of future generations.
Council’s Planning Process

Wollongong 2028

The Wollongong Heritage Strategy expands on the Heritage aspects of our Wollongong 2028 Community Strategic Plan and sits alongside a number of intersecting and ‘supporting documents,’ which are connected to the Wollongong Heritage Strategy 2019-2022. These documents provide further details on how Council will achieve positive heritage outcomes within the Local Government Area.

Objective 1.4 of the CSP specifically deals with the heritage “we recognise and celebrate our heritage.”

The Wollongong Heritage Strategy 2019-2022 is closely linked to the following supporting documents:

> Creative Wollongong Cultural Plan 2019-2022
> Cultural Tourism Strategy 2018 (draft)
> Urban Greening Strategy 2019-2037 (draft)
> Public Art Strategy 2016-2021
> City Centre Urban Design Framework 2019 (pending)

Council has an integrated approach, Council’s Plans, and Strategies work together to make Wollongong a liveable city for all people.

Community Strategic Plan
A 10 year plan that identifies our community’s priorities and vision for the future

Supporting Documents
A level of interconnected documents that provide further detail about how we are going to achieve positive outcomes for the community

Implementation and Action Plan
Sets out the key projects and ongoing actions that will be delivered by Council as outcomes of the Strategy
Our Heritage

Wollongong’s Heritage

Our History
The Traditional Custodians live and care for Country here in the Illawarra as they have done for thousands of years. In 1815 some of the Illawarra’s Traditional Custodians led the first white settlers and their cattle down the Escarpment. This marked a new chapter in the story of our area.

Today the knowledge and dreaming stories of our Traditional Custodians has been layered with a rich history of timber-getting, farming, coal mining, railway and port building and burgeoning seaside village and holiday communities. All this has occurred in the setting of our beautiful beaches and the magnificent escarpment.

Our Shared Heritage
The Illawarra’s heritage places include historic buildings, industrial infrastructure, cemeteries, ocean pools and memorials. But our heritage is much more than just architectural forms. Rural lands, mining sites, cultural and natural landscapes of important to the Aboriginal community are all entwined to form our shared heritage.

Our heritage is the product of thousands of years of Aboriginal custodianship, descendants of the first European settlers and generations of migrants and their families from across the world who moved to the Illawarra and made it their home. It is also continuously evolving as we welcome those drawn to the Illawarra’s natural beauty and rich history. This living heritage is a vital part of the cultural fabric that makes up the Illawarra.

Our Heritage Places
At the time of adoption of this strategy Council has over 490 heritage sites and cultural landscapes listed in the Wollongong Local Environmental Plan 2009 and through State Environmental Planning Policies.

Of these items, 23 are listed on the NSW State Heritage Register as being items of significance to the state of New South Wales.

Heritage Conservation Areas
There are nine listed Heritage Conservation Areas in the Wollongong Local Government Area:
- Austinmer Conservation Area
- Brownsville Conservation Area
- Bulli Conservation Area
- Old Bulli Conservation Area
- Garrawarra Hospital Conservation Area
- Kembla Heights Mining Village
- Market Street Conservation Area
- North Beach Precinct and Belmore Basin
- Illawarra Escarpment Landscape Area

Declared Aboriginal Places
There are two declared Aboriginal Places under the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974 in the Wollongong Local Government Area. In 2007 Sandon Point was declared an Aboriginal Place, followed by formal recognition of the Bellambi Point Aboriginal Place in 2012.

“Places of cultural significance enrich people’s lives, often providing deep and inspirational sense of connection to community and landscape, to the past and to lived experiences. They are historical records that are important expressions of Australian identity and experience.

[These] places reflect the diversity of our communities, telling us about who we are and the past that has formed us and the Australian Landscape. They are irreplaceable and precious.”

- The Burra Charter
Objectives

There are five key Objectives that this Policy aims to achieve

1. Ensure that the Community are actively engaged in the development and delivery of Council’s heritage policies
2. Set the Heritage Reference Group’s agenda for the period of the Strategy
3. Provide a formal mechanism for evaluating, and reporting on Council’s performance in heritage management, and the achievements of the Wollongong Heritage Reference Group
4. Provide for the long term sustainable management of Wollongong’s Heritage
5. Provide the supporting policy framework for delivery of the Wollongong’s Heritage Implementation Plan Proposals 2019-2022
Our Heritage Strategies

Heritage Strategy

Strategy 1: Actively involve the community in the management of Wollongong’s heritage;

Strategy 2: Maintain an up to date list of heritage items;

Strategy 3: Employ and train staff to manage Wollongong’s heritage and provide professional advice to the community;

Strategy 4: Develop and Implement programs and projects that aim to achieve pro-active heritage management;

Strategy 5: Provide funding for heritage projects and programs;

Strategy 6: Identify and manage key heritage precincts, streetscapes, cultural and natural landscapes;

Strategy 7: Implement heritage education and promotion programs;

Strategy 8: Implement best practice heritage asset management procedures as a positive example for the community; and

Strategy 9: Promote sustainable development as a tool for heritage management.

Council will strive to achieve its Heritage Policy and the key Objectives by implementing nine key Heritage Strategies.

Each strategy is linked with a recommendation from the NSW Office of Environment and Heritage publication ‘Recommendations for Local Council Heritage Management’.
Actively Involve the Community in the management of Wollongong’s Heritage

Involving the community in the management of the City’s Heritage is an essential component of good heritage management. The Wollongong Heritage Reference Group was formed in 2018. The purpose of the Reference Group is to provide a formal means of community involvement in Council’s Heritage Management processes and decision making.

In recent years, there has been a significant trend within social media toward engagement around issues relating to the history and heritage of Wollongong. Social media provides an opportunity to engage with a broader and younger segment of the community in relation to heritage issues.

Council also acknowledges that the Heritage Reference Group provides only one means for community involvement in heritage management and that Council must also engage with a diverse cross section of our multicultural community in relation to all policy decisions that will impact on Heritage outcomes.

Council also recognises the need to continually improve our engagement with the local Aboriginal community in relation to Council works projects as well as Council policy programs.

Heritage Branch Recommendation 1 ‘Establish a Heritage Committee to deal with heritage matters in your local area’
Strategy 2

Maintain an up to date list of heritage items

Council has a legislative responsibility to maintain a list of heritage places and recognises the importance of this responsibility. Council is committed to the ongoing review and update of Schedule 5 of the Wollongong Local Environmental Plan and is focused on ensuring that the Schedule accurately represent those aspects of our city’s heritage that are important to the community.

Council also acknowledges that there are many sites and places of significance to the local Aboriginal Community that are not listed on Schedule 5 of the Wollongong Local Environmental Plan. These sites fall under the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974 and are most appropriately managed by the (former) Office of Environment & Heritage through the Aboriginal Heritage Information Management Database.

Heritage Branch Recommendation 2 - Identify the heritage items in your area and list them in your Local Environmental Plan.
Strategy 3

Employ and train staff to manage Wollongong’s Heritage and provide professional advice to the community

Heritage Branch Recommendation
3 - Appoint a heritage advisor to assist the Council, the community and owners of listed heritage items

Council will continue to provide a range of heritage services to the community. These services include:

- Heritage planning advice;
- Advice relating to conservation projects;
- Heritage promotion and education programs;
- Continue to grow and maintain the Wollongong Local Studies Library Collection.

Council recognises the importance of providing adequate resources to maintain and deliver these services to the standard expected by the community.

Council is also committed to the development and implementation of an internal staff training programs.
Strategy 4

Develop and implement programs and projects that aim to achieve proactive heritage management

Council recognises the importance of proactive heritage management in providing positive heritage outcomes and is committed to the implementation of projects and programs that encourage the active conservation of our City’s heritage.

Council aims to achieve this by ensuring that heritage advice and guidance is readily available to the community. Council will continue to promote positive heritage projects through the use of the Heritage Incentive clauses in the Wollongong Local Environmental Plan.

Council also takes a proactive role in shaping heritage policy and legislation at all levels of government. Council is also committed to ensuring that the views of the local community, particularly the local Aboriginal community, are meaningfully represented in these spaces.

Council is committed to maintaining open and effective working relationships with other government agencies including the National Parks and Wildlife Service, the Former Office of Environment and Heritage as well as community organisations such as the Illawarra/Shoalhaven Branch of the National Trust and the Illawarra Aboriginal Land Council to implement cross organisational projects.

Heritage Branch Recommendation 4 - Manage local heritage in a positive manner
Heritage Branch Recommendation 5 - Introduce a local heritage grant fund to provide small grants to encourage local heritage projects

Council recognises the importance of funding to support community based and individual Heritage projects as well as to manage our own Heritage assets. Providing funding for a range of projects allows Council to achieve positive heritage outcomes that benefit the entire community. Council is committed to providing funds to support the delivery of this Strategy and associated Implementation Plan.

Council has run a successful local heritage grant program for the past 10 years and will continue to support local heritage owners to achieve positive conservation outcomes. Council will also continue to actively pursue available heritage funding from other levels of government, including the Office of Environment and Heritage, Heritage Advisor Program.

Keera Vale House, West Wollongong (Image: Illawarra Mercury)
Strategy 6

Identify and manage key heritage precincts, streetscapes, cultural and natural landscapes

The identification and management of historic precincts and streetscapes and is recognised by Council as an essential component of heritage management, as well as being interlinked with principles of urban design and strategic planning.

Council is committed to managing our highly significant Aboriginal Places, cultural landscapes and environmental heritage through meaningful engagement with the local Aboriginal Community. Council recognises the significance of both the tangible and intangible values associated with cultural landscapes such as Sandon Point, Hill 60 and the natural landscapes of Illawarra Escarpment that are entwined with the environmental values of these places.

Council also recognises that some of our valued rural landscapes such as the West Dapto Precinct and historic industrial sites including former Collieries and Cokeworks are facing significant development pressure and are in danger of being lost.

Council is therefore committed to ensuring heritage is a key consideration of town and village planning, CBD planning as well as in planning and master planning for public places and significant sites with recognised heritage values.

Heritage Branch Recommendation 6 - Run a heritage main street program
Strategy 7

Implement Heritage education and promotion programs

Heritage Branch Recommendation 7 - Present educational and promotional programs

Council recognises that our heritage places and sites, particularly the Wollongong Harbour Precinct and North Beach Precinct as well as a wide range of other significant places, are unique assets to the community that provide opportunities for education, cultural tourism and the ongoing economic development of the region.

Council recognises that educating and promoting our heritage to the community and visitors to our Local Government Area is an essential part of proactive heritage management. For this reason Council has committed to the ongoing presentation of exciting and engaging education and promotion programs for all ages, related to our shared Heritage.

These programs include an ongoing education program for Council staff, a commitment to ongoing support for local heritage events and festivals, as well as the preparation of a Heritage Promotion and Tourism Strategy.
Strategy 8

Implement best practice Heritage asset management procedures as a positive example for the community

Council is responsible for the management of over 100 heritage affected properties. These include over 30 heritage listed buildings, more than 20 heritage listed parks and recreation areas, eight Cemeteries, as well as many other heritage items including trees and landscapes, monuments/memorials, ocean pools, historic roads and rail alignments.

In addition to these Council also maintains a number of assets that have cultural significance but may not be listed as heritage items on the Wollongong Local Environmental Plan 2009. These sites include a wide range of Aboriginal sites and places of cultural significance to the local Aboriginal Community.

It is essential that Council puts in place procedures and processes to ensure that Council leads by example and proactively manages our heritage assets. Best practice heritage management benefits our local community by ensuring our shared history, our iconic public buildings as well as our cultural landscapes are cared for into the future.

Heritage Branch Recommendation 8 - Set a good example to the community by properly managing heritage places owned or operated by the council.
Promote sustainable development as a tool for Heritage management

Council acknowledges that Aboriginal Cultural Heritage is intrinsically tied to the Illawarra Landscape and our rich variety of flora and fauna. Caring for Country, through principles of sustainable environmental management and conservation that have traditionally been practiced by the Aboriginal Community for thousands of years is essential to the management of our Cultural Landscapes.

Council also recognises that the conservation of heritage sites supports the underlying principles of environmentally sustainable development (ESD). Council supports the principles of ESD through the Heritage Incentives Clauses of the Wollongong Local Environmental Plan that encourage adaptive re-use of Heritage buildings and the waiver of Development Application fees where conservation outcomes are achieved.

Council also acknowledges that opportunities to allow heritage buildings to meet modern sustainability outcomes are increasing through the development of new technologies. These innovations can be balanced with the heritage significance of these sites through appropriate management and decision making.
Implementation Plan and Policy

To ensure the successful delivery of the Wollongong Heritage Strategy 2019-2022, the Wollongong Heritage Implementation Plan Proposals 2019-2022 have been developed. The Implementation Plan Proposals are provided as Appendix 1 to the Strategy.

The Implementation and Action Plan are intended to guide Council in the delivery of the nine strategies detailed in this Policy.
Appendix 1
Do you have a question for Wollongong City Council?

Phone: (02) 4227 7111
For the hearing impaired: 13 36 77 ( Australian Communication Exchange)

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Please provide written feedback to:

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