

# New Thematic Heritage Listings Program is a first for Australia

When the Heritage Council of NSW sat down to nominate the four subjects that would be the focus of the inaugural Thematic Listings Program for 2009/10, it faced a welcome dilemma.

Which strands of our State's history and heritage would be the first to come under the spotlight?

These initial themes needed to express the character and identity of New South Wales, carry some resonance in the community itself and reflect important milestones and aspects of the State's history.

After much discussion the four themes in the inaugural NSW program were chosen: Aboriginal heritage, the heritage associated with Governor Macquarie, the heritage of Convicts under sentence, and the heritage of World Wars I & II.

The Thematic Listings Program is just one step towards developing a strategic framework for managing the listing process. It will fill some significant gaps in the State Heritage Register and will help to bring together comparative heritage items and places for nomination for listing.

Since the Thematic Listings program initiative is the first of its kind to be undertaken by a State in Australia, its success will provide the model for similar programs in other states.

So why these four themes? First the identification of Aboriginal heritage is seen as a long term process which will be driven by Aboriginal communities through consultation at the grass roots.

The Aboriginal heritage theme will consider the thousands of years of pre-colonial culture, places associated with the first contact with European settlers, and later sites that demonstrate the journey of Aboriginal communities from the past to the present. Sites linked to historical events or associated with respected Aboriginal historical figures will also come under consideration.

Convict heritage is made up of places and items, including archaeological sites that tell the story of the early decades of penal servitude.

Not only did convicts provide the bulk of the original European population of NSW, but their labour built the essential infrastructure such as roads and ports, homes and services to support the colony.

The first listing under the Convict theme was announced on 31 May 2009 with another 30 kilometres of the 180-year old Great North Road added to the State Heritage Register (SHR). The new section (between Mount Manning and Wollombi) of SHR listed Great North Road brings a total of 64 kilometres of the convict built road now listed.

This theme also supports and builds upon current research undertaken to support the Australian Government's 2008 Australian Convict Sites World Heritage nomination to UNESCO.

The third theme relates to the legacy of Governor Lachlan Macquarie. Macquarie is remembered as a renowned colonial governor who had a profound impact on the society and culture of New South Wales and who left behind a legacy of growth and development.

He was responsible for laying out several towns along the Hawkesbury River - Windsor, Richmond, Castlereagh, Pitt Town and Wilberforce as well as



*The new section of the SHR listed Great North Road features several unique structures including the Ramsay's Leap culvert and stone wall (pictured), St Alban's Road ramp and the timber Thompson's Bridge.*

establishing the major satellite towns of Liverpool and Campbelltown and the first inland town of Bathurst.

Macquarie's tenure as Governor ran from 1810 to 1821. In 1822 he compiled a comprehensive list of his building and development achievements that even includes the most trivial of works such as 'An extensive Kitchen Garden' at Penrith. The more prominent items include dwellings, churches, hospitals, watch houses, barracks, courthouses, storehouses, street works, road construction, windmills, docks and jetties.

It is hoped that some of the lesser known items and places will join the more prominent items for inclusion on the Register as part of the Governor Macquarie theme.

The fourth theme provides a significant opportunity to remember two very different 20th century conflicts and their impacts on New South Wales. The exploration of our military heritage acknowledges the 70th anniversary of the outbreak of World War Two, the contribution of service men and women during both World Wars and the role of the 'home front'.

World War I propelled Australia into a full sense of its national identity, one that was finally accepted by the 'Mother Country', but fought largely remote from Australian shores. In contrast World War II brought 'total war' to Australia with full mobilisation of all available citizenry and industry. Heavy fighting occurred close to Australia's borders in Timor, New Guinea and the Coral Sea. For the first time mainland Australia was attacked with strikes at Sydney, Newcastle, Broome and Darwin.

The heritage of the two World Wars is comprised of places that provide evidence of those dramatic conflicts. They include military training grounds, fortifications and munitions factories, internment camps, convalescent hospitals, memorials and shipwrecks. It is hoped that a sample of these will be included on the Register.

With several nominations under the Program almost ready for public exhibition or advanced to the stage for final consideration by the Heritage Council, the community can look forward to some major heritage listing announcements within the coming months.

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