



**ACT**  
Government

# DEBUNKING THE MYTHS OF HERITAGE LISTING

THIS FACT SHEET HAS BEEN PRODUCED TO ASSIST OWNERS OF HERITAGE PROPERTIES IN THE ACT. IT ADDRESSES MYTHS SURROUNDING THE EFFECTS OF HERITAGE LISTING AND REPLACES THEM WITH FACTS ABOUT THE BENEFITS AND EFFECTS OF LISTING.



Having a property listed as a heritage place will have little effect on most property owners. It essentially means that if you propose to undertake works or development on the property, the ACT Heritage Council (the Council) will advise whether the proposal will have an impact on the place's heritage significance. This advice will then be considered through the normal development application process of the planning and land authority.

To date, the Council has supported 92.5% of development applications for heritage listed places in the ACT.





## MYTHS AND FACTS

### ONE: HERITAGE LISTING STOPS CHANGE OR INHIBITS GROWTH

**FACTS:** Changes are often made to heritage places in the ACT. However, as with development for places that are not heritage listed, these changes may need development approval. The approvals process promotes sympathetic changes which retain the authenticity of the heritage place.

Usually, only changes affecting the exterior facade will require approval. However, there are some exceptions to this rule, particularly where internal features are considered to be of sufficient heritage significance to warrant protection. Heritage listed places can be converted to new uses without approval where this doesn't affect significant fabric. You can talk to ACT Heritage or the ACT Government's free and independent Heritage Advisory Service for advice on these or other changes.

Smaller works at heritage listed places may be undertaken without approval; for example, most day-to-day gardening, interior alterations, basic maintenance and replacing materials with like-for-like.

For further information visit the [Council's General Conservation Policies](#).

Managing our limited heritage resources in this way can revitalise unique precincts and drive long-term growth, including improved environments, property values, and visitor numbers.

### TWO: HERITAGE LISTING DEVALUES PROPERTY

**FACTS:** Studies conducted in NSW and Victoria show that listing has no effect on residential property value in most cases, and sometimes improves resale value by up to 12%. Heritage buildings are often quality buildings with a special appeal. As they are limited in supply, their rarity and authenticity are attractions that cannot be built or recreated anywhere else. Therefore, heritage listings of Garden City and other precincts within the ACT can be considered protection for an owner's investment.

For further information visit the Impact of Heritage Listing on Residential Property Values Factsheet.

### THREE: HERITAGE LISTING TURNS MY PLACE INTO A MUSEUM

**FACTS:** Listing does not oblige owners to freeze a place in time or open it to the public as a museum. In fact, finding a viable use is a priority for listed places. The Council recognises that some change is often required to ensure heritage homes provide a comfortable and contemporary living standard. Normal day-to-day maintenance is encouraged. An owner is not required to reverse any previous works to date at the time of listing, although this may be highly desirable.



## FOUR: HERITAGE LISTING PENALISES ME AND MY PROPERTY

**FACTS:** Listing provides recognition of heritage values for you and the community, ensures those values are protected, and gives you improved access to heritage grants and free architectural advice. Listing also gives you greater certainty that neighbouring development in heritage precincts will be sympathetic to the heritage values identified.

## FIVE: HERITAGE LISTING DOESN'T CONSIDER ECONOMIC MATTERS

**FACTS:** This is true in the sense that the Council does not consider economic factors as part of the listing process. At this time, the Council only considers whether a place has heritage significance, which is consistent with the national approach. However, economic considerations may be taken into account by the Council at the time of assessing development applications for works and development. Such factors are not an overriding influence; however, a balance is sought between conservation and reasonable development.

## SIX: THE DEVELOPMENT APPROVALS PROCESS WILL TAKE LONGER FOR A LISTED PLACE

**FACTS:** The process for obtaining Council advice is incorporated into timeframes for deciding on a development application under the *Planning and Development Act 2007*, and does not impose any additional time or fees.

## SEVEN: HERITAGE LISTING COMPLICATES RENOVATIONS

**FACTS:** Having a listed property means you have information about the issues and the process for gaining development approval, including better access to heritage grants and free advice from ACT Heritage and the Heritage Advisory Service. As stated above, the Council advice is included in the development approval process and does not impose additional time or fees.

Fewer delays and better design outcomes often result when you follow the Council's heritage guidelines and talk with ACT Heritage or the independent Heritage Advisory Service early in the process.

Where a property has been identified as being likely to have heritage value, it is preferable to seek heritage listing early. This provides certainty and is likely to reduce the risk of delays and community protests that may occur if heritage values are identified but not properly assessed and listed.

## EIGHT: HERITAGE LISTING IS UNFAIR INTERFERENCE

**FACTS:** Like ordinary planning controls or zoning, listing is necessary. It is required by law for orderly development and to ensure open, transparent and consistent decision making.

Listing is part of good planning. Everyone gets a say before listing; owners and neighbours included. Listing decisions are made independently by the Council after a comprehensive assessment that also considers any public comments – including those of owners – and uses national heritage standards. Decisions are guided by a professional heritage assessment using standard significance criteria guides. Listing decisions may be appealed by interested persons to the ACT Civil and Administrative Tribunal, which will review the decision.



## NINE: I WILL LOOK AFTER MY PLACE BETTER IF IT'S UNLISTED

**FACTS:** While you may be the best possible custodian for your heritage property, no-one can guarantee future owners will look after it as well as you if it isn't heritage listed. In most cases, the reasons for a heritage listing are the same reasons you also value and enjoy your property.

## TEN: HERITAGE LISTING REDUCES DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL

**FACTS:** Development potential is limited by zoning, physical site constraints, impact on neighbours and the environment, and other controls. Even if a place is not listed, the community or the Council can raise heritage concerns when development is proposed.

For a typical listed home, a sympathetic modern rear addition for extra living space, taking advantage of an extra basement level, a second storey in the attic space or dual occupancy may all be possible. Alterations to heritage places to accommodate modern bathrooms and kitchens are common.

## ELEVEN: HERITAGE LISTED PLACES CANNOT BE BULLDOZED

**FACTS:** Listing normally prevents demolition. However, in some cases, where it can be proven that there is no prudent or feasible alternative, Council might not object to a proposed demolition. Such circumstances might be where a building is structurally unsound beyond economic repair, or where there is a significant health or safety risk beyond economic repair.

In some circumstances listed places can be partly demolished with approval, such as to remove detracting additions. If a listed place has lost its heritage significance or no longer needs long-term conservation, the place can be removed from the heritage list or demolished following a government approval process.

## TWELVE: ONLY THE OLD, GRAND OR BEAUTIFUL IS LISTED

**FACTS:** Eight different heritage significance criteria mean places can be significant for reasons other than age and beauty. Criteria such as aesthetic quality; association with important people; importance to the community; and rarity mean that the recent and old, modest and grand, plain and beautiful alike form part of our history and heritage.

When considering heritage listings, Council is mindful that it is important that the range of heritage places depict a broad history.

## THIRTEEN: TOO MUCH IS LISTED

**FACTS:** There are roughly 200 places entered in the ACT Heritage Register. These registered places include heritage precincts, which comprise about 1,750 houses. Of approximately 148,000 buildings in the ACT (including commercial and government buildings), only around 1.3% are heritage listed.

While individual heritage battles might make heritage conservation appear to be a problem, heritage is a very small part of the overall property and development sectors.

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