

14 January 2019

URBIS

Dear Fiona

## **VARROVILLE SHR EXPANSION FINAL POINTS FROM GBA PRESENTATION**

I reinforce all of the material contained in my two reports that were submitted to the IPC on 14 January 2019.

**I strongly recommend to the IPC that, should it advise any form of SHR listing expansion to the Minister for Heritage, it includes a recommendation that there be a complete re-evaluation of the Heritage Significance Assessment and Statement of Heritage Significance currently contained in the Heritage Council submission.**

That re-evaluation should take account of all of the additional research and analysis that has been undertaken by specialised consultants on behalf of the Catholic Metropolitan Cemeteries Trust over recent years.

It is a failure of due process to ignore the research and submissions of the affected property owner while embracing without further questioning, the fanciful and unsubstantiated submissions made by the adjoining property owner.

The Statement of Heritage Significance currently recommended by the Heritage Council will not provide a sound and responsible basis for the management by OEH and further evolution of the Varroville state by the current land owner for the next 100 plus years.

The whole logical basis of the current Statement of Significance is flawed and not fit for purpose. It selectively embraces individual items of documentary evidence, while making no attempt to assess these or to undertake any contextual analysis, before making unjustifiable historic connections leading to conclusions of rarity and exceptional significance.

No historian would accept the wording of a 19<sup>th</sup> century real estate auction promotional text, as wholly definitive and of unchallengeable validity, without detailed contextual analysis.

No one could sensibly claim that a vineyard established in c1815 could possibly be the second oldest in NSW, when vine cultivation was widespread across the Sydney basin from the first years of settlement. No one has definitively linked the current remnant planting layouts on Varroville with any particular period of viniculture in either the 19<sup>th</sup> or 20<sup>th</sup> century.

**GBA**  
Heritage

GBA Heritage  
Heritage Consultants

1/71 York St, Sydney  
NSW 2000 Australia  
T: +61 2 9299 8600  
F: +61 2 9299 8711

[gba@gbaheritage.com](mailto:gba@gbaheritage.com)  
[www.gbaheritage.com](http://www.gbaheritage.com)

Nominated Architect  
Graham Leslie Brooks  
NSW A.R.B. 3836

GBA Heritage Pty Ltd  
Incorporated in NSW

ACN 073 802 730  
ABN 56 073 802 730

There is a similar planting pattern of contour planting on the adjoining St Andrews Estate, visible in Nearmap aerial photographs, challenging the claim of “exceptional” rarity for Varroville.

The proposed Statement of Significance is littered with unsubstantiated claims of rarity or significance, for which no contextual or comparative research is presented.

No one could take seriously Sturt’s claim of building dams and tanks on his property as evidence of a major step forward in water conservation, when every farming estate owner from the earliest days of settlement was faced with the issues of a hot dry climate with variable rainfall. How can the Statement of Significance rely on references to mid 20<sup>th</sup> century aerial photos taken a century after Sturt is supposed to have constructed the western dams?

A simple inspection of the undulating landscape across the slopes of the Scenic Hills, which form the wider context of Varroville, could fail to see the ease of creating water storage dams on every rivulet or stream that would eventually flow into Bunbury Curran or Bow Bowring creek. All of the historic grantees of the land in this locality, as much as across the entire Cumberland Plain, would have been very conscious of techniques for water capture and conservation.

How can the submission by the property owners claim that William Weaver had been comprehensively trained by Isambard Kingdom Brunel, when he arrived in the Colony at the age of 23? This same claim does not actually ascribe the creation of the idealised English parkland to any one individual amongst the 6 or so owners in the first 40 years of Euroen occupation. Suddenly it simply emerged to provide a background to the 1858 house.

**The heritage significance of the subject land must be re-evaluated as an evolved pastoral and agricultural cultural landscape, not as some survivor of an idealised and fanciful English parkland. This fanciful concept has been utterly refuted in the submissions of Dr Richard Lamb and Mr Graham Brooks**

**The term “exceptional” must be removed from the Heritage Assessment and Statement of Heritage Significance recommended by the Heritage Council. No valid justification has been presented of why the current standard level of State Heritage Significance, contained in the existing SHR 00737 listing, should be elevated in relation to the surrounding land.**

Yours faithfully  
GBA HERITAGE PTY LTD



Graham Brooks  
Director

