

Saturday, 16 February 2019

LABOR WILL PROTECT AND CELEBRATE NSW HERITAGE

Deputy Labor Leader and Shadow Minister for the Environment and Heritage, Penny Sharpe, has today announced Labor's plan to protect and celebrate the state's heritage.

If elected in March, Labor will create the first Heritage Strategy for NSW, deliver specific laws to protect Aboriginal cultural heritage, close the loopholes in heritage laws and ensure a transparent heritage decision-making process.

Ms Sharpe outlined Labor's plan today at Parramatta heritage site, Willow Grove, which locals are fighting to save from being demolished by the Berejiklian Liberal Government.

Ms Sharpe said: "There are significant sites around the state, just like Willow Grove and the St George's Terrace, here in Parramatta, which are being bulldozed for development.

"Labor has a comprehensive plan to protect our precious environmental and cultural heritage, like these sites, and to protect and promote Aboriginal heritage."

Currently, NSW is the only state in Australia without standalone legislation to protect Aboriginal cultural heritage.

"Labor respects that Aboriginal heritage is formed by a living culture that includes people, places, languages and the environment, so we will create much-needed dedicated legislation to protect it," Ms Sharpe said.

Labor's five-point plan to protect and celebrate our state's heritage, will:

1. Create the first NSW Heritage Strategy

The strategy will detail initiatives to protect and celebrate the state's heritage over the next ten years. Preparation for it will include a NSW Heritage Summit as well as a review of:

- The *Heritage Act 1977* (NSW);
- Management of the NSW Government's heritage assets;
- Interaction between planning laws, planning policies and the Heritage Act; and
- Funding and support for heritage conservation and maintenance.

2. Deliver an *Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act* to protect and promote Aboriginal cultural heritage

- Aboriginal heritage requires dedicated legislation but the Liberals and Nationals have never introduced a bill to Parliament.

3. Stop Heritage Ministers ignoring the Heritage Council's recommendations for heritage listings

- Currently, the Minister alone can decide whether an item is listed, rejected or reviewed by the Independent Planning Commission (IPC).
- Labor will take immediate rejection off the table; if the Minister doesn't accept the recommendation it will go to the IPC for review. This review process will give the community a chance to have their say and provide greater transparency in the decision making process.

4. End the misuse of financial hardship provisions by government

- In 2016, the Liberals and Nationals misused this provision to refuse to list the government-owned Sirius Building. The claim that heritage listing the building would cause undue financial hardship for the government was rejected by the Land and Environment Court.
- Labor will amend the Heritage Act to remove any doubt that financial hardship provisions are only to apply to individual property owners not the state government.

5. Protect heritage sites

Labor will:

- Save Willow Grove and St George's Terrace in Parramatta (and ensure they're not demolished or sold off to property developers);
- List the Sirius Building on the State Heritage Register;
- Protect the North Parramatta precinct (including the Parramatta Female Factory historic precinct) and fast-track World Heritage listing;
- Keep the Powerhouse Museum in Ultimo and assist with its state heritage listing;
- Retain the historic Windsor Bridge;
- Support the Camden community to nominate the town centre for state heritage listing;
- Contribute \$350,000 to upgrade the iconic Bondi Pavilion;
- Support the community to nominate Haberfield for state heritage listing; and
- Work with the Heritage Council to clear the backlog of state heritage nominations.

The NSW Heritage Summit will be held in the lead-up to the General Assembly of the International Council on Monuments and Sites, which will be held in Sydney in 2020.

Ms Sharpe said: "The Summit will provide a road-map for legislative reform and policies for better coordination among agencies which deal with heritage matters.

"On March 23 there is a clear choice. A vote for Labor is a vote to protect and promote our heritage. A vote for the Berejiklian Government is a vote for further vandalism of our heritage assets."