8 December 2017

DPTI Planning Engagement
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By email: DPTI.PlanningEngagement@sa.gov.au

Dear Sir/Madam,


Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this proposal. I provide this letter as a submission on behalf of Australia ICOMOS.

ICOMOS – the International Council on Monuments and Sites – is a non-government professional organisation that promotes expertise in the conservation of cultural heritage. ICOMOS is also an Advisory Body to the World Heritage Committee under the World Heritage Convention. Australia ICOMOS, formed in 1976, is one of over 100 national committees throughout the world. Australia ICOMOS has over 600 members in a range of heritage professions. We have expert members on a large number of ICOMOS International Scientific Committees, as well as on expert committees and boards in Australia. We have a particular interest in Australia’s world heritage sites.

Australia ICOMOS supports the recognition, protection and enhancement of the highly valuable agricultural landscapes of the Barossa and McLaren Vale through the Character Preservation Acts (Acts), and commends the South Australian government for their leadership in this area of cultural heritage recognition and practice.

Adequacy of Protection of Character Values

The containment of residential development through a legislative framework in each Act aims to provide certainty for continued farming and primary production activities, to protect the rural landscape aesthetics and heritage attributes of towns and landscapes, to enhance the natural resources, and to support tourism enterprise.

The Acts reinforce existing rural zoning provisions and desired landscape character policy and provide legislative reinforcement to previously vulnerable urban and country township boundaries.

We note that improved protection of the character values identified in the Acts will require future planning and design policy to: better define (and align with) the preservation of those values; and to address current policy gaps, inconsistencies and inadequacies in planning assessment interpretation.

New planning policy also needs to recognise that to maintain special character, an agricultural landscape needs to remain viable and resilient in the face of threats from economic volatility and climate change, as well as urban expansion. Multiple policy mechanisms (such as the current alignment of the CP Districts with the locally driven pursuit of National and World Heritage listing) will be needed to address those threats. New policy mechanisms should enable diversification, vertical integration and value-adding to primary production, encourage agri-tourism enterprise and support regional-based economic resilience, and allow adaption and innovation in agricultural practice in response to climate change and economic volatility.

Protection would also be enhanced if planning policy identified the specific landscape values of distinctive views and vistas; and the biodiversity values of places – all of which contribute to the overarching character values. There is an opportunity to consider climate control through the protection of significant tree species and habitat areas, and encouragement of diverse plantings. This level of detail assists the development of policies around climate change and species loss. All policies and guidelines will need to
be discussed with relevant industries, residents, community groups, councils and professional organisations as part of an ongoing process.

**Adequacy of Land Division Controls to Maintain District Character**

The key threats to the character values not covered by the land division controls of the Acts are boundary realignments and the potential implementation or realisation of extensive existing unrealised dwelling rights. These challenges may lead to land being taken out of agricultural production, conflicts between land uses, and negative impacts on landscape character due to an increased density of dwellings across the landscape. These cumulative threats may require further policy refinement.

Land division controls do not necessarily ensure preservation of the landscape character and heritage attributes, nor do they make agriculture and viticulture viable and sustainable. Multiple policy mechanisms and policy fine-tuning beyond land division control will be needed to sustain the identified character values into the future. Future built form on existing allotments should be guided by siting, design and construction materials to complement and maintain existing character.

**Family, Social, Economic and Environmental impacts of the Acts**

The preservation of cultural heritage and the definition and enhancement of what makes a place special can provide social, economic and environmental benefit. A rural landscape represents multiple values beyond its agricultural production values, as recognised in the Acts, and these multiple values need to be defined, understood and recognised by government and the broader community.

The five years since the Acts were introduced have seen an increase in that understanding and recognition at both the government and community level. They have also seen a decline in dwelling construction in the CP districts and an increase in activities such as cellar doors, restaurants, functions centres and other emerging trends for breweries, distilleries and cideries as well as increases in active recreation (walking and cycling). It is difficult to know whether these are impacts of the Acts or other social and market forces, however the trends appear to reflect the intention of the Acts to support a viable farming and tourism region that is valued by locals and visitors alike.

Some conflict between farming and emerging tourism-oriented land uses is emerging, which may need to be addressed further in Act policy. Policy will also need to continue to recognize that the identified values can conflict with each other (eg food and wine production can conflict with visual amenity and tourism and agricultural production with natural resource protection).

**Are changes to the Acts needed?**

Character Area affected Development Plans (DPs) have not responded consistently to the special character suggested by the Planning Strategy Addendum, with consequent policy gaps in existing authorised DPs with respect to character areas. While the replacement Planning and Design Code is being formulated, interim adjustments to DPs would enable clearer special character policies to be provided until DPs are replaced by the Code.

Recognition of historic landscape and tenure patterns might be of assistance in determining the location and siting of future building development. There are also a number of historic structures that are not beyond retrieval that could demonstrate how character areas can be both viable and maintain heritage values, subject to compatibility with farming practices. The benefits include local tourism, local heritage as part of character areas and adding to the economic and social opportunities.

**SA’s new Planning System – Changes Suggested**

Consideration of clustering of housing near townships, where development is feasible, with suitable buffers between agribusiness and townships to minimise risk of adverse effects of harvesting, pest control and rural maintenance of soil quality.

A fundamental requirement for managing change is to be informed of land capability. Within this context, managing character should be a process to reassure some primary producers who may doubt the viability of their livelihoods until clearer character policies are formulated.

**Summary**
The Acts, while commendable in their intent, are limited in influence. They should ideally influence decision-making and policy-making in a broader context, beyond the current local and state government development assessment context.

Both Acts should both protect and promote the identified high-level character values of the regions. They should address the threats from economic and environmental upheaval, as well as from urban expansion, while allowing the districts to adapt and evolve over time as productive, viable and innovative agricultural and tourism regions. As high level planning legislation, the two Acts currently reinforce and underline the need to value character areas through practical planning policies.

Considerations of character in terms of the observations suggested in this submission may reduce conflicts between productive land uses such as farming, viticulture and food production and the State’s planning policy framework.

Thank you again for your consideration of the views of Australia ICOMOS on the Review of the Character Preservation (Barossa Valley) Act 2012 and Character Preservation (McLaren Vale) Act 2012. Australia ICOMOS has a National Scientific Committee on Cultural Landscapes and we would be pleased to contribute to any future policy and guideline development around the legislation.

Yours faithfully

IAN TRAVERS
President, Australia ICOMOS