

Friday 1 June 2012

Study supports Mount Lofty Ranges World Heritage bid

Researchers from the University of Adelaide have recommended that four councils in Adelaide's Mount Lofty Ranges and the State Government should jointly pursue a bid for World Heritage listing of the region.

In a report released publicly today, the findings support a proposed bid for UNESCO World Heritage listing of the working agricultural landscape of the Adelaide Hills, the Barossa Valley, Mount Barker and McLaren Vale.

According to the study's authors, World Heritage listing would protect the Mount Lofty Ranges' unique qualities as a working agricultural region. The region's food, wine and tourism industries could be globally branded accordingly.

If successful, the Mount Lofty Ranges would join other working agricultural sites in Italy, Portugal, Hungary and Mexico to be recognised in this way.

Funded by the Adelaide Hills Council, Barossa Council, District Council of Mount Barker and the City of Onkaparinga, the 18-month study was led by Professor Randy Stringer from the University of Adelaide's School of Agriculture, Food and Wine and the Environment Institute. The councils will consider the study's findings over the next six weeks.

"World Heritage listing for agricultural landscapes is very rare, and rarer still for *working, evolving* agricultural landscapes," says Professor Stringer, a University of Adelaide agricultural economist who has had extensive experience with the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization.

"Achieving World Heritage Site status would aim to conserve the unique qualities of the Mount Lofty Ranges, not just for future generations of Australians but also for the world. This would not be seen as turning the Ranges into a museum, but protecting its status as a working, growing, changing landscape under local planning control.

"World Heritage listing would provide the globally recognised branding that our food, wine and tourism industries are seeking – it would tell the story of what makes this place so special to the outside world, and to the people of Adelaide."

The report concludes that seeking World Heritage status is a no-lose proposition, whether or not it succeeds.

"World Heritage status has evolved into a widely respected brand that countries use to attract tourists and to promote and add value to their products," Professor Stringer says. "For me it all comes down to answering one question: 'If we *can* get it, why wouldn't we?'"

Note to media:

The following page contains a detailed summary of the reasons why a bid for UNESCO World Heritage listing should proceed.

For copies of the Executive Summary, the Feasibility Study and the related Economic Impact Study, go to this link: [Mount Lofty Ranges agrarian landscape World Heritage bid documents](#).

World Heritage listing of the Mount Lofty Ranges agrarian landscape feasibility study conclusions

1. **Solid grounds exist** – on the basis of history and continuing culture and practice – to mount a bid for World Heritage Site (WHS) designation for the Mount Lofty Ranges agricultural region. Such a bid should be pursued in **two stages**, and would have a good chance of success. Two criteria for World Heritage listing concern outstanding examples that *'illustrate[...] significant stage(s) in human history'* or are *'directly or tangibly associated with events or living traditions, with ideas or beliefs...of outstanding universal significance'*.

South Australia was not only the **first place in Australia to be planned and developed by free settlers**, but also **the first place in the world to apply the principles of 'systematic colonisation'**, developed by **Edward Gibbon Wakefield, John Stuart Mill and Jeremy Bentham**. The region's links to this unique philosophical movement of 'universal significance', and the continuing reflection of these ideas in the modern landscape and land use policy, would form the basis of a future World Heritage bid.

2. WHS designation would stimulate **higher economic growth** in the region by boosting producers' global competitiveness (e.g., branding opportunities), supporting continued development of high-value primary production, and attracting investment. Extensive analysis of direct benefits-to-costs alone shows **strong returns** for low-, medium- and high-growth scenarios if WHS listing is achieved – taking note of uncertainties in generating such estimates – and real benefits even if it is not, simply through undertaking the process of mounting a bid.

3. By placing high value on character- and heritage-conserving innovation, WHS listing would provide a much **more resilient development path** for the region, and help reverse trends of agricultural land loss in the greater Adelaide area. Existing zoning and proposed legislation **will not ensure** the economic viability necessary to retain the region's rural character in the long term.

4. WHS and National Heritage listings **will not affect ordinary planning processes** for the vast majority of development applications in the region. These processes will remain the same before and after listing.

5. The value of WHS listing is unlocked not by the listing itself, but by the motivation and **coordinated action of local stakeholders** and the integration of systems of governance marshalled to make the bid work. The bid process would catalyse and unify discussion of issues vital to the future of Adelaide and South Australia, as well as to the region, including 'intangibles' with real consequences, such as sustainability, climate change mitigation, biodiversity conservation and ethics, as well as senses of place, identity and community.

6. **Continuing loss of productive agricultural land** means that securing the place of agriculture in the regional landscape and economy cannot be left to a 'business as usual' policy stance. A decisive shift in public policy and in private behaviour is needed, as are multiple vehicles to carry that decision through.

Media Contact:

Professor Randy Stringer
Agriculture and Food Policy Professor
School of Agriculture, Food and Wine
The University of Adelaide
Phone: +61 8 8313 7123
Mobile: 0405 148 007
randy.stringer@adelaide.edu.au

Stephanie Johnston
Project Manager
World Heritage Listing of the Mount Lofty
Ranges Agrarian Landscape
Mobile: 0400 738 844
stephaniejohnston@adam.com.au

David Ellis
Media Officer
The University of Adelaide
Phone: +61 8 8313 5414
Mobile: 0421 612 762
david.ellis@adelaide.edu.au