



PLANNING IMPACT STATEMENT #2

Commonwealth legislation implications and the day to day planning impacts of National and World Heritage listing

A consortium of six regional councils in partnership with Regional Development Australia Barossa and the University of Adelaide is undertaking a bid to nominate areas of the Mount Lofty Ranges for UNESCO World Heritage listing as a ‘working agricultural landscape’. The process comprises two stages: inclusion on Australia’s National Heritage list followed by a bid for World Heritage listing.

National Heritage and World Heritage listing would recognise and celebrate the national and international significance of the landscape’s links to South Australia’s utopian origins, not just for future generations of Australians but also for the world. UNESCO listing also creates significant global branding opportunities for the region and its produce, and paves the way for new high value niche markets. The listing of cultural and agricultural values is not about imposing an additional layer of control or regulation, creating a museum or changing current planning rules, but about allowing the area to continue to evolve and develop under local and state government policies, and delivering real and lasting economic, cultural and environmental benefits to the region.

Local councils, or the relevant state government authority, will continue to make decisions on the vast majority of development applications under existing development policies. It is anticipated that only a small number of actions or proposals will have, or are likely to have, a significant impact on the national or world heritage values. Those actions requiring referral under the Commonwealth Environment and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 are expected to be of a scale or nature not envisaged by existing development policies in any case (e.g. a large scale residential development, commercial airport or open cut mine in a primary production area).

It is considered that listing will not impose any additional obligations for the majority of development proposals involving primary production and common development activities. Previous World Heritage bids for agricultural landscape areas demonstrate that the pre-existing planning and development processes, zoning rules and regulatory policies form an essential basis for UNESCO’s inscription of those sites onto the World Heritage list. The existing planning policies and processes inform the documented management framework for the area, so any activity approved by those (evolving) processes is, by definition, anticipated within the listed area. Accordingly, primary producers, processors, landowners and business operators would face the same zoning and regulatory processes after the area is listed as they do now.

Plans and policies need regular review over time to ensure they reflect current needs and trends, and to this end the councils involved in the bid are currently working to improve existing policy to support investment and employment opportunities within their primary production areas, while also ensuring good design and environmental, social and economic outcomes. In conjunction with the state government’s planning reforms, these initiatives are creating a positive policy framework that aims to encourage diversity and good design outcomes, while also recognising community and business needs. It is envisaged that National listing, followed by UNESCO listing and the associated management framework for a future World Heritage landscape site would reinforce this policy agenda and propel communities to continue updating planning controls to support the listed agricultural and cultural values, and remove any encumbrances that might unnecessarily restrict agricultural and tourism enterprise in the region.