

17 May 2023

Chairperson
Heritage Council,
Northern Territory, Australia
via email: heritagecouncil@nt.gov.au

Dear Chairperson

Proposed Declaration of the Darwin Esplanade as a Heritage Place under the Heritage Act 2011

The Property Council of Australia, Northern Territory Division, having thoroughly reviewed the proposed declaration of the Darwin Esplanade as a Heritage Place under the Heritage Act 2011, wishes to register its concerns and reservations about this potential development formally.

While we acknowledge and appreciate the historical and cultural significance of the Darwin Esplanade, we believe that the designation as a Heritage Place might inadvertently impede the site's potential for progressive development and enhancement, potentially undermining the economic growth and urban vitality of Darwin's Central Business District.

The Darwin Esplanade has been a site of continual evolution, reflecting Darwin's growth and transformation. Its significance is not solely derived from its past but also from its adaptability and capacity for change. The provisional heritage listing, while well-intentioned, may impose significant administrative burdens, potentially stifling this ability to adapt and evolve in response to the community's needs and aspirations.

We understand the desire to protect and preserve the unique features of the Esplanade, including its Aboriginal sacred sites and numerous historical features through War. However, the lack of a clearly defined preservation strategy and use plan prior to the declaration of heritage status raises concerns about the practical implications of this status.

We fear that the heritage declaration may:

- a. jeopardise longstanding events due to increased bureaucracy and costs.
- b. escalate the upkeep costs, potentially impacting the City of Darwin's capacity for ongoing improvement, and;
- c. limit future enhancements that could contribute to the revitalisation of the CBD.

It is critical to ensure that the heritage listing does not negatively impact the developmental prospects of privately-owned land along the Esplanade. Many owners have held their properties along this stretch for an extended period and deserve certainty regarding their investments and the potential for future development of their land.

The Property Council firmly believes in striking a balance between preserving cultural significance and facilitating ongoing growth and development. As such, we recommend that further consultation and stakeholder engagement be prioritised. Implementing a master plan, complete with a heritage overlay and use strategy, should be considered to provide clear guidelines on what is possible in the future.

We believe that the Darwin Esplanade can continue to be a cherished landmark and a symbol of the city's past while also being a vibrant, evolving space that contributes to the city's future. Therefore, we respectfully ask the Heritage Council to reconsider the provisional heritage listing, considering these concerns and the potential implications for the future of the Darwin Esplanade and the city at large.

Thank you for considering our submission. We look forward to a constructive dialogue on this important matter.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Ruth Palmer' in a cursive script.

Ruth Palmer

Executive Director
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