



Marion Scrymgour

MINISTER FOR ENVIRONMENT AND HERITAGE

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NEW HERITAGE LAWS TO BENEFIT ALL TERRITORIANS

The NT Government has fulfilled a key election commitment, announcing today an overhaul of the Territory's heritage laws.

The new Legislation will provide interim protection of sites once they are nominated, and also removes the capacity of any government minister to destroy a declared heritage place.

"Had this law existed in 1999, the Hotel Darwin might still be here today," Environment and Heritage Minister Marion Scrymgour said.

"We came to Government with a very important promise – to overhaul our heritage laws – and we are doing that."

Ms Scrymgour said one of the key features of the new legislation will be a new heritage council with a much broader representation from across the community, and the power to make decisions on heritage listing.

Members will now include representatives with interests in not only heritage, but importantly property, industry, and indigenous interests.

"Labor is balancing growth with lifestyle while protecting our environment," Ms Scrymgour said

"Our heritage places are very important in shaping the Territory's identity, but they also play a huge role in our tourism industry - which of course has flow-on economic benefits for the NT."

Ms Scrymgour said a comprehensive review of the current legislation resulted in an overwhelming response with more than 300 people attending public meetings and more than 40 submissions received.

"I have been extremely heartened by the response. The Government has considered the recommendations from the Heritage Advisory Council ... and we will completely rewrite our heritage laws."

Ms Scrymgour said there was a backlog of sites nominated for heritage listing – some dating back as far as 1994, including some World War II sites.

"This is not fair to the community and it is not fair to property owners. Our new legislation will tighten this up and provide greater certainty by providing stricter time lines for decision making.

“Our icon WWII sites, parts of the old North Australian Railway and part of the Old Telegraph line will be more easily listed protected under our new heritage laws. And Government is placing a priority on WWII heritage.”

Ms Scrymgour said another feature of the new laws that she had firmly ruled out was the capacity for Government to destroy a heritage listed place.

“The CLP amended the current legislation to do just that,” she said. “But such a provision has no place in good heritage law and will be removed.”

Other key features of the new heritage laws will be:

- Expanded appeal provisions for both the community and property owners;
- Increased penalties for destroying or damaging listed heritage places;

The NT Government will now draft a bill for community comment, with a final bill to be presented to Parliament as soon as possible.

Contact: Maria Billias 0401 119 746