

Peer Review Policy

1. Summary

What	A Peer Review Policy
Who	Any organisation that procures a consultant heritage report may conduct a peer review.
Why	To improve the robustness and rigour of any procured heritage report, (including any heritage study, Conservation Management Plan, or Heritage Impact Statement).
How	By following the recommended guidance for sourcing and conducting a Peer Review and using the Checklist (guide only) provided in this policy.

2. Policy

This policy guides the delivery of a peer review. It covers:

1. a definition
2. sourcing
3. scoping
4. expected outcomes

2.1 Definition: what is a Peer Review in Heritage?

- Most Conservation Management Plans (CMP), Heritage Impact Statements (HIS), and reports state in the introduction or preamble the basis of their preparation.
- A Peer Review in Heritage:
 - is typically of a heritage study, CMP, HIS, or report
 - is a process of critical and sound analysis of the structure and content of these heritage documents AND an assessment of the validity of the research methods to support the documents conclusions and opinions
 - assesses whether the conservation document has, in fact, been prepared in accordance with the procedures and method stated
 - identifies if the report structure is illogical or has gaps.

For example, in the case of a CMP, the foundational documents require an assessment of significance prior to any work being done (which includes design or feasibility work) that can then be used to inform any later maintenance work, conservation work, or adaptive re-use of the place. If the CMP has been prepared in conjunction with the design work or after the design work has been completed, the peer review would note that the CMP has not been prepared in accordance with the cited documents.

- A peer review in heritage is not another “opinion” on a heritage matter.
- Conducting a peer review is best practice. It is not a mandatory requirement under the *Heritage Act 1977*.

2.2 Sourcing

- A peer review must be undertaken by the appropriately “qualified expert”, and/or an independent heritage consultant (as defined) with the “relevant expertise”.

“Relevant expertise” includes, for example:

- an archaeologist experienced in historical archaeology when peer reviewing a document concerning a post-Contact site
- an architect with experience in post-World War 2 heritage when peer reviewing a document concerning a post-war building
- a heritage landscape architect/horticulturalist when reviewing a landscape report
- a qualified engineer for reviewing bridges and infrastructure reports.

- The consultant should have no pecuniary ties with any of the parties involved in the site and document.
- The author consultant(s) being peer reviewed must be advised that their report is the subject of a peer review, prior to the commencement of the peer review, and should be given the right of reply to the peer review, following its completion.

2.3 Scoping

A peer review of a heritage document needs to include a review of the document's:

- structure
- content
- use of documentary evidence
- use of physical evidence
- assessment of significance

A checklist of contents to review is provided in Appendix A.

(Note: The checklist at Attachment A is a guide only. It is not an exhaustive checklist as some reports/studies may require additional matters for consideration and, conversely some simple reports may not need all the items to be checked off).

2.4 Expected outcomes

- Using the checklist at Appendix A, if the conclusions of the reviewed report are derived from accepted sound process and content then the peer review can conclude that the reviewed report meets the required standard.
- A peer review author should not expect to support the conclusions reached in the heritage report, but be able to confirm that the process and research/analysis on which the report is based, meets acceptable standards outlined in Appendix A.
- Where the methodology of the assessed report is found to be inadequate (or if the conflicting opinions in two reports could not be resolved by comparison of their methodologies), the commissioning body can commission a third independent complete report to further research the documentary and physical sources.

3. Context

This section includes background details such as:

1. defined terms
2. responsibilities for different stakeholders
3. references and related documents
4. document control information
5. appendices to this document.

3.1 Definitions

Peer Review	A process of critical and sound (cross checked) analysis of the structure and content of the reviewed document and an assessment of the report's conclusions against the evidence presented in the reviewed document.
Independent [Heritage Consultant]	<p>A heritage consultant who is “independent” of the work being reviewed. The peer heritage consultant's independence from the work being reviewed means that the consultant:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • was not involved as a participant, supervisor, technical reviewer, or advisor in the work being reviewed; and • to the extent practical, has sufficient freedom from funding considerations to assure the work is impartially reviewed. The consultant should have no pecuniary ties with any of the parties involved in the site and document.

3.2 Responsibilities

Persons or Organisations	Persons or organisations commissioning heritage consultant report should follow the Heritage NSW Peer Review Policy when procuring a peer review of a consultant heritage report.
Heritage document author	Create or revise a heritage document in line with the HNSW policies and procedures.
Heritage document reviewer	Review any new or revised version of the heritage document to ensure that it meets the HNSW policies and procedures standards, and then formally endorse it for use.

3.3 References

Legislation	N/A.
Standards	N/A.
Policies and procedures	HNSW CMP guidelines including (as located on the HNSW website): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statement of Best Practice for Conservation Management Plans • Statement of Best Practice for Heritage Asset Action Plans • Guidance on Developing a Conservation Management Plan • Conservation Management Plan Checklist • Conservation Management Plan Consultant Model Brief
Resources	Appendix A: Checklist for a Peer Review

3.4 Appendices

Title	Description
A: Checklist	A checklist to guide the conduct of a peer review

Appendix A: Checklist

Checklist	Component	Completed
Structure	Has the document under review been structured in accordance with the foundational documents to which it refers?	
	Have the report authors been clearly identified, along with their qualifications and expertise to provide the advice contained within the document (including a short CV)?	
	Has the location of the item been clearly identified (on plan as well as its real property description), together with any pertinent curtilage?	
	Has the surrounding context been illustrated with plans/maps and photographs?	
Content	Has the research of the documentary and physical evidence been undertaken by the appropriately qualified experts?	
	Is the authorship limited? If so, those limitations must be identified.	
Documentary evidence	Are all sources of information used cited? If not, the material in the report cannot be verified and therefore does not pass. Material used in the investigation of documentary evidence must be able to be scrutinized by a peer review process to ascertain that the information quoted has not been misconstrued or taken out of context.	
	Have all the appropriate sources been used?	
	Are all the sources secondary sources?	
	Have primary sources been used (e.g., land title records)? Primary sources should take precedence over secondary sources as the basis for factual information.	
	Have relevant aerial and contemporary photographs been sourced, examined and their evidence explained in the report?	

Checklist	Component	Completed
Documentary evidence	Have the current statutory planning controls (LEP) and non-statutory controls (DCPs, Area Character Statements, etc.) been examined and their constraints/opportunities been cited and assessed?	
	Have all statutory and non-statutory Registers and lists been consulted and the results of that consultation stated (i.e. is the place on the list or not on the list)? If these elements are missing, the peer review would note such omissions, misinterpretations or misconstructions.	
Physical evidence	Does the document include an analysis of important views to, from and within the site or landscape?	
	Have accurate documents been prepared to inform the inspection and recording of the physical evidence? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Such documents may include measured drawings for built structures or sketches of the site showing significant vegetation, site hard works, and other site features. • Are all rooms shown accurately in terms of size and placement? • Are there elevations of the exterior of the building and relevant cross-sections through the building? • Are all building elements shown accurately (e.g. window and door openings, wall thicknesses, roof and floor construction and sizes, joinery details such as architraves, skirtings and cornices, materials of construction – where visible)? 	
	Is there a site plan that shows the buildings in relation to the boundaries of the site, the main trees and shrubs as well as any garden beds, paths, retaining walls, etc?	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there current, comprehensive photographs of the site and its important elements? • Have these photographs been appropriately cited with regard to photographer and date as well as being indexed to the site and floor plans in terms of their location? 	
	Is there an analysis of critical relationships within the broader setting, particularly in a conservation area?	

Checklist	Component	Completed
Physical evidence	If these elements are missing, the peer review would note such omissions, misinterpretations, or misconstructions.	
Assessment of significance	<p>Have the recommended processes and procedures to assess significance been followed? These are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • based on an impartial assessment of the documentary and physical evidence of a place or item, • the synthesis of that evidence; and • the production of a succinct statement of significance from which policies for the management of the place flow. <p>If the assessment has not demonstrated use of NSW criteria or has not demonstrated them in the Statement of Significance, the peer review would note this.</p> <p>Is the assessment of significance a dispassionate assessment of significance having been undertaken without being prejudiced by supporting a particular development?</p> <p>Has the document thoroughly synthesized the documentary and physical evidence into an understanding of the significance and functioning of the place?</p> <p>Has the evidence enabled an understanding of the growth and development of the place?</p> <p>Does the analysis follow the method in the NSW Heritage Manual with respect to assessment against the standard NSW assessment criteria?</p> <p>Have the assessment criteria been aggregated to form a succinct Statement of Significance?</p> <p>Has the physical fabric of the place been examined in order to assess its level of significance and to determine its condition?</p>	
Curtilage	Has a curtilage review been undertaken, which considers the existing curtilage and determines whether it is appropriate and includes all of the significant elements?	

Checklist	Component	Completed
Opportunities and Constraints	<p>Is it relevant for the document to address opportunities and constraints? If relevant, has the document considered opportunities and constraints arising from any of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the statement of significance and gradings of the significance of the elements, • statutory and non-statutory listings, • statutory requirements such as relevant parts of the National Construction Code of Australia and Australian Standards, • requirements of the current owner/s or custodian/s, • requirements of other stakeholder groups; and • requirements under the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974 and Heritage Act 1977 in relation to archaeology and Aboriginal cultural heritage. <p>If the assessment has not considered the opportunities and constraints and this should have occurred or would be useful, the peer review should note this.</p>	
Policies	<p>Have the policies been derived from the significance of the place?</p> <p>Have areas of possible alterations or future development on the site been located so as not to affect the assessed significance?</p> <p>If the document being peer reviewed is a Heritage Impact Statement do recommendations that support the development fully assess alternative development strategies that were not pursued and, if those strategies are not being pursued, explains why were they rejected?</p> <p>Is the subject proposal the best proposal to conserve the heritage significance of the place?</p> <p>Again, tabulation/s are a good tool enabling critical analysis of any policy to be undertaken. If these elements are missing, the peer review would note such omissions, misinterpretations, or misconstructions.</p>	