

Huskisson Heritage Association Inc.

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Thank you for the update on the former Anglican Church site in Huskisson -(62597E(D21/288284), received on 12th July 2021.

At a recent meeting of the Executive members of the Huskisson Heritage Association this issue was discussed, and it was agreed to ask you a number of questions to help us clarify the processes and timetable relating to the decision to scrape and to the next actions likely to occur on the property.

We note that the Hunter Geophysics report acknowledged that GPR is inexact, and that the number of possible graves detected may equally be an underestimate or an overestimate and that currently several areas have not been tested, under the rectory and the church and outside the boundaries of the property. Given that whatever the results of any scraping, this will remain a graveyard, and given that these areas will still not have been tested, and given that there are no remaining burial plan records (as far as we have been able to ascertain) that would enable linking of specific graves with specific persons, the most perplexing and general question is:

Q 1. What the Council is trying to achieve with this exercise?

We do not know why Navin Officer Heritage Consultants have advised the Council to question the results of Hunter Geophysics' GPR findings, - except for the obvious political reasons – but we do note that the advice of NOHC has only been made public through the filter of the Council's report to the Development & Environment Committee, 11 May 2021.

Q 2. Are we able to see the actual report of NOHC explaining the reasons for undermining the results of Hunter Geotech....? If you are unable to release this for whatever reason, you will understand that the HHA find this mediated information puzzling.

[The Council report claims that NOHC found the Hunter Geophysics report 'possibly correct' and that the criteria used 'seem reasonable' but that they found there to be an unlikely high number of graves given the historical window within which the graves would have been laid down.' All this does is to raise questions over when and whose burials these may be. Given that we have evidence of a burial in 1870s and a death certificate for one in 1935 even this period of European settlement covers around 70 years.

The HHA has written to the Heritage Council outlining our objections to this, indicating that 'receiving the GPR findings and then searching around for possible reasons to discard them is a-historical and methodologically perverse.']

Q 3. Will the SCC application to NSW Heritage for a Sec 139 (excavation) exemption be made public?

Q 4. If permission is granted from NSW Heritage to undertake this 'verification' work, how will the Council justify the stated intention to 'scrape across each of the four most likely clusters of possible graves.'

While we appreciate that this may cause less damage to the site than a more extensive scraping, earlier partial investigations of the presence of graves were unacceptable to the community as they allowed for 'cherry-picking' and unsubstantiated claims for the limited presence of graves and presumably any further partial interventions will remain unacceptable.

Q 5. If permission is granted to 'scrape', will the community be informed in advance of this work being carried out detailing the limits, extent and depth of the scraping, who will be supervising the scraping and when will results be made available?

Q 6. Is it the usual practice of the SCC to seek verification of a professional GPR survey such as the one carried out by Hunter Geophysics? Are you able to tell us when and why this has happened in the past?

We are aware of situations where this work is being carried out in the context of preserving and upgrading a graveyard, not in the context of a development proposal.

Q 7. What rights do descendants of people buried on the site have in relation to disturbance?

We understand that this is subject to state legislation, (Cemeteries and Crematoria Act 2013) and that it may hinge on the status of the land (i.e., in this case the land is not a consecrated cemetery) but we ask because we have been told that in the past some investigations were made by the Anglican Church into the few names associated with the cemetery prior to our more recent research. Does the SCC hold any documentation in relation to this?

Q 8. In terms of proceeding with the scraping, what is the implication of the Federal inquiry into the Jerrinja LALC's application under the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Protection Act 1984*.

We did ask this question earlier in relation to activities on the block in general, but did not receive a response beyond being told that this 'is with the relevant Minister.' (Eric Hollinger to HHA, email, 22nd April 2021)

Q 9. Finally, given that the land has now been sold, is there anything to stop the new owner of the site moving the church now under DA18/2102? If this is to occur, will there need to be a new DA submitted?

Yours sincerely



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