

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

GENERAL

This document is a Conservation Management Plan (Stage 1) for the entire length of the Great North Road, originally constructed from 1826 to 1836 to link Sydney with the Hunter Valley, a distance of some 240 kilometres. Of this distance approximately 200 kilometres remains in use as gazetted road in both urban and rural areas, and about 40 kilometres exists as fire management trails or walking tracks in or adjacent to National Park areas.

This plan deals with the historic background and significance of the Great North Road, provides an overview description of its physical condition, considers present management issues, and provides policy and recommendations to assist with the future management of this highly significant heritage item. This Plan is an advisory document.

The Conservation Plan began by assembling all relevant material and by considering which parts of the Great North Road were well-known and researched and which parts were not. This process has also considered associated roads and tracks, including those such as Finch's Line, Mr Sharp's Track, the Simpson Track, and also associated sites, for example Wisemans/Warners Well, the archaeological sites of the Convict Stockades and other buildings such as at 10 Mile Hollow and Frog Hollow.

INVENTORY

Once these initial investigations were complete the whole of the Road was divided into separate **Inventory Sections**. The reason for this is that the existing line or corridor of the Great North Road, being such a lengthy heritage item, changes its nature and character very sharply in different areas. These **Sections** have been further subdivided into **Precincts** and then down to the level of individual **Items** as a way of organising and describing the character of the whole Road. The result of this is that the (main) Great North Road has been divided into eight primary Sections. They are:

Section 1.0.0 Baulkham Hills to Wiseman's Ferry

Section 2.0.0 Branch of the Great North Road between Abbotsford and Dural
(the "New Line")

Section 3.0.0 Wisemans Ferry to Mount Manning Junction

Section 4.0.0 Mount Manning Junction to Wollombi

Section 5.0.0 Wollombi to Maitland

Section 6.0.0 Wollombi to Broke

Section 7.0.0 Broke to Patrick's Plains

Section 8.0.0 Broke to Warkworth

These major Sections then sub-divide into 39 further Precincts, each of which may include additional and/or separate inventory items. There are 13 Inventory Items. Sections and Precincts are described on a separate basic inventory format, which provides quick and accessible information about the Road.

SUMMARY STATEMENT OF HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

The Great North Road is an item of **National** heritage significance. It has values under **all** relevant heritage assessment criteria, including historic, aesthetic, scientific and social significance as expressed by the ICOMOS Burra Charter, and under the SHI criteria. (These criteria are outlined in Sections 3, 4, 6.1 and 6.2 of this Conservation Plan report). The Road also fulfills numerous assessment criteria as expressed by the Australian Heritage Commission. Whilst many heritage items will fulfill more than one value, the immense significance of the Great North Road is reflected in its possession of these multiple values at a number of levels.

Historically the Great North Road was the first made road north of the Hawkesbury, constructed by convict gangs between 1826 and 1836. The road has historic associations with several notable colonial figures including Governor Darling and Surveyor-General Sir Thomas Mitchell. The Road is also tangible evidence of the development of the colony at Sydney, and of policies which saw convict gangs used to construct major public works during this period.

The Great North Road also provides a direct material record of convict labour. Many surviving structures and precincts indicate the quality of work achieved by convict artisans. Many precincts of the road also remain in relatively unspoilt settings which are evocative of the environment on the 'frontier' of the 1830s.

Other parts of the historic Great North Road (even if re-named) remain in use as an essential transport corridor and have thus carried European traffic continuously since the 1830s.

ISSUES

The Conservation Plan has examined relevant issues relating to the operation, management and conservation of the Road and the constraints imposed by statutory obligations, the physical condition, and the management structure. The Plan has considered these issues and developed Conservation Policies and strategies to assist the long term conservation of the Road.

The Great North Road is currently in the control, management or ownership of an extremely diverse range of management authorities. These multiple ownerships then impose their own differing objectives and requirements and encompass diverse responsibilities and resource levels. The Road also crosses numerous physical and administrative boundaries. In an administrative sense, the Great North Road sits on the boundaries of numerous administrative regions (Sydney and Hunter Regions), sub-regions, and agencies. These include its definition as a Local Government Area boundary, and also as a boundary for other regions, including for example, Tourism Commission and Department of Urban Affairs and Planning regions. The main Great North Road passes through the Local Government Areas of Drummoyne, Ryde, Hornsby, Baulkham Hills, Hawkesbury, Gosford, Cessnock, Singleton, Maitland. In joining to Mitchell's Hunter Valley Road (now the New England Highway) the road then enters the City of Newcastle. The associated Simpson Track (which diverges from Ten Mile Hollow) crosses into additional LGAs, including Wyong.

Section 6 of this Conservation Plan report provides conservation policies covering key aspects and issues for the Great North Road. These consider matters such as conservation works, fabric and setting, landscape, curtilage and new works. Another issue is the absence of any single centralised repository for either relics and/or physical road fabric which has been salvaged, or for archival documents, reports and other studies.

The biggest issue for the entire Great North Road is the lack of an overall, or holistic management structure which can assess and view proposals for the road (whether positive or negative) from the perspective of its entire context.

It is desirable that any future management structure continues the 'grass roots' involvement

characteristic of the present Convict Trail Project. With this in mind models were investigated for the management of other similar items. Such items are lengthy, linear, and pass through a range of ownerships. Models which were looked at were:

Catchment Management Trust
Crown Lands Reserve Trust (Specific Purpose)
Advisory Committee
Regional Environmental Plan (REP)

On the basis of the models assessed it is considered that preparation of an REP for the Great North Road is recommended as the most viable option to pursue in the immediate future.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDED KEY ACTIONS

TASK: Adopt the Stage 1 Conservation Plan and in particular the Conservation Policy

ACTION: **Plan to be circulated and reviewed by CTP Heritage Group members.**

TASK: Investigate the feasibility of obtaining a single Statutory Planning Instrument (an REP) applying specifically to the Great North Road.

ACTION: **CTP Executive Group to pursue with the Department of Urban Affairs and Planning**

TASK: Ensure Local Government Planning Instruments (LEPs) include provisions applying as appropriate specifically to the Great North Road and its contextual environment.

ACTION: **Local Government Representatives on the CTP to pursue**

TASK: Obtain consistent heritage listing(s) for the entire length of the Great North Road.

ACTION: **CTP Heritage Group to pursue**

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