

CPA Response to Haven Amphitheatre Heritage Interpretation Study

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the 3rd draft of the Haven Amphitheatre Heritage Interpretation Study (HAHIS) prepared by Betteridge Consulting Pty Ltd.

In many aspects the content covered is thorough and well documented, particularly the first phase of theatrical activity spanning the 1930's. The last 38 years of performance and community cultural development around the Haven receives much less attention in this document. True, there was not the star attraction of the Griffins in the second phase, but the activity and events form a strong part of the cultural history of this place, the theatre and its community. The Haven Amphitheatre Management Committee has been instrumental in this cultural resurgence and it is only because of their tireless work, and the Conservation Society being pro-active in uncovering it in the 1970s, that we have been able to enjoy the legacy of Marion's Gift to the community over this period.

The CPA believes the generous bestowing of the Deed of Trust (DOT) needs greater dominance than is given here. It is such an important part of the story of the place and the fact that Marion used her inheritance to buy the Haven Estate, then died a poor woman in 196 while her Haven became a rubbish tip is a tragedy of Shakespearian proportions. This story needs to play a part in the interpretation of the heritage of the site. There were specific conditions under which Marion instructed Council to manage the amphitheatre and bushland reserves that she entrusted to them.

We believe that the DOT should be part of the appendix to this document? The core conditions of the DOT are still applicable today, specifically that ...

... 9. The Council shall appoint a local committee and the following conditions shall apply to the appointing of such Committee and the Council the Committee and the Donor shall have the following rights, powers obligations and duties in relation to such appointment and such committee ...


It should be noted that Willoughby Council did not observe these conditions at the time. It wasn't until the community resurrected the site and theatre companies wanted to start using the venue, after *Salome*, that in 1981 the Council appointed a local management committee (now known as the Haven Amphitheatre Committee or HAC) to manage the site independently, and to report to Council as required.

The HAHIS contains some important historical errors that CPA believes need correction before interpretation of the space is put into place. These are set out below.

HAHIS Reference	Page	Comment
<i>...the 1970s, with the construction of a timber stage and other facilities.</i>	7	There were no other facilities, just the wooden stage spanning the creek up until 1992.
<i>They approached architect and local resident Robert Sheldon to design and build a wooden platform for a stage and to rework the sandstone seating, some of which had been removed for its value as a landscaping material.</i>	23	Robert Sheldon recalled that some sandstone seating had been removed, but there are other primary sources who have a slightly different memory. Judy Messer, who worked with the CCS in 1975-76 weeding the site, and Dee Street who was also involved, both recently recalled (independently) that the sandstone seating was largely intact when they uncovered them from the weeds and rubbish.

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<i>The significance of the Griffin's legacy in Castlecrag had been given prominence by the formation of the Castlecrag Conservation Society in 1972 and the area's natural values, architectural features and town planning principles began to be recognised and appreciated once again.</i>	23	This statement vastly underplays the role of the Castlecrag Progress Association since 1925 in working to preserve the suburb's bushland, heritage and community spirit. The Griffins were members of the Progress Association. The Conservation Society became an offshoot of the CPA in a bid to divide the workload of preserving the values of the suburb we all hold dear. Similarly, the WBGS was formed to focus on the Griffin Estate and Marion & Walter's work in Australia.
<i>Salome description</i>	23	There were fourteen performances over a 3-week season. This is relevant information.
<i>Subsequent work over the next two decades included a stage extension...</i>	23	The extensions to the stage & undercroft occurred in 1992, with assistance from the NSW Ministry of Arts.
<i>...The community of Castlecrag and The Haven Amphitheatre team have produced many events on the site over nearly forty years.</i>	26	<p>There seems to be some confusion here. Since the 1976 revival, the Haven Amphitheatre Committee has been the only producer of events at the Haven. Occasionally other groups have used the venue for private events like an AGM, or hired out for a wedding, but always facilitated by the HAC. Historically all public performances have been organised or hosted by HAC and if a group wanted to use the Amphitheatre, they approached the Committee who would produce the event at varying levels, depending on the production. WCC has never played a role in programming of events, other than awarding grants for productions to be staged for Spring Festivals, which traditionally catered to children and their families.</p> <p>In WCC papers 28 APRIL 2014 21.3 HAVEN AMPHITHEATRE IMPROVEMENTS it is stated:</p> <p><i>Since 1981, the Haven Amphitheatre 355 Committee has operated the venue, providing up to 7 performances a year for the community. Other informal activities eg yoga classes and children's parties, also use the stage and surrounds.</i></p>
Footnote 20 ...	26	www.thehaven.biz is the website of Haven Amphitheatre Committee, not the Friends of the Haven, that was only recently established.

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<p>4.1.2 The Friends of The Haven Amphitheatre</p> <p><i>The Friends of The Haven Amphitheatre are an independent community organisation established to support The Haven Amphitheatre to continue its legacy of performance.</i> http://www.thehaven.biz/. With community support, The Haven Amphitheatre team produced a wide-ranging program, which is recorded at http://www.thehaven.biz/past-events/</p>	43	The first sentence is an accurate statement. The Friends are a lobby group established around 2012 when the campaign to rebuild the Haven began. The rest is inaccurate. They have not produced shows. It's the Haven Management Committee that produced the events. As addressed in Footnote 20 ref above, the website is that of the WCC Haven Committee.
<p>4.1.4 Castlecrag Progress Association Inc.</p> <p><i>Serving the Castlecrag community since 1925, this organisation has lobbied Council to enable the continued use of The Haven Amphitheatre for community cultural activities.</i></p>	44	Through its newsletter, <i>The Crag</i> , the CPA informs the community of events and happenings at the Haven. It also includes local history articles. Given that all other local group's aims are included in their description, it would seem equitable to include the CPA's. They are: <i>To promote the interests of Castlecrag and to enhance its community life while conserving its natural and human heritage for future generations.</i>
<p>5.4.1 On-site Interpretation</p>	49	The bronze plaques were produced by WCC not by WBGS
<p><i>The Friends of The Haven Amphitheatre maintain a website with image galleries and information about past events.</i> http://www.thehaven.biz/.</p>	50	Again, it is the HAC, not the Friends that do this.
<p>5.5 Audience profile</p> <p><i>The Haven Amphitheatre is a much-loved community asset which has a very strong local support base. Audiences for performances are largely drawn from residents of the immediate area of Castlecrag and their friends. Performers include local and interested individuals and amateur groups along with professional actors and musicians.</i></p>		<p>Whilst this statement about audiences would have largely reflected the situation in the 80's, since then, the venue's audience has been drawn not so much from locals, but those from surrounding suburbs and districts. The performers and groups have been largely professional so draw a wider crowd.</p> <p>Articles and advertising of shows in such newspapers as <i>SMH</i>, <i>NST</i> and <i>Sydney's Child</i> and <i>702 Radio</i> and other <i>What's On</i> opportunities have helped facilitate wider audiences. Surveys conducted by bus drivers of Haven Shuttle Buses indicate that many audience members come from outside the suburb. Theatre Companies staging productions often brought audiences with them from inner Sydney, who have a great appreciation of the unique nature of the venue. The exception to this was the Annual Carols by Candlelight on Christmas Eve, which was always a full to overflowing house, attended largely by locals but also many busloads from the shopping</p>

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		village of people who had either driven or walked to the shops. It was also the only free event on the calendar at the Haven.
<p>5.6 Interpretive framework</p> <p><i>Developing Australia's cultural life-Creative Endeavour</i></p>		<p>What about the 38 years of performances and community/cultural life between 1976-2014 that contributed strongly to developing Australia's cultural life? What other communities have had local volunteers create theatre and run a working venue with no paid employees for 38 years?</p> <p>It would be good to include reference to the important function the site also plays in passive recreation. People picnicking, sitting and reading, contemplating, socialising, children playing all around the site; these activities occur on a regular basis.</p>
<p>Recommendation 1</p> <p><i>A logo or standard script style should be developed as a way of visual branding of the site for future commercial use on posters and performance programs.</i></p> <p><i>Note: Figure 18 shows posters that carry the current logo.</i></p>		<p>The Haven Amphitheatre committee received a grant from the NSW Ministry of Arts in 1994 to fund the development of a logo and to produce a brochure for potential hirers (see Figure at right).</p> <p>The logo has been used on all posters, publicity, letterhead etc. since that time. Is it considered that the present logo is inadequate or tired and so needs changing? If so, the recommendation should be to develop a new logo.</p> <p>All Haven printed material currently carries the following footnote:</p> <p><i>"Conserving the Haven Amphitheatre's architectural, natural and cultural heritage by operating a community-based open-air stage for music, theatre and the performing arts."</i></p> 
<p>Recommendation 2</p> <p><i>Standard text should be developed for inclusion in printed material. Printed programs could feature historical information about the history and significance of the the Haven Amphitheatre site.</i></p>		<p>Sound idea. Whenever programs or printed materials were produced for performances, a piece about the history was included. This has been the practice at The Haven Amphitheatre for a long time.</p>

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<p>Recommendation 6:</p> <p><i>Equipment which can deliver a short, scripted timed narration synchronised with lighting effects should be provided as part of the technical infrastructure of the site. It should be user-friendly and robust. The delivery of this as an introduction at the start of each performance should be a mandatory condition of the hire of the venue.</i></p>		<p>This of course can only apply to night-time performances, so it can't be mandatory.</p>

Regarding the analysis of issues in section 4.0 of the document, the greatest issue facing the Haven Amphitheatre is the conflict between heritage and access requirements. This has not been adequately addressed. CPA believes that the Haven's heritage value will be greatly compromised by providing access as planned in the current DA. It involves a long winding ramp with an access path traversing the historic western terrace. Another solution needs to be found.

In conclusion, these comments regarding the history of the Haven and its interpretation are offered in a constructive context and in good faith. The goal is to have an historically accurate presentation and interpretation of the new Haven Amphitheatre in a way that is non-obtrusive, sensitive to the site and interesting to people. There are some contested parts to the Haven story with varied views regarding whether the demolition of the stage was in fact necessary. It may be challenging to include these views but they do require consideration. They're part of the story.