

CULTURAL HERITAGE PROJECTS PROGRAM

A. The Project : St Thomas' Anglican Church, Port Macquarie, Restoration.

The Project covers:

Generally in accordance with the Conservation Management Plan a full design brief and specifications will have to be prepared by the Architect (Ed Clode of Suters) and the Structural Engineer (Bill Jordan of Bill Jordan & Associates) and these will include but not be limited to the following list of tasks. Please see attached report and scope of works from Australian Heritage Restorations, which will prioritise, provide budgets and time frames for the list of tasks for the completion of these works.

- a) Replacement of wainscotting, plus repairs and pest control spraying to control Borer infestation;
- b) Carpentry to damaged doors and window embrasures;
- c) Cementing new pathways around Church to stabilise moisture around foundations including the reshaping of the grades to achieve better storm water distribution
- d) Renewing timber around clock faces
- e) Replacing & repainting timber window embrasures
- f) Replacing & repainting timber doorframe (n. side of nave)
- g) Restoring brickwork around north door
- h) Further lightening protection to the roof of the east wall
- i) Strengthening to east end of building
- j) Further repairs to plaster and paint internally
- k) Replace existing light fittings with more sympathetic
- l) Further works to re-establish the original layout of the box pews
- m) Construct new weather protection over the north entry
- n) Reinstate the carriage set down to the north entry for ceremonial use

B. Importance:

St Thomas' Church is the fifth oldest in Australia still extant, built by convicts and the military between 1824 and 1827. It stands on Church Hill. Together with other two other 1821-2 buildings this constitutes the oldest cluster in Australia.

As well as cedar furnishings throughout the Church, a number of heritage musical instruments are housed in the Muniments Room (clarinet 1828, seraphine 1830, pipe and barrel organ 1855). As well, there is the grave of Captain Rolland under the flooring of the front stand of box pews, the first officer to oversee building, who died one month before the Foundation Stone was laid in 1824.

Altogether, the history of the three buildings is the biggest tourist attraction in Port Macquarie. The cellars under the Surgeon's Residence and the 60ft well in the back garden, plus a pedal harmonium in the Chapel (still in use) highlight the convict beginnings of this town.

C. Conservation Planning:

The 1999 Conservation Management Plan by our Heritage Architect, Ed Clode of Suters Architects, has already been sent to your Heritage Department when restoration began in 2002. We also use advice from Hastings Council Heritage Officer and consultant Architect. All work is in line with Burra Charter. This work is not a new project, but a continuation of that already started. Funding is insufficient to complete the work, owing to the alarming and rapid deterioration of the structure.

The Minister for the Environment and Planning, the Hon Dr David Kemp, with Minister for Trade and representative for Lyne, the Hon Mark Vaile, inspected the Church on Monday 27th October 2003. Dr Kemp was satisfied with the work to date and understood the problems facing continuation. He advised completing a new application form for further funding.

H. Additional project benefits:

1. St Thomas' Church will be made safe (from falling bricks etc) and from further Deterioration. *(Present condition of the building is so unsafe that both visitors and Parishioners could be at risk. Already bricks in the northeast wall are slipping and chocks have been inserted to stabilise the wall).*
2. As well, our Friends of St Thomas' will feel secure when guiding visitors from overseas, bus tours, or school inspections, around the Church. *(At present the tower is closed to visitors and decisions must be made to close the Church altogether if further work is stopped because of lack of money).*
3. The Muniments Room can be restored and extended to provide a more comprehensive Museum. *(This work is high on the priority list and some funds have already been donated for this specific purpose).*