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Professor Peter Newman  
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Dear Peter

I want to make two submissions to your Unit.

### **Cultural Landscapes**

The first concerns *cultural landscapes*. These are landscapes that have been modified by human activity over a long time, acquiring a special character that is part of the heritage of a locality and, in many cases, of the whole State. Usually cultural landscapes have little or no natural heritage value: most don't support rare species of fauna or flora or have biodiversity value. Examples are parts of the Swan Valley, the land around the Greenough River and the Greenough flats. Most have acquired their special character through farming, others may be parklands.

Most cultural landscapes aren't protected by legislation, nor is the conservation of their cultural value the responsibility of any government department. CALM is not generally responsible, and The Heritage Council is really only concerned with the built environment and the few urban parks and gardens that are on the State heritage Register.

In Australia, until recent times, only the pristine natural environment was considered worth conserving. Now we must start controlling the use and exploitation of cultural landscapes as they do in Europe. I recommend that your unit should formulate policies for the sustainable use of cultural landscapes in Western Australia. To do this money needs to be spent on their identification. They should then be given some legislative protection. Maybe planning legislation and planning authorities should be involved.

### **Adaptive re-use of heritage buildings**

The second submission concerns *adaptive re-use* of existing building stocks. It should be a principal strategy in sustainable urban development.

An increasing number of buildings of high heritage value stand empty and unused. They have been saved from demolition by The Heritage Council. But their owners (often organs of government) have vacated them in favour of new purpose-built premises. If they remain empty, and if they generate no revenue to pay for maintenance, they will eventually deteriorate to the point where they won't be worth saving.

Universities have adaptively re-used a number of heritage buildings, including many in the West End of Fremantle and the Government Print building in Murray Street. A few commercial enterprises, particularly in the hospitality and entertainment industries, have reused heritage buildings to advantage. Unfortunately, the State and Federal Governments have not set a good example of adaptive re-use. Local Government Authorities have also been laggardly. To-day major building complexes like the State Government Offices in Barrack Street and the Midland Railway Workshops are empty and in need of repair. There have been strong moves to relocate the Supreme Court from its heritage courthouse to new premises - an initiative deplored by the entire judicial bench.

Government advisers have developed a myth that it's more expensive to adapt an old building for re-use than to build a new one. The argument over the refurbishment of Council House was an example. Actually, adaptive re-use of existing building stock not only represents sustainable development but is often cheaper than building anew.

I recommend that the State Government show leadership in adaptive re-use of heritage buildings. It should require its own instrumentalities to occupy existing buildings wherever possible. It should also assist the adaptive re-use of heritage buildings by offering design and planning advice as well as financial incentives.

I hope this has been of use. I'd be happy to develop these ideas further with you if appropriate.

Yours sincerely

Michal Lewi Am