



STATE  
HERITAGE  
OFFICE



BASIC PRINCIPLES FOR  
**LOCAL GOVERNMENT  
INVENTORIES**



# LOCAL GOVERNMENT INVENTORIES

Local Government Inventories in WA have become widely known under the name 'Municipal Inventories'.

Local governments are required to compile them, by provisions in the *Heritage of Western Australia Act 1990*.

In terms of form and substance, Local Government Inventories can best be described as 'local heritage surveys'. As such, they are common practice in WA and throughout Australia, as the foundation of sound local heritage planning.

They identify local heritage assets in a systematic fashion, and provide the base information needed for local heritage planning to achieve consistency, strategic direction, and community support.

These "Basic Principles" are intended to guide local governments in the fundamentals of modern best practice in local government inventories.

The Basic Principles offer a tool to assist local governments. They are not mandatory, save for a requirement that inventory findings be publicly available (clauses 10 and 12).

## Timing

1. An inventory or inventory review should be undertaken in conjunction with each major review of a local planning strategy and local town planning scheme.

## Purposes of an Inventory

2. Local Governments use their inventories:
  - (a) to identify the places and areas that, in the opinion of the local government, are of cultural heritage significance for the local government district.

Inventory reviews (conducted in conjunction with major reviews of local planning strategies and local town planning schemes) are intended to:

- (a) ensure that the existing inventory meets the minimum standards, and to bring the findings into line with the standards if deficient.
- (b) review changes in the local heritage in the preceding period such as demolitions of places, changes in their condition, or the availability of other new information).

## Comprehensiveness and scope

3. An inventory should comprehensively identify the places and areas of cultural heritage significance in the local district including:
  - geographic coverage of all the district's towns, suburbs or other areas without arbitrary exclusions.
  - coverage of all place types (eg. public and private buildings; residential and commercial places), without arbitrary exclusions.
4. The inventory should identify places and areas that retain significant physical fabric from the past. It is not intended that the inventory encompass sites without remnant fabric (ie. vacant or redeveloped sites), unless they have historic associations of major importance to the locality.

## Assessment criteria

5. The inclusion or exclusion of places in the inventory should be on the basis of cultural heritage significance, in accordance with the standard assessment criteria (not on the basis of objections unrelated to heritage significance).

The assessment criteria for local heritage assessment, published by the Heritage Council, should be employed.

## Documentation

6. Documentation of each place or precinct should be in accordance with, or substantially in accordance with, the minimum requirements for documentation set out in the assessment criteria.
7. A thematic history of the local district should be prepared as an aid to assessment, in line with Appendix 1.

## Public consultation

8. The inventory should involve public consultation, including as a minimum:
  - giving each affected owner the opportunity to comment on the heritage significance of any place proposed for inclusion.
  - public advertising of the inventory to give the opportunity for public comment (either at the commencement or when preliminary results are available).

## Currency of the inventory findings

9. As far as possible, the contents of the inventory should be updated regularly to reflect new information about, or changes in the status of, places and areas identified within it.

## Public access to the inventory

10. The findings of the inventory must be made publicly available, either in printed or electronic form.

## Heritage Council involvement

11. The Heritage Council standard brief for local heritage inventories should be considered in designing the project brief for a local heritage survey (ie. an original compilation or a review).
12. The Heritage Council must be supplied with a current copy of the inventory.
13. The Heritage Council do not review or approve inventories.

## APPENDIX 1

### Thematic Histories

This part of a local government inventory addresses the history of the physical development of the local district.

The objectives of a thematic history are to:

1. identify and explain the themes or 'story lines' that are crucial to understanding the area's historic environment as it exists today.
2. provide a context for the comparative assessment of heritage places in the locality.
3. provide preliminary information as to local places of potential significance (which may subsequently be documented separately, in individual place record forms).

The thematic history should be concise (no more than 5,000-7,000 words) and analytical. It will normally comprise the following elements:

- (a) A concise narrative of the chronological history of the area, addressing the key events (they may be grouped under thematic headings but this is not essential).
- (b) A summary of the key themes in a tabular form (a 'matrix') showing the periods of development along one axis, and the themes along the other. Entered into the cells of the grid are events (not places, except where their construction are key events).

The Historic Themes published by the Heritage Council should be used as a checklist in identifying themes relevant to the locality.

Completion of a Thematic History is typically an iterative process, with the history being 'filled in' and revised as a result of fieldwork and assessment concerning individual heritage places (and vice versa).



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## Contact us

State Heritage Office  
Bairds Building  
491 Wellington Street Perth  
PO Box 7479  
Cloisters Square  
PO WA 6850

**T:** (08) 6552 4000  
**FREECALL (regional):** 1800 524 000  
**F:** (08) 6552 4001  
**E:** [info@stateheritage.wa.gov.au](mailto:info@stateheritage.wa.gov.au)  
**W:** [www.stateheritage.wa.gov.au](http://www.stateheritage.wa.gov.au)