

Historic heritage

The region's rich land-based heritage contributes to our sense of identity. The region has a world renowned stock of late 19th and early 20th century wooden houses, Selwyn churches, New Zealand Land War sites, and a remarkable archaeological assemblage associated with the volcanic cones and the Hauraki Gulf Islands. These sites are of national and international significance.

Unfortunately, much of our historic heritage has been lost or damaged, and continues to be under threat of destruction or neglect. Threats to historic heritage include:

- Ongoing growth and development.
- 'Demolition by neglect' continues to be an issue, with heritage buildings in particular being neglected to the point that restoration becomes too difficult or costly.
- 'Façadism' is sometimes promoted as a way of retaining heritage values when in reality much of the heritage value of a building can be lost (see picture below).
- Coastal development threatens historic heritage resources in the coastal environment.

What is measured and results

Identifying cultural heritage is the first step towards protecting it.

Since 1997, the ARC has collected information on historical heritage sites, adding them to the Cultural Heritage Inventory. The number of items increases as new sites are recognised. By the end of 2008 there were 15,745 items in the inventory. The types of items in the inventory include archaeological sites, historic structures, places significant to Maori, trees having cultural or historic significance, shipwrecks, landscapes and places where special events happened.

The New Zealand Historical Places Trust (NZHPT) also identifies heritage items, adding them to the NZHPT register. Over the past 4 years, there has been a steady increase in the number of registered items in the Auckland region and 494 were registered by the end of 2008.

- Registration is an identification mechanism only. It does not offer any protection as the NZHPT relies on local authorities to include the registered items in their heritage schedules.
- Most registrations relate to historic buildings and more than 70 per cent are in Auckland city. Rural areas and other areas with low development pressure are often not well surveyed and consequently historic heritage within those areas may be at greater risk.
- Historic places registered with the NZHPT are assigned a Category I or II rating, depending on their level of significance or value. The majority of NZHPT registered historic places in the Auckland region have Category II status and just over one-quarter have Category I status.

Ongoing condition of and risk to historic heritage

While progress has been made with the identification and survey of historic heritage in the region, and with the development of schedules, policies and rules in regional and district plans for protecting historic heritage, there is an ongoing risk to this heritage because historic heritage schedules are incomplete and do not represent the full extent of the region's heritage. There is an emphasis on pre-1940 buildings, while archaeological sites and areas of significance to tangata whenua are underrepresented. There is also little recognition of the broader landscape issues relating to historic heritage management.

There is little systematic monitoring of the physical condition of our historic heritage, or a comprehensive record of the number of resource consents issued for the modification, destruction or relocation of heritage items.

Little is known about how heritage items are withstanding degradation from natural pressures or human activities.

Only two of the eight Auckland councils have amended at least some of their heritage provisions in response to the 2003 Resource Management Act (RMA) amendment which elevated 'historic heritage' protection to a matter of national importance. This brings into question the quality of heritage provisions in plans and the extent to which they reflect the significance afforded to heritage protection under the RMA.



The Chatham Buildings in Central Auckland are prepared for the development of a multi-storey building behind and adjoining. This is an example of façadism.

