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MEDIA STATEMENT

Update on the World Heritage List nomination for the Parramatta Female Factory and Institutions Precinct

Friday, 20 February 2026

The Albanese and Minns Governments note the advice from the UNESCO World Heritage advisory body – the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) - that the Parramatta Female Factory and Institutions Precinct does not meet its criteria for World Heritage listing.

While this advice from ICOMOS is very disappointing, it does not diminish the recognised and intrinsic significance of the Precinct to the nation, nor does it affect the strong statutory protections already in place.

Located in the heart of Sydney, the Parramatta Female Factory and Institutions Precinct includes elements of the earliest surviving purpose-built facility of this nature in Australia. It tells the powerful story of the forced institutionalisation of women and children, from convict women and orphans to asylum patients and Aboriginal girls and boys, over more than 180 years.

The Albanese and Minns Governments both made commitments to accelerate the World Heritage List nomination for the Precinct, and have worked closely with the local community to secure this listing.

In 2024, a preliminary assessment request for the Precinct was submitted to ICOMOS. This is a new step in the World Heritage listing process, designed to provide early guidance on whether a site has the potential to demonstrate Outstanding Universal Value - the fundamental requirement for World Heritage listing.

The reasons provided by ICOMOS pertained to substantial changes to the site over time, including past demolition, that have reduced its ability to reflect the female experience at the site. This is despite NSW Government investment in major conservation works across the Precinct, including restoration of the Parramatta Riverbank and activation of former institution buildings. The nomination focussed on the site's demonstration of the changing social policies and practices in the treatment of women and children. ICOMOS did not consider this process was of outstanding significance.

Nothing can reduce the importance of the Precinct's story to the broader Australian story – nor the importance that this site holds to Parramatta, to greater Sydney and to the many descendants of those who were institutionalised at the site.

The site will continue to be protected through its listing on the NSW State Heritage Register under the *Heritage Act 1977* (NSW) and the National Heritage List under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (Cth).

Quotes attributable to Minister for the Environment, Murray Watt:

“This site is important to many Australians, and we understand the deep impact this outcome will have on those communities. We take all world heritage nominations seriously, so it is naturally a disappointing outcome.

“The Parramatta Female Factory and Institutions Precinct will continue to be recognised on Australia’s National Heritage List, and the Albanese and Minns Governments will continue to work with the Parramatta community for the conservation and protection of this significant site.”

Quotes attributable to the NSW Minister for Heritage, Penny Sharpe:

“I want to personally thank Friends of the Parramatta Female Factory, who for many years have campaigned for World Heritage recognition of this important site. I know they will be disappointed with the outcome.

“The Female Factory holds deep significance for many people. Both Governments remain committed to building on the work undertaken to date and to discussing opportunities to strengthen recognition, interpretation and engagement with the site's heritage.”

Quotes attributable to Federal Member for Parramatta, Andrew Charlton:

“The Labor Government put Parramatta’s Female Factory forward for World Heritage Listing because it is one of the most important historical sites in Australia.

“Irrespective of the outcome of the UNESCO process, we are determined to protect the Female Factory for future generations.”

Quotes attributable to NSW Member for Parramatta, Donna Davis:

“I’ve been a part of the campaign for the World Heritage Listing of the Parramatta Female Factory for many, many years, so this decision is a real blow.

“I want to thank all the incredible people who I have campaigned with over the years. We may not have gained a world heritage listing, but we will not stop fighting for the protection of this site.

“We all have a part to play to ensure that the experiences of the women and children of the Parramatta Female Factory and Institutions precinct are woven into the Australian story, so they are never forgotten.”

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