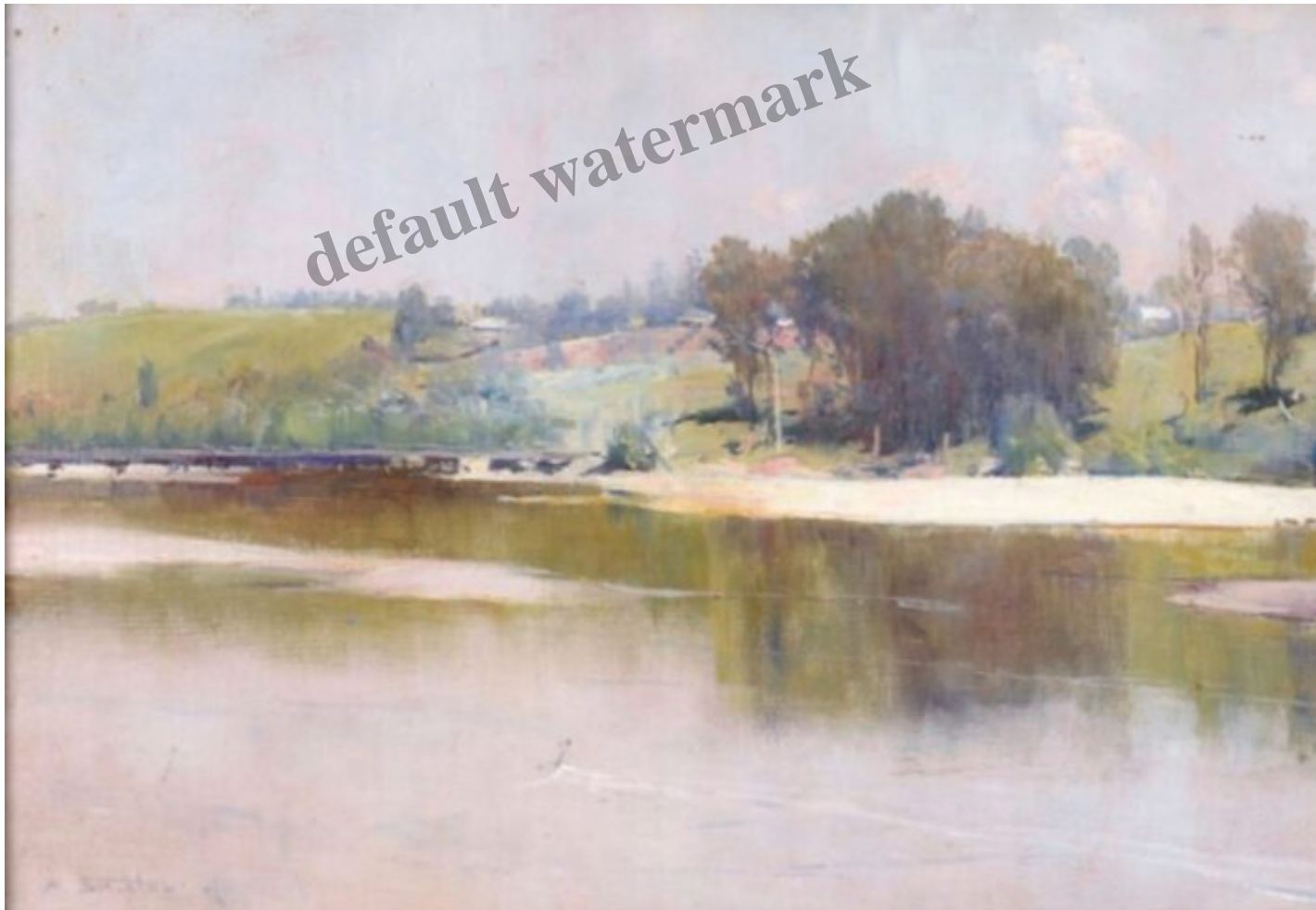




Council Committees and protecting our Heritage

Description



Hawkesbury City Council has no less than [17 different Committees](#).

They're a mess – some have been around since Noah. Some have forgotten the reason for their creation. Some took it upon themselves to re-write their own terms of reference. Some are chaired by

Councillors, some are not. Some take in members of the broader community as voting members, some not.

Some of the committees do good work, and enrich the decision making processes of Council. Some... not so much. Each committee requires staff resources to prepare agendas, minutes, and convene meetings.

A proposal was advanced at [tonight's Council meeting](#) to restructure our committees for the first time in decades. It was a great idea – it streamlines the number and remit of committees, taking on detailed feedback received by a Council review over the last year.

It ensured that our committee meetings were public and open to public address (they aren't now). That agendas are pre-published, and that documentation was available in a timely way to Councillors and the public alike.

It promotes the importance of existential threats like floods and bushfires to become the concern of the whole Chamber – not just a subcommittee.

I agreed. Many times I've been in a committee meeting and thought '*I wish all my colleagues were hearing this*'.

I disagreed on one critical point – the proposal, as it was moved, sought to abolish our [Heritage Committee](#).

Our Heritage Committee, which I've been a member of for four years, carries a disproportionate weight for Council. HCC doesn't employ a full-time Heritage Officer. The members of this committee are a rare and special fraternity of heritage wisdom, including scientists, heritage architects, historians, and planning experts. We're very fortunate to have them give their knowledge to us around the year, completely gratis. Put it this way – if we had to pay for their advice, we couldn't afford it. The work this committee does fills a huge gap that would be impossible to fill if the committee was dissolved – and the motion before me sought to do just that. It sought to amalgamate its function into a committee with no community representatives and which shared billing with Waste and Environmental Sustainability – fairly poor bedfellows.

So, when the vote came, and despite my support for committee reform generally, I voted for a deferral so we could talk as a group of 12 about a better outcome that both permits reform, and protects our unique Heritage (and this committee). I expect the matter will come back to Council before Christmas.

Picture: Summer Noon, Hawkesbury River; Arthur Streeton, 1896.

Here are the remarks I made to Council when this came up:

Category

1. Uncategorized

Tags

1. Hawkesbury Council
2. Heritage committee
3. Hawkesbury Heritage

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