



## Frequent Asked Questions regarding The Spastic Centre and the McLeod House Heritage Status

### 1. **Who and What is The Spastic Centre of New South Wales?**

The Spastic Centre of NSW is a Company Limited by Guarantee and is a recognised Charitable Institution.

The Mission of The Centre is:

*“supporting people with cerebral palsy and their families in the community.”*

The principal activities, as set out in the 2001 Annual Report, of the Spastic Centre are:

*“to provide access to a range of services and facilities to children and adults with cerebral palsy and their families in NSW and the ACT and, where applicable, to people with other disabilities who can benefit from the type of services offered.”*

Established in 1945, the Spastic Centre has been present at its Allambie Heights site since 1957.

During the 1960's and 1970's, the Spastic Centre progressively added new buildings and more land to the original site as to create a comprehensive and expansive multi-function facility for people with cerebral palsy. It now has trusteeship of around 7.2 hectares of Crown Land located to the south of Aquatic Drive and to the west of Allambie Road.

### 2. **Who owns the land occupied by The Spastic Centre at Allambie Heights?**

The land owner is the NSW State Government, or more specifically the Department of Land and Water Conservation. The Department has an ongoing responsibility for overseeing management of such public land and ensuring that the land use is consistent with the purpose for which it is reserved.

The Spastic Centre as trustee of the land has the responsibility to ensure that the land, which is reserved for charitable purposes, is used only for such purposes.

3. **Who owns McLeod House and what is it used for?**

McLeod House is owned by The Spastic Centre.

Initially built for accommodation purposes the previous residents have now been relocated to community based facilities. Parts of the building are uninhabited because of the absence of basic amenities. Those parts of the building that are used are utilised for the purposes of therapy, assessment and fitting of Hart Walkers, and clerical activities.

4. **What are the Spastic Centre objections to McLeod House being listed on the heritage list?**

On 9 July 1998 The Spastic Centre obtained advice from Mr David Sheedy, Architect, who advised as follows;

*"While the (McLeod House) building is of pleasant domestic scaled design, it has, in my opinion, no real architectural distinction and has undergone much renovation and alteration over its life and now retains little original interior fitments.*

*In addition, it has become a financial burden for The Spastic Centre organisation due to the inability of fully utilising it, because of the high costs of maintaining and operating the building and also due to the potential high costs needed to convert the building so that it fully complies with BCA and Fire Regulation requirements.*

*As the whole system of operating The Spastic Centre has changed from that of institutional buildings such as McLeod House to the use of family homes and close community centre support such buildings as McLeod House are virtually non functional because of their purpose and function driven design and can rightfully now be regarded as having a transitory role in the total development of care for children with cerebral palsy, the Mosman site more correctly reflects the start of the organisation and the building by volunteers originating at that property.*

*It is therefore my assessment that McLeod House does not qualify to be included on Warringah Council's LEP Heritage Register due to its low level of heritage significance in all categories".*

Based on that assessment The Spastic Centre requested that Warringah Council reaffirm to the NSW Heritage Office its previous decision to remove McLeod House from the heritage inventory of items of local significance.

The Spastic Centre makes that recommendation on the following grounds:

- The system of providing services by The Centre has changed from that of institutional buildings such as McLeod House to the use of family community homes thereby rendering the building obsolete for its intended purpose.
- McLeod House is non functional because of their function driven design and inadequacies in terms of fire safety and in other matters of non compliance with existing Building Code of Australia.
- McLeod House has no real architectural or historic significance in the history of The Centre. The Spastic Centre would contend that Mosman site correctly reflects the origins of The Spastic Centre and in the use of volunteers in the construction of facilities for the disabled.

Specifically The Spastic Centre factually disagrees with the heritage assessment statement prepared by Council's heritage adviser, namely that McLeod House "*possesses strong social significance as the first building erected by volunteer labour for the establishment of The Spastic Centre*".

- The Spastic Centre ask that Council note that an Archivist has been engaged by The Centre to maintain the archival records of The Centre, including measured drawings and architectural photographs, for retention in a Library and Historical collection.
- Finally, The Spastic Centre reaffirms its previous concerns that McLeod House has become a financial burden for organisation due to
  - (i) the inability of fully utilising it for the purpose for which it was constructed, and
  - (ii) the high costs of maintaining the building, and
  - (iii) the need for rectification work identified by DLM Consulting, and costed by Currie and Brown, to convert the building in order that it fully complies with BCA and Fire Regulation requirements.

It is contended that such a financial burden depletes scarce resources that could be better used in the provision of services to people with disabilities.

It is therefore our assessment that McLeod House does not qualify to be included on Warringah Council's LEP Heritage Register due to the low level of heritage significance.

5. **What are The Spastic Centre's plans for McLeod House?**

In March 2001, a report was commissioned from DLM Consulting in respect of upgrade of McLeod House to current Building Code regulations. The report was commissioned because of Occupational Health and Safety concerns for staff and clients using the facilities at McLeod House.

Based on the report by DLC Consulting, the firm of Currie and Brown estimated the cost of upgrade to McLeod House to be \$1,453,000.

It should be emphasised that The Spastic Centre has no plans for the demolition or reconstruction, whether in whole or in part, of McLeod House.

The Spastic Centre however reaffirms that the McLeod House building does not merit heritage status, and consequently remains reluctant to commit to maintaining the building to a standard expected of a heritage item. Such a commitment would mean the reallocation of financial resources from essential services to people with cerebral palsy and their families.