

I write on behalf of the Burnside Residents Action Group, a local residents association of the city of Burnside, Adelaide, Sth Australia. We are a volunteer group, not affiliated with any political party or religious organisation. The major purpose for our existence is to watch over the performance of our local government and report to our residents and ratepayers. While we seek to promote increased involvement people of all ages in our local government, we also seek to promote increased involvement of young people in local government matters. We also seek to promote intelligent decision making by Burnside's elected members that will provide good governance of our city.

The City of Burnside has a population of approximately 40,000 people and is located on the eastern side of the City of Adelaide. Please find herewith our response to the Productivity Commission's Draft Report into the Conservation of Australia's Historic Heritage Places.

HERITAGE

Much has been written about protecting and preserving historic heritage places. Generally most people like the idea of keeping and protecting buildings and places that they believe have historical significance. It is important to remember that such preservation and maintenance comes at a financial cost. Both to governments and to individuals. Who is to pay?

The Productivity Commission, an independent agency established by the Federal Govt., has recently examined a range of matters relating to the pressures, benefits and costs of protecting and preserving historic heritage places and has made a no. of recommendations which our local residents group generally supports.

For the purpose of this response we shall confine our comments to our experiences with our local Burnside Council. While we note that the Burnside Council has decided to oppose the recommendations of the Productivity Commission, the Council did not consult residents whose homes have recently been compulsorily heritage listed nor did it invite any public comment on the Commission's Inquiry.

Prior to the existence of the current Council, the City of Burnside had adopted a voluntary approach to the listing of heritage places. Some elected members became unhappy because a no. of buildings and places deemed by the Council to be of heritage significance were not voluntarily listed. This, because the home owners had chosen not to have their properties so listed generally because of perceived loss of value of their properties and prescriptive regulations to which council adheres. And so, in 2005, the Council decided to compulsory list 390 properties that the Council believed to be of heritage significance.

This turned out to be a somewhat farcical process. Many home owners were aggrieved because of the lack of consultation. They were unable to even find out the reasons for such compulsory listing. A significant no. of residents were elderly and quite distressed having no idea what such listing might mean for them and their properties. As it turned out, some places were listed in error since the properties or parts thereof no longer even existed in the forms described by the Council. Even a tiny rusty old tin shed was listed. Our residents group received a no. of complaints and requests for advice. Some residents felt compelled to employ the assistance of lawyers and independent planning

officers in order to represent them with the Council. This proved a very costly exercise for many home owners who could ill afford the expense.

We know that many of Burnside's current Councillors take the view that there are too many developers who want to "make a fast buck" by knocking down large old homes and building more than one home on the same site. And while it's true that many larger old homes have disappeared and are disappearing, it is also true that many people these days prefer to live on smaller properties of a different style. This is not a fact that is generally acknowledged by a no. of Burnside's councillors at present. Many property owners have appealed our Council's planning decisions and won their appeals. As a result, our Council has currently overspent its anticipated planning legal costs to some \$300,000. Residents and ratepayers are unhappy with this financial impost and would prefer that planning matters were undertaken by a planning body more independent of Council.

Our position

We believe that if "the community" decides to take "an interest" in a person's property and therefore desires to "have a say" in the design or maintenance of such property then "the community" ought to pay for its desired "interest". Home owners ought not be left out of pocket when the community removes some of their property rights - a double penalty.

We believe that it is far preferable to work **with people to negotiate an agreement** rather than impose heritage listing on home owners.

We believe that incentives should be offered to home owners to have their homes heritage listed.

We believe the fact that decisions under the planning act do not carry any compensation is inequitable. This especially so for heritage listing where in almost every case the outcome is a financial loss for the owner.

We believe that local government should establish measures for collecting, maintaining and disseminating relevant information on conserving homes that it deems to be of heritage significance.

We believe that our local government ought to document and publicly report on heritage related costs associated with their conservation of heritage buildings and places.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment on your Inquiry,

Ruth Morley-Keough,
President,
Burnside Residents Action Group (BRAG)