



**City of Sydney Combined Resident Action Groups**  
[www.cityrags.org.au](http://www.cityrags.org.au)

23 February 2006

Heritage Inquiry  
Productivity Commission  
PO Box 80  
Belconnen ACT 2616

Dear Sir/Madam

**HERITAGE INQUIRY**

The City of Sydney Combined Resident Action Groups (CityRAGs) is the central forum representing some 18 resident action and precinct community groups across the entire City of Sydney LGA.

We believe many of the draft Recommendations in the Report will result in the destruction of Australia's heritage, specifically the concept of voluntary statutory listings of privately owned property, subject to a negotiated "conservation agreement".

The concept of a "conservation agreement" which would lapse with a change of ownership support is fraught with difficulty and we urge you to consider its impact.

If adopted, this will have the initial impact of a massive reduction of heritage listings, and when combined with changes in ownership, will result in an unacceptably significant loss of built heritage, most probably by demolition.

It has been proven time and again that many developers and renovators will not protect built heritage in a voluntary manner. This is not only during periods of "a property boom" but on a day-to-day basis in our inner city suburbs.

Unfortunately it is apparent that many private property owners do not want to accept (or understand) their role as custodians of Australia's heritage nor recognised the opportunities by adaptive re-use and maintenance of these historic properties.

Whilst we acknowledge that there are some cases that present difficulties for some owners of heritage listed properties, this should not be used as an argument to decrease legislative protection. Instead we support the process of financial assistance. Nevertheless, the introduction of any "conservation agreement" must be supported by heritage listings and enforceable heritage planning.

Without proper legislative heritage protection, any financial incentive assistance to the current owner of a heritage property is likely to be pointless and wasteful, particularly if the subsequent owner does not want to support an agreement to maintain the heritage listing.

**CityRAGs Members**

Centennial Park Residents Association • RESNET, CBD • CRIG Chippendale Residents Interest Group • ECCG East Chippendale Community Group • DRAG Darlinghurst Resident Action Group • ESNA East Sydney Neighbourhood Association • The Glebe Society • 2011 Residents Association, Kings Cross • Millers Point Resident Action Group • Moore Park Road Residents • Paddington & Darlinghurst Community Working Group • Pyrmont Action • Pyrmont Community Group • Nichols Street Community Group • The Ultimo Society • wRed wRaG • REDwatch Redfern Waterloo

# CityRAGs

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In considering this Report, it appears the Commission has not adequately considered the consequences of real life scenarios such as voluntary heritage listing regimes, such as Bankstown City Council nor the development of successful legislation, such as Local Laws, such as "Dilapidated, dangerous and unsightly premises" Local Law of the Melbourne City Council.

The proposal for Government acquisition of heritage properties instead of heritage planning controls will only led to unrealistic demands from some private owners to ask Government (i.e. the tax payers) to pay unrealistic prices, resulting in the destruction of heritage precincts in Sydney.

We believe consideration needs to be given to the economic benefit and value of protection of heritage precincts and heritage conservation areas and the impact the draft Recommendations would have on these areas, where collectively the benefit is derived from its preservation.

Whilst we acknowledge the current system requires reform to provide consistent management and remove duplication of consent requirements between State and Local Government here in NSW, any changes must support the need for consistent heritage protection and the on going maintenance of heritage items as well as the need for increased heritage funding assistance to ensure its protection.

It is also particularly important that recommendations include legislation which has the power to prevent "demolition by neglect" and promotes heritage education to property owners, developers and wider community.

Some of our members have suggested that responsible owners of heritage properties should be allowed to 'self-list' their own properties (with due input from an expert), thus protecting those properties through any subsequent buying and selling.

Whilst it may not be intended, in its present form, the Report advocates the permanent loss though demolition, of built heritage and takes Australia's heritage protection of the built environment back to the 1960s.

Yours sincerely

M. Gormly  
For and on behalf of CityRAGS

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