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Haberfield NSW 2045

22 February 2006

The Assistant Commissioner,
Heritage Inquiry,
Productivity Commission,
P.O. Box 80,
Belconnen, A.C.T. 2616

Dear Mr. Plunkett,

On reading the Productivity Commission's Draft Report *Conservation of Australia's Historic Heritage Places*, three aspects of it stand out to me as potentially undermining the conservation of Australia's heritage.

Firstly the idea that buildings, places etc. should only be listed as heritage items with the consent of the owner:

- "Privately-owned properties should be included on a national, State, territory, or local government statutory heritage list only after a negotiated conservation agreement has been entered into and should remain listed only while an agreement is in force" (page XLIII Draft Recommendation 8.1)

Secondly, that heritage zoning of a property results in it losing financial value:

- "Owners suffer an erosion of property rights and potential loss of value ..." (page XXIX)
- "The loss in value of our home would be around \$120,000" (page 169).

Thirdly, demolition and development controls should be less stringent in heritage conservation areas than on individual properties:

- "Heritage conservation areas impose less stringent restrictions on the ability to demolish and redevelop properties than do individual heritage controls" (page 94, draft finding 5.3).

Firstly, if a building, place etc. is deemed to be of heritage significance it should not depend on the consent of the owner whether it is saved from mutilation or destruction. Such a policy would have deleterious consequences if it was applied to either individual properties or to a heritage conservation area where the streetscape had to be maintained to keep its heritage integrity. In a conservation area, inappropriate development of one property would have an adverse impact on those in its vicinity. People who purchase properties knowing that they are heritage listed should not be permitted to simply withdraw their property from that listing.

Secondly, it has been shown that there has been an increase in the financial value of properties in heritage conservation areas. This argument was put forward in an article "Heritage streetscape adds up to extra value" in the *Financial Review*, 8-10 October 2004. A copy of the article has been included with this letter. As well, as recently as 19 February 2006 it was reported in the Sunday Telegraph that property values in Haberfield had risen 8.8% in the past year. All of this suburb was gazetted as a heritage conservation area by the New South Wales State government in 1985 and its heritage provisions managed by Ashfield Municipal Council. It was ranked tenth of "Suburbs on the Move".

Thirdly, demolition of individual houses in a conservation area would result in the gradual loss of integrity of that conservation area. In the part of Haberfield developed by Richard Stanton each house was of an individual design (see my book *Tours of Haberfield: Past and Present, Part One*). Demolition of an individual house would result in the loss of one example of these variations on the architectural theme that characterizes Haberfield. The replacement of an original building with a modern one would cause an area to lose its authentic character.

It would be disastrous for both heritage conservation and property owners' financial interests if individual property owners could withdraw their property from heritage listing or demolish a building on a whim or for some short-term financial gain. The community's interests, both cultural and financial, should take precedence.

Yours Sincerely,

Vincent Crow OAM