

SUBMISSION TO PRODUCTIVITY COMMISSION ON CONSERVATION OF AUSTRALIA'S HISTORIC HERITAGE PLACES by EVONNE MOORE.

I am an elected councillor with a local council in Adelaide. My council, the Norwood Payneham and St. Peters Council, is making a written submission to the enquiry. But I felt so appalled by the commission's draft suggestion for voluntary heritage listings that I am making my own personal submission.

I am the owner of a 1920s cottage in an inner suburb. I am delighted that my council has recently declared that my house lies in an Historic Conservation Zone and that my dwelling is listed as a contributory heritage place.

Contributory heritage listing means that while my dwelling may have little individual heritage significance, when it is included in the group of 1890s-1920sd cottages in my part of my street, together these buildings show a historic and architectural coherence and consistency which make up a residential streetscape of historic heritage value.

I believe that this listing will help to protect my property from future unsympathetic development nearby and also contribute to an increase in my property's value over time.

Heritage zoning is an excellent way to protect historic areas. However Planning SA will not allow my council to declare large parts of our town historic areas. This is because Planning SA supports urban consolidation and so large parts of our town must be available for demolition and redevelopment so that developers can cram more dwellings into our city's boundaries.

Despite the value of heritage zoning, some buildings of heritage value sit outside such zones and still deserve protection, I believe.

Many people who are strongly opposed to compulsory heritage listing of their properties in our council's area appear to be mostly upset that

- (a) their properties will fall in value, and/or
- (b) their opportunities to redevelop their property will be reduced, and/or
- (c) they will be forced to maintain their properties to a high degree.

In relation to the last point, there is no legal requirement in South Australia for heritage property owners to keep their properties in excellent condition.

In relation to property values, it is true that in some cases property values of listed properties in residential areas may fall. But in other cases, prices may rise. For example, the beautiful residential "Avenues" area of the suburb of St. Peters was largely built by the East Adelaide Investment Company in the 1880s. Several avenues of magnificent houses were listed as an Historic Conservation Zone by the former St. Peters Council in 1993. This, combined with the individual listing of many dwellings of local

heritage and contributory heritage value, has seen the value of these properties sky-rocket in the past twelve years.

Well cashed-up and discerning home-buyers are happy to pay top dollars for properties which they know enjoy protection from out-of-character developments on adjacent land, which would detract from the character of their area and reduce their residential amenity.

Where property-owners are concerned about a loss in value of their properties due to heritage-listing, then local councils, state governments and the Commonwealth government should, I submit, offer some compensation through a range of programs.

Councils may offer free heritage advice and limited grants for restoration work, as my council does. If councils had more resources, they could offer larger grants and rate concessions to affected property-owners. However most councils are strapped for cash and/or carrying heavy debt loads and council rate concessions are rarely offered in this State to owners of heritage-listed properties.

Councils can also offer trade-offs in terms of zoning requirements for new development in heritage-listed buildings. Heritage-listed commercial buildings can find new uses through this means.

Our State governments could also offer land tax concessions and Emergency Services Levy concessions for owners of local heritage and State heritage listed properties. Other concessions from State governments could also be considered.

The Commonwealth government should assist here through grants to local councils to assist with heritage compensation measures or offer compensation through federal tax laws.

Economic compensation would only be partial compensation, I submit. However while I support limited economic compensation in those cases where heritage listing may reduce property values, I strongly support compulsory heritage listing.

I am deeply disturbed that the Commission is recommending to the Australian government the scrapping of compulsory heritage listing.

There is no evidence that voluntary listing, as the Commission recommends, would save Australia's diminishing collection of heritage buildings.

While the present system is not perfect and needs improving, let us not throw out the baby with the bath-water.

Individual property-owners will tend to put their own narrow economic interests above the general public interest in heritage conservation. Financial incentives offered by governments may not be sufficient to save many buildings.

Australia took over 180 years, from the time of European settlement, to bring in compulsory legislative controls on the demolition of our built heritage.

It is indeed a national tragedy that we stood back for so long and watched so many lovely historic buildings be demolished. I refer the Commission to *Lost Adelaide: A Photographic Record* by Michael Burden which records some of the beautiful heritage buildings demolished in Adelaide between 1900 and the 1970s.

I have little doubt that in the future many other fine buildings will be lost should voluntary heritage listing be introduced.

In the United Kingdom, there are houses which are over 800 years old.

It says something about colonial societies, such as ours, built as we are on migration flows, something that makes us slow to value our history and heritage.

Thankfully, the Australian people now strongly support the conservation of our built heritage. This support should be enshrined in legislative controls, not left to the whim of individual property-holders.

The value of our heritage buildings to our international tourism trade would appear to be immense.

Heritage conservation is for the long term. It is part of our past. It is part of our future. We hope to hand it on to future generations. What is lost is lost forever.

Heritage buildings have an intrinsic value, as does a work of art. Economics are only one aspect of any consideration of this issue. Social, cultural, aesthetic and environmental considerations also play a part.

Let us work to improve the present system. But I urge the Commission not to embrace a radical and risky strategy of voluntary heritage listing.

Thank you for the opportunity to make some comments.

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