

Dear Assistant Commissioner,

My apologies for this late and informal correspondence, but unfortunately personal circumstances have prevented me from presenting a more structured and detailed paper.

In short this email is simply to flag a thought you may wish to consider as a part of your overall review relating to Victorian heritage buildings. My comments are focussed solely on buildings which are situated within the boundaries of a rural title.

In many instances, business consolidation and/or changes in lifestyle/personal requirements within rural communities have created positions where development of modern housing or infrastructure has left original dwellings and/or other significant structures disused and unoccupied.

In the majority of cases, neither time or cash flow allow the title holder to dedicate any focus to ongoing upkeep of disused buildings and the structures fall into a state of disrepair. More often than not the forces of nature make short work of these structures.

The nature of "rural titles" makes it difficult, if not impossible for landowners to subdivide their properties without sacrificing a significant component of productive land.

Not too long ago near Warrnambool a landowner arranged to sell the original homestead on his property to a building relocation company. The sale was stopped on the basis the building was historically significant. As he had neither funds or inclination to use the building himself, he has subsequently allowed the building to deteriorate beyond repair..

It is my belief that had an option existed where the landowner had been able to subdivide on a basis whereby he could sacrifice nothing more than 1 or 2 acres surrounding the original homestead (as opposed to the 50 to 100 acres required by Councils on most rural titles) along with providing an access easement he would have happily sold the building to someone who could have devoted time and resources into restoration, perhaps with the view to establishing a B&B or the like.

It may be worth considering opening up an avenue for landowners to utilise a "significant heritage" subdivision provision so that historically significant buildings can be sold accompanied by only a modest land parcel. Heritage Australia and/or other heritage related entities may even be interested in purchasing such sites.

As it currently stands, no agriculturalist or pastoralist would be willing to part with 50 to 100 acres just to enable an old homestead, shearing shed or dairy to be saved.

Hope these thoughts are of some use, and again I apologise for not reverting earlier

Sincerely

(Signed James Reid)