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6.9.05

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

Dear Mr. Plunkett,

I am writing in regard to funding privately-owned buildings and places of heritage value in Australia. I am especially interested in the Haberfield Conservation Area which was listed on the Register of the National Estate in 1990.

Over the years some houses have been altered to a small extent and need restoration of aspects of them to bring them back to their original appearance. Perhaps the Commonwealth government could devise ways to encourage house owners to spend money on such restoration projects. While it would be to the benefit of both the property owner and the community for such a thing to happen, the main problem for the property owner is the initial outlay of funds.

I own a property at 14 Haberfield Road, Haberfield. The house was built in 1904 during the Federation period and it mostly retains its original appearance. The only significant external parts that have been removed by previous owners are the slate roof and brick chimneys. As the house is leased to tenants, I would be able to replace the roof when needed and claim this cost as a deductible expense from an income-producing property. However the cost of replacing the existing glazed terracotta tile roof with a slate roof would be much higher than replacing it with unglazed terracotta tiles which were an alternative roofing material during the Federation period (c. 1890-1920). It would be less costly to re-roof the house with unglazed terracotta tiles than with slate but the result would be less authentic to the house. The initial cost outlay is the problem. Perhaps the Commonwealth government could devise a way to solve problems such as this. The higher relative cost would be especially onerous on the owner-occupier of a property as he/she would not benefit financially from the cost of the roof until the property was sold.

If the former chimneys on my house were to be reinstated, the cost of doing this could not be deducted from my taxable income as it could not be claimed as a repair. The Commonwealth government could provide some financial support to people who wish to restore significant elements of their heritage property. Certain criteria to qualify for some financial support might need to apply such as the property being listed on a heritage register. Perhaps the element to be restored might need to be able to be seen by the public i.e. form part of the streetscape.

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The main problem for owners of private property wishing to restore elements of their heritage property is the initial cost. It would be beneficial to society as a whole, through restoration of Australia's built heritage, for the Commonwealth government to provide some form of financial assistance and support.

Yours Sincerely,

Vincent Crow OAM