

Mt. Druitt Historical Society

“Preserve Our Heritage”

All communications to
be addressed to:

Hon. Secretary,
Box 3055
MT DRUITT VILLAGE, 2770

Scanned copy of original submission

General Manager
Blacktown City Council
P O BOX 63
BLACKTOWN NSW 2148

Dear Sir

**Re: Productivity Commission Draft Report on the
Conservation of Australia's Heritage Places**

At the last meeting of the Mount Druitt Historical Society consideration was given to the abovementioned report, and we would like to make the following submission.

The New South Wales Government for many years acting under State Legislation was allowed to investigate old recognisable historic buildings in the different localities, within their respective areas, worthy of preservation. Extensive investigation resulted in a number of worth preserving buildings being part of a final list, following a period of public exhibition and determination. The list was then submitted to the Minister and we understand it had been gazetted.

We firmly believe that the local council, because of its undisputed local knowledge, should be the appropriate body to determine the preservation of items of local historic and cultural values. It has better ability and capacity and clearly defined powers to guard and protect items of local importance from the destructive sledge hammer of greedy developers and speculators.

Federal and State governments constantly urge the public to take interest in our history and heritage. The students at schools are taught to preserve our heritage and environment. Yet, surprisingly enough, the National Government is considering a set of legislation, which, on application, could easily lead to a precarious situation where in years of dedicated endeavours to secure-by applying reasonable limitations on some buildings closely linked chronologically with the development of our city, to be wasted.

In the absence of any financial assistance from the Federal and State Government, Blacktown Council each year sets asides in its budget, several thousand dollars and allows the owners of the listed properties to apply for an allocation for minimum maintenance. We understand many owners did accept the offer, - an indication of co-operation.

Australia is a young country and unlike other nations, it does not require a Department of Antiquities. What we need are allocations of funds by Federal and State Administrations to salvage and restore buildings presently listed. If there is national pride, we must provide the evidence, **that we are builders and not demolishers.**

Blacktown Council has in the past requested the Minister for Local Government to be allowed to apply a Local Improvement levy to raise \$500,000 annually (100,000 rated properties \$5 per assessment), so it could assist further towards the restoration or even gradual acquisition of some of the listed properties. The Minister refused.

We do not understand what can be the real intentions of the government. The Prime Minister, who has publicly revealed his desire to promote history as an important subject throughout our educational system, is now acting contrary to his beliefs and principles! This is a serious contradiction.

This Society is anxious to know as to what would happen with the gazetted list of historical buildings. Further, what would be the position who, subject to a Council conditional D.A. approval, the developer agreed to preserve an historic house within his subdivision or overall development?

We regard Blacktown Council's policy on heritage and preservation to be one of commendation and any attempt to change the status quo would create hostility and antipathy against those who may attempt to cause damaging interference in local affairs. AS A COMMUNITY WE ARE PROUD OF OUR ACHIEVEMENTS.

Yours faithfully

(Mrs) L. Stakenburg
SECRETARY
21^{5t} February 2006