

RICHARD FALKINGER
1 Green Place
East Melbourne
Victoria 3002
Tel: (03) 9416 2437
Fax: (03) 9416 2349
rf@falkingerandronas.com.au

**Conservation of Australia's Heritage Places
Submission to the Productivity Commission
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About the Author

This Submission has been prepared by Richard Falkinger, Architect and Heritage Consultant on behalf of The Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne

Richard Falkinger

- Has established a reputation, built over 30 years, in the conservation of culturally significant places, ecclesiastical architecture and the design of culturally sensitive places;
- has been the architect for the conservation of St Patrick's Cathedral Melbourne from 1971 to 1997 (the year of the centenary of the consecration of the Cathedral);
- Has carried out the restoration of St Patrick's Cathedral Ballarat, St Mary's Cathedral, Sale and about 50 Roman Catholic and Anglican churches in Victoria and South Australia;
- Has worked in the architectural conservation of churches in England (Wells Cathedral), Germany (Frauen Kirke, Munich) and Italy (Chiesa Nuova, Rome).
- Since 2000 has been leading the architectural team of Falkinger Andronas Pty Ltd in the conservation of St Paul's Anglican Cathedral, Melbourne;
- Has successfully participated in major fund-raising activities for many of the pre-eminent projects he has worked on;
- Is a member of the Cathedral Architects Association of the United Kingdom.

Director:
Arthur Andronas A.R.A.I.A.
B. Arch. R.M.I.T.
M.A. Conservation Studies (York UK)

Consultant:
Richard Falkinger F.R.A.I.A.
Dip. Arch. R.M.I.T.
Grad.Dip. Conservation Studies (York UK)

Consultant:
Gabrielle Moylan A.R.A.I.A.
B. Arch. (Hons) Melbourne

A.B.N. 59 064 508 425
Architectural Company
Approval No. C 406

The Roman Catholic Church is owner of a great number of places of varying degrees of cultural significance, and is conscious of the obligation that comes with being the owner of culturally significant buildings and places.

As Cathedral Architect for St Patrick's Cathedral, Melbourne from 1970 to 1997, I can make the following observations with regards to the conservation issues of a notable culturally significant place:

I worked for Yunken Freeman Architects in 1970 when the firm was commissioned by the Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne to design their new Diocesan offices. There was no Heritage Act, only the National Trust's Classification system for notable buildings. The Cathedral College had to make way for the new proposed Diocesan office building. I was the senior designer working directly with Roy Simpson, recipient of the R.A.I.A. Gold Medal. The National Trust vehemently opposed our design at that stage, although we had carried out a comprehensive analysis (similar to today's C.M.P.). Thirty years on it was the National Trust who proposed the listing of the Diocesan offices on the Heritage List and more recently the Diocesan offices were awarded the 25 year Award by the R.A.I.A.

At the end of 1970 I left Yunken Freeman Architects to start my own practice, the re-ordering of St Patrick's Cathedral Sanctuary becoming my first job and the beginning of a career change into ecclesiastical architecture and conservation of Heritage Places.

The temporary re-ordering of the sanctuary of St Patrick's Cathedral in 1971-2, in readiness for the 1973 Eucharistic World Congress, was financed entirely by the Catholic Church. It became the model for many liturgical re-orderings in Australia.

Towards the end of the 1970s a stone pinnacle fell from the nave roof onto the aisle roof, miraculously not causing any personal injury. This incident prompted a condition survey to be undertaken of all the pinnacles on the upper parapets and subsequent emergency repair work. Again this was paid for by the Church.

Because of this experience, a public fund raising appeal was launched in the early 1980s to attract funds for the maintenance of the cathedral. This appeal was not successful. Less than half the money that was expected was actually raised. The main reason given by the business community for not giving towards the maintenance fund was that it was felt that pure maintenance was the responsibility of the owners, despite tax-deductibility through the National Trust of Victoria.

As a result of the failed fund-raising appeal, Archbishop Little agreed to raising \$10million for the restoration of the spires, roofs, windows, the upgrading of services, and the permanent re-ordering of the sanctuary. The appeal received \$2million donation from the State Government and a further 1 million was donated by the Federal Govt towards the end of the Works Program. The balance of the funds was raised through a five year giving-program by the Parishes, and the generous donation of private individuals and major companies. Richard Falkinger was personally able to raise \$100,000 for the restoration of the Franz Mayer windows. All donations were Tax-deductible through the National Trust of Victoria.

The restoration program was completed on time and on budget for the centenary celebrations of the consecration of the cathedral in 1997.

The cathedral currently lacks the funds to create a permanent maintenance program based on the experience of English Churches, necessitated through a legal faculty for a quinquennial survey of the fabric and the follow-on execution of the necessary maintenance works.

The Cathedral is built of bluestone with freestone dressings. Our surveys have clearly shown that the sandstone used in the construction of the spires in 1937-9 had significantly decayed over a 70 year period. In order to maintain as much of the original fabric we have carried out repairs of the fabric with methods used in European churches for centuries. These include: repointing of joints; mortar repairs to stone; and some stone replacement where necessary, thus maintaining structural integrity of the fabric and preventing water entry.

The Church is aware of the high cost of providing scaffold (access) to the spires and upper reaches of the building. The Church also knows that major restoration of the masonry will have to be carried out more frequently in the future, due to the accelerated weathering of the stoneworks.

Whilst major restorations will always be part of the life cycle of any cathedral, a fully funded repair cycle would significantly reduce the cost and frequency of major restorations in the future.

The Cathedral today, as in the past, functions as the Mother Church of the Diocese. However, the cathedral congregation who support the cathedral on a weekly basis has dwindled significantly, therefore the income has also reduced, hence, the Cathedral can no longer support the cost of its proper maintenance. If the Cathedral is to survive and maintain its cultural significance as a masterpiece of Gothic Revival architecture, the continuing maintenance costs need to be funded by public monies.

The majority of the European church properties have, through a '*Concordat*' (agreement) of the late 19th century with the Vatican, brought ownership of these properties to the state. This applies to Germany, France, Italy and Austria. The state is therefore responsible of all church properties.

The example of Europe of maintaining public heritage places (such as cathedrals) has been the most successful recipe for providing major tourist income to these countries. Publicly funded restoration work has also provided a major source of work and as such is a positive influence on the GDP of each country.

Buildings such as St Patrick's and St Paul's Cathedrals in Melbourne, greatly enhance tourism to this city, yet the benefit of that is not returned.

We concur with and support the following submissions to this Productivity Commission:

- English Heritage,
- The Uniting Church of Australia.

The nature of the Church is that of a large organism which changes as peoples move from place to place, whose needs change, as people change.

It is essential, for an owner of a significant amount of culturally significant property to be able to have that property modified, to change with the organisation, at all its levels.

For example,

St Patrick's Cathedral is on the Register of the National Estate and on the Victorian Heritage Buildings Register. Liturgical re-ordering has been an issue for the Catholic Church throughout the world as a result of the Second Vatican Council in 1966 which directed changes to the way the liturgy was to be celebrated. As a consequence, the sanctuaries of all churches were impacted upon due to the decrees of the Vatican.

In Victoria, any change of culturally significant buildings is subject to a permit from Heritage Victoria. However, liturgical change is exempt from requiring a permit under the Victorian Heritage Act. We have used this clause in the Act to insert a new worship space in the numerous churches of State significance, including St Patrick's Cathedral, Melbourne. However, all other proposed interventions to buildings of State level significance require a permit from Heritage Victoria.

The subject of change in any building is often met with suspicion and reluctance from the authorities. If change is granted it is supposed to be done in a contemporary manner so as not to mimic the original fabric.

Generally, the officers of Heritage Victoria involve themselves in the design process so that the proposed changes are well understood, and through dialogue, successful outcomes are achieved.

However, this is often not the experience with places of lesser cultural significance that are under the control of local authorities. The approach to changes and alterations of locally significant buildings differs from council to council, very much depending on the experiences of the local Heritage Advisor. There is a lack of consistency of approach. There is a need for a consistency of approach so that there is a greater degree of certainty of outcome.

There is also a concern that the degree of control on locally significant buildings being the same as or sometimes greater than those of buildings of greater significance. Surely if a building is of local significance, it has the potential for greater intervention, and or more flexible approach to change and adaptive re-use. There are many building of local significance within the ownership of the church. Some of these are no longer required for their original purpose, for example redundant convent and or churches, which should be available for adaptive re-use. The issue is further heightened in relation to those properties that are not considered culturally significant in themselves but are caught up on a Heritage Overlay in the local Planning Scheme.

Perhaps there should be a Working Party established to review the above-mentioned issues. The Church is not looking to off-load its responsibilities in relation to culturally significant buildings, but as a major owner of such places, it would appreciate a

considered and consistent approach in relation to the gradation of cultural significance and controls that reflect the gradation respectively and consistently. The Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne would be pleased to participate in any such Working party addressing these issues.

Yours sincerely

Richard Falkinger