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original submission

THE NORTH ADELAIDE SOCIETY Inc.  
NORTH ADELAIDE, SOUTH AUSTRALIA 5006

23 January 2006

Heritage Inquiry  
PRODUCTIVITY COMMISSION  
PO Box 80,  
Belconnen, ACT 2616

Dear Sir/Madam,

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

Dear Sir/Madam,

It has long been the view of this society (established in 1970 and continually active since then) that our built heritage is too precious an asset to be squandered on the grounds of economic argument alone.

Heritage value cannot and must not be measured solely in dollar value.

The society rejects categorically the notion that heritage conservation is a negotiable process. Built heritage is identified because it meets legislative criteria, not because of owner consent. The fundamental basis of heritage listing is that the community has a right to the preservation of its built heritage, which right supersedes the right of owners to alter or destroy their heritage property. We strongly oppose the recommendation in the Draft Report of the Heritage Commission that privately-owned buildings should be included on a heritage register only after a conservation agreement has been entered into.

Owners of currently listed buildings either agreed with the listings at some earlier time or at least knew about them on purchase and, once same are listed, the sense of perpetuity must prevail. Hence, allowing for the possible future negotiability is counter-productive, as it flies in the face of all previous analysis that the retention of such properties is worthwhile for the future.

Abandoning the work of previous groups (with considerable expertise in a number of areas) denigrates that effort. Community involvement in the process over the past three decades also indicates there is more to preserving and conserving buildings, streets and suburbs, than

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dollars alone. The draft report purports to have considered the social and economic value of historic heritage places, but its emphasis is clearly on their economic value. Furthermore, we are aware that many groups and individuals submitted comments and recommendations in response to the 2005 Issues Paper, which are contrary to the recommendations of this Draft Report, but which were not addressed in the Report.

The myopic analysis of the Productivity Commission does nothing to respect the wishes of many and favours the few who have other designs for entire areas.

We challenge the underlying economic assumptions embedded in this report as being sufficient to justify the introduction of mechanisms which will ultimately destroy that which has been deemed worthy of conservation - these earlier decisions having been made with the full force of multi-disciplinary analysis (such as the Lord Mayor's Heritage Advisory Committees which included property, architectural, historic and residential perspectives) and the Heritage (Heritage Directions) Act of July 2005, drafted by the South Australian Government. The Productivity Commission's perspective is limiting and destructive.

In effect, heritage-listed properties should be seen as development 'no-go' zones. Prospective buyers know of the encumbrances before a purchase and developers are well advised to consider that before making any substantial propositions. North Adelaide, in turn, adds the additional layers of 'warnings' to potential developers by referring them quite clearly to the planning parameters for a precinct - this method also clearly enunciating the acceptable forms of development for a given area, importantly acknowledging its heritage value.

The language of the report is couched (understandably from a productivity perspective) in economic terms, heavily littered with phrases like "net benefit", "conservation agreement", "package", "concessions" as if this matter is a bargaining activity. The North Adelaide Society is firmly opposed to this model and challenges its validity when referring to matters of heritage and conservation.

Yours sincerely

Chairman

enc: *What does the North Adelaide Society do? - attachment*