

Central Western Daily

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I see a report that "one of Orange's most historic buildings" - the old Town Hall - is being sold [CWD 16.4.08]. Under NSW heritage laws, old does not automatically equate to "historic" - nor does beauty cut it. Many heritage fanatics want to heritage list fibro asbestos ridden Housing Commission cottages, sewer vents or pokey mass produced project homes.

This building is being sold because the market rent it attracts is well below the market value of the property. A negative or low return is not at all an unusual situation for owners of old buildings to face, despite ongoing propaganda from heritage fanatics claiming for example a heritage listing has a positive effect financially.

The Orange Ex-Services Club management should be congratulated for being responsible Directors and abiding by their Director's duties. They have made a rational decision that as this facility is not being used by their members, they prefer to use the sale proceeds on facilities that do benefit the members.

It is likely however that the usual grouping of heritage fanatics will leap into the fray, wanting to heritage list this item, impose wildy unreasonable restrictions on its future usage and/or engage in abuse and intimidation of the current owners.

I say if heritage fanatics love heritage a building as much as they claim, they should put their money where their mouth is, buy a property for its true market value and then try to run it at a profit themselves.

However, if they do what they normally do, and whinge for already stretched local Councils to use scarce rate payers money to buy the property and then rent it out at a peppercorn rent, then tell them to take a hike. Orange Council has enough genuine financial burdens already.

Those who profess to love old buildings need to take on the financial burden of buying and making viable the object of their adoration, and stop expecting NSW rate payers to subsidise their hobby. Any owners who feel harassed by heritage fanatics can contact us at sohonsw@gmail.com for support.

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Society of Heritage Owners