

14 April 2008

Dear Goulburn Post Editor,

I see claims that the privately owned old technical college in Bourke Street has “heritage value” has suddenly popped up after it was sold for a spectacular price and immediately the new owner’s foreshadowed a new development on the site.

I urge the Goulburn rate payers and Councillors to scrutinise any recent claims about heritage values affecting this building skeptically.

There is a long standing practice in NSW of local government heritage discretion being misused and even fraudulently used, for non-heritage purposes. It most often crops up in the circumstances such as the old technical college, where a new buyer pays current market or even top market price to acquire a property with no heritage listing affecting it, and others seek to stop a new development on the site and slash the value of the property, by suggesting a heritage listing. This is not about genuine heritage values at all, but something far more sinister - an attempt to systematically exploit heritage powers for non-genuine heritage purposes, such as a back door method to stop an otherwise complying DA and/or to render a project so financially unviable that it is stopped dead in its tracks.

This abuse of existing heritage laws, especially at local government level, has been thoroughly documented in the 2006 Federal government’s Productivity Inquiry into Built Heritage. The 2007 Expert Panel reviewing the NSW Heritage Act has made wide ranging recommendations about how to stop local government heritage malpractice.

Owners of any properties with existing heritage listings who dispute the validity of that listing and any others threatened with being heritage listed are welcome to contact the Society of Heritage Owners NSW at sohonsw@gmail.com for support.

C. Hayward

Foundation President

Society of Heritage Owners NSW