

16 March, 2010

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

THERE GOES THE NEIGHBOURHOOD!

THE NATIONAL TRUST OF AUSTRALIA (VIC) SLAMS THE PLANNING PROCESS SURROUNDING MELBOURNE'S KEY BOURKE STREET PRECINCT ASKS WHERE IS THE TRANSPARENCY IN OUR PLANNING DECISIONS?

A permit was issued today by the Executive Director of Heritage Victoria for the demolition of almost 50 percent of the Windsor Hotel and construction of a 91m tower.

CEO for the National Trust of Australia (Vic) Mr Martin Purslow says: "Today's decision by Heritage Victoria to issue a heritage permit for redevelopment of the historic Windsor Hotel is clearly a 'no wins' for the Windsor. By issuing this permit, Heritage Victoria is clearly not standing up for this historic site and precinct."

The Windsor was bought by Rupert Hamer's Government in 1976 because of the threat of demolition, but was returned to private ownership in 1990. Given the State of Victoria's previous commitment to preserving the hotel, and the considerable public finances expended upon it, the Trust considers it lamentable that a substantial proportion is now proposed to be demolished.

Mr Purslow says: "It is particularly concerning that the demolished section is proposed to be replaced by a tower of similar proportions to that which the Government found objectionable in 1989, so objectionable in fact that they stepped in to save the hotel by acquisition."

Today's announcement by Heritage Victoria caps off a bizarre fortnight in the Windsor redevelopment process. "We are extremely disappointed with this decision, which has been clearly weighted to the perceived economic benefits of the redevelopment. The economics of the proposal have not been made public by Heritage Victoria," said Mr Purslow.

"We call on Heritage Victoria to make public all the information that it has relied on in coming to its decision," he said.

"It is depressing and surprising to think that this decision has set a precedent for the Bourke Hill precinct," said Mr Purslow. "Which other city would treat the future of its Parliamentary Precinct so tawdrily on the basis of unseen, unscrutinised economic arguments?"

"In the absence of third party rights of appeal under the *Heritage Act* there will be no scrutiny of the developer's economic claims through an appeals process. Attention resumes on Planning Minister Mr Madden and his role as decision-maker under the *Planning & Environment Act*.

"At the launch of the Heritage Council's calendar in December 2009, we clearly heard about the supreme importance of the vistas through the city. Given this, we hope that the decision that is now sitting with Minister Madden is made with these sentiments in mind."

Many other historic hotels around the world have been successfully upgraded without the need for enormous towers. The Trust has researched many of these and a summary is attached and pictures that the Trust has had drawn up.

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