

Hon Steven Marshall MP (Member for Dunstan)

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Friday 17th May, 2019

Dear Steven,

## PROTECT OUR HERITAGE

Norwood has the distinction of being the oldest local government municipality in South Australia, with a unique built heritage that not only reflects the diverse social standing, lifestyle and aspirations of early settlers, but also creates a charming and identifiable community atmosphere which attracts a variety of people here for many reasons. Yet, it is this very essence of Norwood's appeal that is now being threatened by a rushed process of reform under the proposed Planning and Design Code, which seeks to water down the policy controls currently protecting our historic areas.

It has really only been over the last forty years, that our local Norwood, Payneham and St Peters (NPSP) Council has steadily assumed responsibility for the oversight of what is now widely deemed a valuable and irreplaceable asset. Sadly many beautiful old buildings have been (and continue to be) lost to suit the vested interests of developers. When my husband and I first bought our 1880s Victorian villa in 1996, it too was vulnerable to demolition until its Local Heritage listing a short while later. A major fire in 2007 may well have sealed its fate, but in response to numerous local resident concerns/queries about its preservation and our own commitment to the value of heritage, the building has been carefully restored.

Progress is important, but so too is our history. In satisfying the legislative thrust to simplify and standardise the development process, do we gradually sacrifice the heritage character of our precinct to accommodate modern buildings, so that in the end our once distinctive area looks much like any other, state-wide? At the moment we enjoy beautiful snatches of Norwood's yesteryear via State and Local Heritage listings (both relatively safe under the new planning system) along with Historic (Residential) Conservation and Character Zones (both now under threat in the new code proposed by the State Planning Commission (SPC)). Critically though, it is the **clustering** of these older (often stone) buildings which generates a strong sense of the past. Single old buildings dotted amongst a plethora of new structures, would simply not yield the same effect or ambience. Hence contemporary infill across our urban areas **cannot** be a universal concept – it needs to be refined and tailored, with recognition that some areas are less suitable for such development. In past years, the state's policy framework and changing direction has resulted in the notorious difficulty of listing buildings worthy of preservation. This means that any non-State/Local Heritage dwellings

within existing NPSP Council Historic Conservation and Character Zones are no longer guaranteed the same level of policy protection from demolition.

Alarming, new SPC policy tests of acceptable replacement buildings and 'theme representation' in other neighbourhoods, will ensure LESS policy certainty and MORE likelihood of old building losses. This anomaly needs to be addressed and places/zones which are ALREADY rigorously evaluated on historical merit by local councils (via heritage surveys and government assessment through Development Plan amendments, all of which required significant resource/financial investment by councils) need to be able to transfer seamlessly across into the code.

The subject of built heritage is close to many hearts and it is both undemocratic and disingenuous to remove community consultation (initially promised via the People and Neighbourhoods Discussion Paper) on an issue which could have a strong impact on people's financial investment, sense of community and quality of life. Policy reform without preliminary consultation/negotiation with affected parties is untenable to the community. As it stands, no public debate can now occur on the Commission's proposals to weaken the demolition tests for old buildings currently protected inside historic conservation zones. Exactly where is the engagement process with owners to raise awareness of this watering down of existing demolition controls? The SPC has comparatively unlimited time and resources to devote to this matter, but ordinary citizens/residents who are the most directly affected, have to proactively make time within a busy work/life schedule in order to stay sufficiently informed and appeal against unacceptable proposals. So, what is the timing and process for notifying all of these households inside these areas of the changes the Commission now intends to make? Nothing has been announced, which begs the question, 'How will this meet the Commission's own Charter of Community Engagement?'

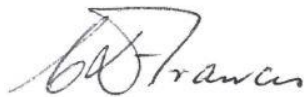
State government officers are telling you that historic buildings will be protected in new 'Local Heritage Places Overlays' and Michael Lennon (Chair of the SPC) has been on radio claiming this as fact. The trouble is, buried within the new Heritage & Character Policy Position Papers, we have found that the 'structurally sound' test *against* demolition is being removed from all buildings in these new overlays, unless they are officially heritage listed. Historic buildings can also be demolished if they are found to be 'well represented' in other suburbs, which is utterly outrageous. If you allow demolition of these buildings, the zones will no longer be historic in nature and certainly will not have historic character. These Historic Conservation and Character Zones represent a collection of buildings from a certain era and it is not too much to ask that the few that are remaining in these zones are protected. As a community we fought hard for these protections and they are generally well accepted by those who choose to live in these buildings and suburbs.

It is also not unreasonable to argue that the State's (or a particular community's) heritage really belongs to its citizens. Hence government bodies/bureaucrats with a 'let's get the job done' approach, or private owners who are really only short-term caretakers of properties, but *most definitely* developers with vested commercial interests, should NOT have the final say on such a valuable legacy for all.

Moreover, the State Government's Expert Panel on Planning Reform recommended an audit of listings, further dialogue and financial subsidies to support place-based heritage. However, the State Government has hitherto neither invested in nor consulted upon these key proposals to underpin good heritage management.

We are all aware of previous Labor Government legislation driving these initiatives, but is our elected member for Dunstan, prepared to watch his Liberal government reform in haste and repent any negative outcomes at leisure? In a bid to be progressive, does this government want a repetition of the obliteration of irreplaceable heritage on a similar or greater scale as that graphically recorded in Michael Burden's **Lost Adelaide**? Without an attentive ear to the valid concerns of constituents to help produce sensitive well-honed legislation, forty years of careful heritage protection is currently at risk and the ambience and amenity of old established communities like **Norwood** could be irrevocably changed. Our built heritage is as much as an investment in the future as it is a testimony to the past, and in Norwood especially, we need our elected representative to recognise and fight for the long-term rewards of its preservation over the short-term gains of its demolition.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Chris Francis'.

Chris Francis  
President  
Norwood Residents Association

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Tom Smith'.

Tom Smith  
Secretary  
Norwood Residents Association