



## ROYAL HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF VICTORIA INC.

239 A'Beckett Street, Melbourne 3000

**Friday, 4 March 2022**

### **Postponement of Legislative Council Inquiry into Planning and Heritage**

The RHSV deplores the decision not to hold hearings as planned and to postpone the Inquiry. The Legislative Council had a great opportunity to shine a light on the alarming increase in the loss of heritage. Members of the public and community groups, including the RHSV and the National Trust, have made over 250 submissions which uncover fundamental failings in the protection of local heritage. Clearly, for our political leaders, heritage and planning are too hot to discuss in an election year!

The RHSV noted in its submission that since the abolition of the Planning Appeals Tribunal and the transfer of planning appeals to VCAT, heritage protection has been declining. More recently, with the closure of Heritage Victoria's Heritage Advisory Service, the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) has abrogated responsibility for local heritage protection and, indeed, is actively undermining it by imposing design objectives that invite developers to construct new buildings even on sites covered by the Heritage Overlay.

The John Curtin Hotel is only the latest example of this problem. It is covered by the Heritage Overlay but also by a Design and Development Overlay calling for an eight-storey building on the site! The Corkman Hotel was subject to an Overlay calling for a twelve-storey building! Thus state planning controls invite developers' greed.

We greatly regret that the Committee did not assign priority to the issue of heritage and planning and has now allowed it to be mothballed, thus reducing discussion of these issues before the election. The future of the Inquiry is anything but assured. Everything will depend upon the next parliament. We urge all Victorians who care about our heritage to demand of candidates at this year's state election that they pledge to restart this Inquiry and pursue it to the end, with full hearings and deliberations.

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