

**Submission
No 260**

INQUIRY INTO REVIEW OF THE HERITAGE ACT 1977

Name: Dr Philip Drew

Date Received: 28 June 2021

Dear Mr Shane Mallard MLC

Re: COMMENT ON HERITAGE PRACTICE AND KEY IMPORTANCE OF ARCHITECTURAL CULTURE CONSERVATION

I recently completed a PhD, *The Fire in the Stone: The Life and Architectural Sculpture of Thomas Vallance Wran 1832-1891*. Wran emigrated to Queensland from London in 1870 and selected land at Lawrence, prior to his arrival in Sydney in 1872, to restart his career as an architectural sculptor and contributed sculpture to a number of significant monuments in the city, namely The General Post Office, Great Synagogue, Chief Secretary's Building, Founders Hall Newington College, Stanmore etc. He also built three houses in Balmain, one of which, 'Wranville', at 4 Caroline Street, was sold recently for redevelopment.

Little until now, was known about Wran's career and his important sculptural contribution to Sydney architecture, although the Minister's Stonemasonry Programme noted Wran's contribution to the Chief Secretary's Building and GPO. Copies of my 2 volume dissertation (vol.1 text, Vol. 2 catalogue raisonne) are available from the Mitchell Library and the NLA Canberra..

I wish to express my deep concern over the NSW Government's actions over the past decade of selling key government owned heritage items such as The Education Department, Lands Department, GPO, for trifling sums without adequate investigation of their real value or suitability, in most instances for adaptive use as hotels, in a climate of Covi-19 uncertainty and international tourism retreat at what in commercial real estate terms can only be considered give-away prices, thus depriving the community of a genuine monetary return on the original public investment and the true real value of the properties.

One of my research activities was to photograph Wran sculpture on the GPO in Martin Place and Pitt Street. I have since attempted to discover what exactly was done during the cleaning without success. High-resolution images document the impact: at first the keystone heads and coats of arms were bleached white and the case hardened skin appeared to have been stripped off exposing the raw stone beneath to accelerated deterioration. On visiting the sculpture recently, they were an unrecognisable lacklustre dull grey uniform hue having lost their beautiful rich sandstone colour entirely. This is shattering.

My research on Wran involved research on the Wran family history which revealed that T.V. Wran is the great grandfather of Neville K. Wran who from 1976-1986, was Premier of NSW and whose government was responsible for passing the present Heritage Act 1977 being considered for revision. 'Wranville', the house Tom Wran built with, and for, step-son Harry Wran, is not heritage listed or protected. It has an impressive and original interior created by Wran which it seems very likely will be demolished. I respectfully draw the attention of the Review Committee's notice to the imminent danger of demolition and loss of a materially significant historical link to Neville Wran.

I am an independent architectural historian and author of more than 20 books on a diverse of subjects ranging from the Australian veranda, world history of nomad and urban tents, individual architects Jorn Utzon, Glenn Murcutt, Peter Stutchbury, Frei Otto (Germany), Arta Isozaki (Japan), and *The Coast Dwellers* interpretation of Australia as a veranda country living on the edge.

I would strongly urge the Committee to pay special attention to measures that more better conserve and protect architectural sculpture as the leading and key symbolic expression of value in architecture, since its interpretation and application of three-dimensional photogrammetric and laser documentation is much neglected at present.

Yours sincerely,

Philip

Dr Philip Drew (B arch UNSW, M Arch U of Sydney, PhD UNSW)