

Heritage madness

Clover to list homes that are only 50 years old

By LARISSA CUMMINGS

EVERY homeowner in the Sydney City Council area whose property is more than 50 years old risks having to pay up to \$3000 to prove their home has no heritage value.

Under a heritage plan backed by Lord Mayor Clover Moore, properties built before the mid-1950s — including weatherboard homes, red-brick flats, outdoor dunnies and homes with chimneys — would be open to heritage classification.

With every development application for these properties, the council would be able to request a heritage impact statement — costing the owners up to \$3000 — to assess whether it was of “heritage value.”

While preserving the original look of old properties, a heritage listing imposes several development restrictions on property owners.

These constraints include height limits, no underground renovations and maintenance of period features such as fireplaces, cornices, fences and balconies at the owner's cost.

If the changes are passed, about half of the properties in the city's

“villages” of Glebe, Darlinghurst, Surry Hills and Camperdown would be subject to the strict heritage conditions.

The conditions would also extend to developments next door to heritage-listed properties, which would be required to ensure they were “in sympathy” with the heritage building.

One Sydney family is so angry at the plan they have “defaced” their ageing single-storey terrace house with brightly coloured stickers in protest.

Brian and Carmel Green spent \$1000 buying the tacky stickers now adorning their Camperdown terrace.

“Our family is outraged by proposed and existing heritage laws which seek to preserve non-genuine heritage items such as weatherboards, asbestos-ridden fibros, outdoor dunnies, ugly smoke stacks, sewer vents and Californian bungalows,” Mr Green's son Gary said yesterday.

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YourSay blog: Are heritage listings out of control?

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Heritage at a price

IN the latest episode of local government enlightenment, Sydney City Council has decreed that every built structure which is 50 years old will be subject henceforth to an automatic heritage classification.

The idea is that we should be at pains to preserve the heritage and conservation value of our city — and the principle is sound. Indeed, the CBD has been subject to such a regulation for some time.

But now, it is proposed that such a regulation would apply to all buildings — dwellings, public building, bridges, even outdoor toilets and chimney stacks — across the entire Sydney City Council local government area.

The implications for property owners are significant. This will mean before any development work can be undertaken — renovations, additions property reconfigurations and so on — developers will be required to obtain “heritage impact statements” from licensed “heritage assessors”.

No doubt the work prospects for those assessors are attractive to them. But for home owners wanting to upgrade their 1950s-vintage homes, for business operators wanting to modernise their premises to match new operating conditions, the costs are likely to be significant.

Buildings put up a mere 50 years ago are hardly in the realm of the Great Pyramid of Cheops or the Colosseum. So let's have some realism.

A 50-year-old Darlo privy is unlikely to warrant inclusion in the national estate.