

20 April 2016

The Planning Department  
Glen Eira City Council  
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**Re: Objection to Permit Application No. GE/PP-28748/2015, 294 Kooyong Road, Caulfield**

Dear Madam/Sir,

I write in objection to the above Permit Application. The National Trust was first contacted in 2015 by the Glen Eira Historical Society regarding plans to demolish the 100-year-old Red Cross Rest Home (also known as the Montgomery nursing home) on the site of the proposed development. Along with representatives of the Glen Eira Historical Society and local MP David Southwick, the National Trust met with representatives of HammondCare, including then-General Manager David Martin, on 9 September and 26 October 2015 to discuss HammondCare's plans for the site, and explore alternatives to the demolition of the Red Cross Rest Home. On both occasions the National Trust expressed opposition to the demolition of the Red Cross Rest Home, and sought to convey the building's significance to HammondCare.

The Trust has also conducted primary research to determine the significance of the Red Cross Rest Home, which was provided to the Glen Eira Historical Society to support a nomination to the Victorian Heritage Register of fabric at Caulfield Hospital relating to the Caulfield Repatriation Hospital (AGMH 11). This nomination includes the Red Cross Rest Home, as well as Buildings 17, 17a and 18, as well as the original Glen Eira mansion fence and gates, and is currently being assessed by Heritage Victoria.

Since the lodgement of the current planning permit, the Red Cross Rest Home has also been added to the War Heritage Inventory maintained by the Department of Premier & Cabinet (Hermes No. 199158).

**Heritage Significance**

Caulfield Repatriation Hospital was established in 1916, and after the war remained a repatriation hospital and permanent home for many disabled soldiers. It is depicted by writer George Johnston in the Miles Franklin Award-winning novel *My Brother Jack*. It is also featured in the Melbourne's Museum's major Anzac Centenary exhibition, *Love & Sorrow*.

The Red Cross Rest Home is the only remaining building on this important hospital site which dates to World War I—and indeed to 1916, the very year the hospital was established. The Trust's research also suggests that the Red Cross Rest Home is the only remaining purpose-built Red Cross Rest Home in Victoria. While at one time there were at least a dozen Rest Homes in Victoria, most were established in existing buildings, and many have been demolished. It is our submission that the building is significant at both Local and State Level for its capacity to demonstrate an important period of Caulfield, and Victoria's, history.

We were therefore greatly surprised and dismayed that the Heritage Impact Statement for the site submitted with the Planning Application (Peter Andrew Barrett, September 2015), found that “There are no significant detrimental impacts to this place from the removal of Montgomery House.”, and that “Montgomery House is not of any recognized heritage value”. The National Trust categorically refutes this assessment.

We disagree with Mr Barrett’s assertion that the Rest Home has a “low level of cultural heritage significance in understanding the history of Caulfield hospital in its role in the rehabilitation of injured returned soldiers”. On the contrary—as a functioning aged care facility, the fabric of the building clearly still reflects its previous use for the rehabilitation of returned soldiers. In particular, the building retains the wide verandahs which allowed returned soldiers to convalesce in the fresh air, which presumably are also enjoyed by residents today.



Bernard Haines in hospital bed outside Red Cross Rest Home, c1916 (State Library of Victoria)      Red cross rest home, 2015 (National Trust)

Mr Barrett further asserts that “Montgomery House is of a low level of aesthetic and architectural heritage significance, as it is an unremarkable and altered work of the architect AJ Macdonald”. We disagree. The modest, domestic scale of the Red Cross Rest Home reflects the purpose for which it was built, as well as the austerity experienced during World War I. The assertion that the Rest Home is not significant because it is “unremarkable” negates the historical and social significance which is clearly evident in the design and fabric of the building. The distinctive and elegant cruciform design also echoes the building’s connection to the Red Cross, with the gabled roof, roughcast walling and chimney reflecting the influence of the Federation Arts and Crafts style. While an appreciation of the original form of the building is obscured by later unsympathetic additions, these could easily be removed.

### **Alternative Options**

We submit that the proposal for a Memorial Pavilion and poppy garden is inappropriate and not an acceptable alternative to demolition. As part of the building’s significance is derived from its distinctive cruciform layout, we do not believe that any demolition of the original form is acceptable. While from the drawings it appears that the poppy garden is intended to interpret the footprint of the Rest Home, more than 50% of the original footprint would be obscured by buildings and landscaping, and the intention to highlight the former building would likely not be apparent to visitors to the site. Further, we believe the poppy garden response is a generic and tokenistic approach to the commemoration of a site with a very specific history, ie a place which demonstrates the experiences of returned soldiers and the women who established the Rest Home and nursed the patients, and the particular response of the Caulfield community to the Great War.

The National Trust accepts that the Red Cross Rest Home is no longer suitable for use as an aged care facility, however we note that there are a number of proposed new structures on the site that may have compatible uses with the existing building, including the administration building, general store, chapel, salon and workshop. We do not believe that HammondCare has adequately demonstrated that the demolition of this building is the only available option.

### **Glen Eira Planning Scheme**

We believe the proposed development is contrary to a number of provisions in the Glen Eira Planning Scheme, which supports the identification and protection of heritage places. In particular, we note the policy basis outlined in 22.01-1:

- *A key objective of Council's Municipal Strategic Statement is to identify, protect, enhance and promote understanding of Glen Eira's heritage.*

We also note the objectives outlined in 22.01-2:

- ***To identify the City's heritage assets** and to give effect to the recommendations of the Glen Eira Heritage Management Plan 1996, and the Addendum to the Glen Eira Heritage Management Plan 2014. [our emphasis]*
- *To recognise and preserve the aesthetic and cultural characteristics of heritage places which are held in high esteem by the community of Glen Eira.*
- *To protect places identified as having architectural, cultural or historic significance and which demonstrate the various eras of Glen Eira's development.*
- *To ensure sympathetic development and renovation of places identified as having architectural, cultural or historic significance.*
- *To promote a better appreciation and wider understanding of the City's heritage.*

The following policies outlined at 22.01-3 further state that:

- *An application to demolish an individually significant or contributory building in a heritage area demonstrate that there is sufficient justification for not retaining the building.*
- *Redevelopment of heritage places that involves sympathetic recycling of heritage buildings will be encouraged.*

### **Conclusion**

The National Trust is cognisant of the importance of providing aged care services to an aging population, and particularly the merits of the innovative model of dementia care presented by HammondCare. However, we do not believe that such development should be at the expense of our shared history.

In 2015, Glen Eira suffered the loss of Frogmore mansion in Carnegie, which was demolished to make way for an aged care development. It is our understanding that the development has stalled, and the site remains vacant. This is a disappointing result, considering the extraordinary campaign waged by residents to save the building, and Council's decision to allow the demolition of the building despite independent heritage advice confirming its significance.

The Frogmore experience now serves as a case study for what can happen when buildings "fall through the cracks" of heritage protection, and was included in our 2015 submission to Heritage Victoria's Heritage Act Review to support call for better guidance and communication to be provided to councils regarding protection at a local level. In Caulfield Red Cross Rest Home, we are now presented with another building which has "fallen through the cracks". Located on hospital grounds, and not immediately visible from Kooyong Road, it appears that this building has not been picked up by previous heritage studies. However, the fact that it has not been formally recognised to date, does

not mean that it isn't significant. Council now has an opportunity and, we believe, an obligation, to address this oversight.

We therefore call on the City of Glen Eira to refuse the demolition of the Red Cross Rest Home, and seek independent heritage advice as a matter of urgency to ensure the protection of the remaining fabric at Caulfield Hospital relating to the former Caulfield Repatriation Hospital (AGMH 11), particularly the Red Cross Rest Home.

The City of Glen Eira has demonstrated a commitment to Anzac commemoration through hosting services, supporting the *Glen Eira Remembers: Poppies Community Project*, providing resources at local libraries, and maintaining a number of war memorials. In this Anzac Centenary year, Council now has an opportunity to protect a living memorial which tells a unique story about the consequences of war, and important the role of women as volunteers, nurses and fundraisers. We therefore call on Council to refuse the demolition of the Red Cross Rest Home and work with HammondCare to incorporate it in the new development. We ask that you also please advise us of any opportunities to support this submission at future Council meetings.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'F. Watson' with a stylized flourish at the end.

Felicity Watson  
Senior Community Advocate

**CC: Cr Neil Pilling, Mayor**  
**David Southwick, MP**  
**Glen Eira Historical Society**  
**CEO, Alfred Health**  
**CEO, Australian Red Cross**