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City of Kensington, Norwood and St Peters
175 The Parade
Norwood SA 5067
AUSTRALIA

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RE: Proposal to remove No 296 The Parade Kensington 5068 from the list of Local Heritage Places

I write as the owner of no 54/54A High Street Kensington, as an architectural historian, as a former President of the Kensington Residents Association, as the founder of the International Network for Traditional Building, Architecture & Urbanism (INTBAU), and as a former resident of Kensington.

I have heard from friends in Kensington that No. 296 The Parade Kensington is to be removed from the list of Local Heritage Places. This is a very bad decision. The fact that its listing apparently resulted as a mistake which is now to be 'rectified' by this removal suggests some disorganisation in the process. Certainly, at the time I was Chairman of the KRA, we had no idea that this building was to be omitted from the listing and would have protested vehemently had we known.

As I am sure you are aware, the Desired Character Statement for the Kensington I Policy Area in the Norwood, Payneham and St Peters Development Plan, which the KRA helped Council officials to write, states that:

"The unique diagonal street pattern of Kensington is an important part of its character. Development shall respect and, where appropriate, reinforce the predominance and integrity of that pattern. Significant corner buildings which contribute to the character of the policy area will be conserved and their prominence maintained."

No 296 The Parade Kensington is in fact the only building in the suburb that responds to this unique grid pattern. Every other building is a normal rectangular building placed conventionally on its site. This is the only example of a 'flat iron' building in Kensington, and the only one I know of in Norwood, Payneham and St Peters. Indeed, it may be the only such purpose built flat iron building in Adelaide. As such, it is not only a key component of the Kensington Historic Conservation Zone, but also an important building in a wider context.

The 'flat iron' shape of this building is an example of a much more universal enthusiasm for such buildings in the late 19th century. It seems that the form emerged as a fashionable shape in response to new urban conditions across Europe during a period of rapid city redevelopment, starting with the reconstruction of Paris under Baron Haussmann from 1870 onwards, and including the re-ordering of London during the late 19th century to improve traffic flow. Specifically, both interventions cut streets at an angle through areas that were mostly regular, resulting in the creation of triangular sites. Architects in these cities were quick to seize on the drama offered by such streetscapes and planned buildings forming acute angles in

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profusion. Examples can be seen to this day in Paris and in London. The most famous example is of course New York's Flatiron Building, of 1902, by the great Beaux-Arts architect and planner of Chicago, Daniel Burnham.

From these towering heights it may seem a come down to return to the subject of No. 296 The Parade Kensington. However, this represents a unique example of a purpose-built flat iron building in the context of suburban Adelaide. Light's vision for a city of regular angles and straight streets meeting at right angles left few opportunities for architectural display of this kind in his new city. This little building is a reminder of an almost-forgotten fashion that emerged in the height of the 19th century boom in Europe, and of the unique geometry of our own Kensington.

In closing, I have two further points to make. First, I note that Council claims "it is only fair to the property owner that the Council fix the historical administrative error". That may be fair to the property owner, though I doubt it is the same person as it was when the building was first listed, but a far greater injustice is done to the 1,700-odd residents of Kensington, who fought to have their suburb listed as the first conservation zone in Australia against a tide of destruction and bad development. To risk perhaps the most unique listed building of the whole neighbourhood is unfair to all those who have lived in and loved Kensington. It also sets a very risky precedent for the future in case other 'errors' are discovered.

Second, it is highly unlikely that any replacement development on this site would occupy this acute angle. No modern developer is going to build something so out of the ordinary: and in fact, any replacement development is very likely to occupy this corner of the site in any case, meaning that the building could be listed without inconvenience to a redevelopment of the bulk of the site. As it is, the building screens the noise and visual intrusion of traffic on the Parade from the predominantly residential Regent Street, and creates a notable and well-loved gateway to Kensington's heritage zone. I urge Council to uphold the listing of this important little building, and to recognise that minor errors can sometimes lead to more important truths.

Yours sincerely,



Dr Matthew Hardy.

I hereby authorise Andrew Dyson of 42 Regent Street Kensington SA 5068 to represent me at the meeting.