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44. Productivity Commission 2006 Report on Heritage

According to the recent Productivity Commission Report on heritage in Australia, people are expected to be the custodian of privately owned Australian heritage, whilst giving a free kick to the broader community - a substantial community-wide benefit for which the community at the moment is paying nothing. It's because of this tension that there is reluctance for land owners to engage in the listing process and the conservation process of privately owned property. It is a fundamental equity issue that seems to be the only reason why people in every jurisdiction are afraid of having a property they own heritage listed, because they see not only an immediate loss of capital value, but an ongoing increased expense for which they are going to have to pay ultimately for everybody else's benefit. The question is whether or not the government should intervene and if it does intervene, who pays for it and how is it to be paid for, especially if there is a cost embedded in that process. The commissioners argued that the community needs to be approached to try and derive from it what it regards as the value of heritage at various levels and across a range of building types and heritage types, so that policy about heritage can be informed and integrated into society and its processes. This argument by the commissioners was vehemently rebutted by prominent heritage practitioners in every state and territory. Collectively, they argued that it is the duty of government to provide necessary stewardship. It must do this through four essential mediums; good legislation; good policy framework; good education; and good heritage incentives.