

CAMBERWELL HISTORY

RECORDING THE HISTORY OF CAMBERWELL
AND DISTRICT
Camberwell Historical Society



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Principal Patron: Professor Emeritus Geoffrey Blainey, AC

Patron: Her Worship the Mayor of Boroondara, Cr Jane Addis

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

George Fernando

Boroondara Historical Societies Association has continued to meet to work towards joint projects with the **Boroondara Historical Societies Valuation Day** planned for Sunday 25 August 2019 1 - 4pm. The close links between the BHSA members from Camberwell, Balwyn, Canterbury, Hawthorn, Kew and Surrey Hills, is very encouraging.

Recently I attended a thought-provoking lecture by Professor Charles Sowerwine (The annual McIntyre lecture at Kew Historical Society). An abridged version of his lecture on heritage protection appears below.

HERITAGE PROTECTION RECONSIDERED FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

Prof. Charles Sowerwine

Emeritus Professor of History, University of Melbourne
Chair, RHSV Heritage Committee

Charles Sowerwine grew up in the New York suburbs. In 1974, he came to Melbourne as Lecturer in French History at the University of Melbourne and immediately joined the National Trust, recognising the uniqueness of Melbourne's Victorian heritage. He is now Emeritus Professor at Melbourne University and Fellow at La Trobe University. Local history and heritage remain a great passion.

This article was originally a lecture delivered as the Kew Historical Society McIntyre Lecture on 13 March 2019 at the Kew Court House. Professor Sowerwine's lecture was edited, then revised by Professor Sowerwine to take account of more recent developments.

From a population of four million in 2010, Melbourne will reach a population of seven million by 2030, overtaking Sydney as Australia's largest city. How do we house and find workplaces for these people without destroying the fabric of the city we cherish? Can we maintain our built past as well as develop our new city? The battle for heritage is a battle for Melbourne's future.

Heritage is much more than maintaining attractive buildings. Heritage is recognition and protection for buildings that have become part of the culture. Heritage is proof that our forebears

built well and reassurance that we are part of a generational chain of humanity linked to place and it is proof that we experience daily.

Heritage is thus an important source of cultural stability. It is becoming more important as our society undergoes what seem like waves of disruptive change, often confusing and disturbing. Some critics argue that heritage offers a false or at best nostalgia-tinged view of the past and it is certainly true that anyone can read heritage buildings however they wish, but that objection doesn't seem relevant to me. That very openness to subjectivity is part of the value of heritage: it belongs to everyone.

The Royal Historical Society of Victoria (RHSV) Heritage Committee was formed in response to requests from members and member societies for help as they saw much-loved local landmarks threatened with demolition. Most of the correspondence we receive concerns 'local' landmarks. Professor Stuart Macintyre, Chair of the Heritage Council, notes that 'the overwhelming majority' of media reports about heritage issues - more than 30 a week in Victoria - concern 'local places'. The heritage that matters is always local in the sense that it plays a role in people's customary lives, which are necessarily local: your life is where you live it.

Whether it be Flinders Street Station or a Beaumaris modernist house, what makes heritage important to people is that it plays a role in their lives, it's part of their own – local - world, it helps orient them geographically and chronologically. While sites of 'state significance' may be known to more people, sites of 'local significance' constitute the bulk of our heritage assets. Each loss of a local landmark makes a significant difference to the lives of those who orient themselves around it. The cumulative effect of the loss of many such local landmarks is a collective loss of shared identity.

Our heritage protection system, however, is split between sites deemed of 'state significance' and those condescendingly termed 'of local significance'.

Sites deemed of state significance are listed on the Victorian Heritage Register. Any person or body can nominate a place to be listed on the Register. Often it is the National Trust, which has a statutory role in the process. The Executive Director of Heritage Victoria investigates and makes a recommendation to register a site (or not). The Heritage Council then holds hearings and decides whether or not to confirm that recommendation. If it is confirmed and permanently registered, Heritage Victoria administers the site, granting permits for alterations and occasionally demolitions. This system, broadly the same as when it was established by the Hamer government in the 1970s, still works reasonably well.

Federation Square is a good case study for this process. The National Trust nominated it for the State Register and the executive director of Heritage Victoria recommended registration. Fed Square Proprietary Ltd sought a permit from Heritage Victoria to demolish the Yarra building and replace it with an Apple Global Flagship building in order to increase rent. They went to Heritage Victoria because once a building is being considered for registration, it is given interim registration and applications for permits go to Heritage Victoria, the same as when registration is permanent. Heritage Victoria refused the application.

The Heritage Council will now determine if Federation Square fulfils the criteria set out in the Heritage Act. We support the nomination and three of us attended the Hearings. Only

registration will protect the integrity of the space as a public space: the Square depends on being its own brand: it is not the NGV, it is not ACMI; it is Federation Square. In that sense it is public and its public character as a civic square is an essential part of what makes it heritage. The character of the Square depends on its extraordinary level of architectural coherence.

The Directions Hearing for permanent Registration was held on St Valentine's Day 2019 with no opposition to Registration. The substantive Hearings stretched over three days, from 15 to 17 April. There it soon became clear that Fed Square Proprietary Ltd aim to influence the conditions attached to Registration in such a way as to make possible their plan to demolish the Yarra Building and replace it with an Apple Global Flagship Building. They are using both sides of the system. Nevertheless, we can, I think have faith in the process as we await the decision.

Another side of the state heritage system is illuminated by the case of the Queen Victoria Market (QVM). In 2015, then Lord Mayor Robert Doyle proposed a revamp of the Market to build parking and services permitting more fast food below the historic fruit and vegetable sheds. The QVM has long been listed on the Heritage Register, so any works required a permit from Heritage Victoria. Queen Victoria Market Proprietary Ltd and the Melbourne City Council applied for a permit to dismantle the historic sheds and excavate beneath them.

The Council proposed to build:

- 1) Three levels of parking,
- 2) Loading docks for deliveries in order to transfer all vehicle operations from the surface,
- 3) Preparation rooms, cool rooms, storerooms, change rooms, etc., to facilitate a shift to more 'value-add', such as prepared foods or fast foods.

The sheds would then be rebuilt as they were above the new facilities.

- 4) Move from stall-holder installation to permanent stalls and modernise the delivery and presentation.

Such applications go through a rigorous process. About 98% are granted, some with conditions. In this case, Heritage Victoria refused the application. As this refusal was so unusual, they agreed with a Council request to release their lengthy determination. Among the many grounds for refusal, let me point to four particularly noteworthy problems:

- 1) The financial case was seriously flawed
- 2) The sheds couldn't be rebuilt in the way they were built in 1878 because of their age and because of modern building requirements;
- 3) The market's statement of significance on the Heritage Register pointed to its traditional mode of operation as important to its social significance and the proposed change in the mode of the market's operation would irreversibly alter that;
- 4) To service the underground levels, six modern lift and stairwells would have to be inserted into the historic sheds, radically altering their original look. The spatial experience would be completely different.

Both Federation Square and the QVM issues were driven by an unforeseen consequence in their funding structure. In the 1990s, Fed Square Pty Ltd and QVM Pty Ltd were set up as private companies wholly owned by the State or the City to maintain these sites using the profits they generated. Profit, however, became the driver and they now seek to make radical changes in order to increase the profitability of the sites they were mandated to preserve. This is a profound betrayal of their fundamental mission.

The motives of owners, however, are not my point. My point is that both cases - Federation Square and the QVM - suggest that the state heritage system is working reasonably. To be sure, there is room for improvement. Heritage Victoria is under-resourced for the job it now does. The Heritage Council lacks funding to support owners unable to maintain buildings. Small investments in both would benefit Victorian heritage enormously, but the system is working and justifies public faith in it.

That is not the case at the local level. The Queen Victoria Market furnishes both a good example of the successful working of the state heritage system and a good example of the problems with local heritage. Around the QVM, the surrounding buildings associated with the Market are part of the Queen Victoria Market Historic Precinct. While the Market itself is protected by being listed on the state Register, the Precinct is protected only by a local Heritage Overlay. These buildings are not remarkable enough to justify listing on the state Register, but they are essential parts of the market and need to be preserved if the area is to retain its historic character. Melbourne City Council proposed the Historic Precinct to which these buildings are contributory, and the Minister agreed.

The Council purchased the block south of Thierry Street (opposite the Deli Section), known as the Munro Site. The Council sought to make a profit from this site to pay for the proposed redevelopment of the Market. A 196-metre tower was proposed, but Planning Minister Richard Wynne reduced the height to 125 metres or 41 stories. The new development is now under construction. In order to maximise the profit, the Council voted for demolition of the same buildings on which it had placed a Heritage Overlay, and the Minister agreed. The tower will be based on a five-storey podium, which the developer's rendering softens with splashes of greenery that may or may not eventuate.

This case illustrates the vulnerability of local Heritage Overlays to the whims of Council, which is the responsible authority for initiating any Heritage Overlay and for subsequent planning involving buildings covered by their own Heritage Overlays.

Even obtaining a Heritage Overlay is difficult. The case of the Beaumaris Heritage Study of modernist houses illustrates that difficulty. A local preservationist group, in conjunction with the National Trust, persuaded the Bayside City Council to undertake a heritage study, which in 2018 recommended heritage protection for a number of outstanding modernist houses dating from the mid-20th century, including work by Robin Boyd and Roy Grounds, as well as Peter McIntyre's 1956 Grant House.

Sadly, a scare campaign about loss of property value led the Council to reverse its stand and withdraw the proposed Heritage Overlay. Instead, a 'voluntary' system will permit owners to propose their houses for protection. In the meantime, houses have already been lost. The story may have a happy ending for Grant House. The Director of the Heritage Council has proposed it for nomination to the state register 'as the most intact example of the bowstring truss houses constructed in Victoria' and 'a notable example of innovative and experimental design on a modest scale'. But most of these outstanding modernist homes will remain vulnerable to the first buyer who wants to build a "McMansion".

Just getting a Heritage Overlay is deeply problematic. Scare campaigns are not unusual. (Local historical societies can play an important role in such debates. They are after all composed of locals who in many cases also own property). An even bigger problem with Heritage Overlays is

that they have weak status against other planning policies. This is where we come to the secret of the Corkman.

The Corkman Hotel, formerly the Carlton Inn, was demolished in October 2016. The hotel dated from 1857. It was a classic gold-rush era Victorian pub. It was protected by a Heritage Overlay. At the time of demolition, the authorities thundered that the developers would have to rebuild the hotel, but last October, the Council and the Minister quietly passed a Planning Scheme Amendment that will allow the developers to build a 40 metre apartment tower set back 6 metres from a 'street wall' 25 metres high.

That is what the developers would have got had they acted legally: a 40 metre (13 storey) apartment tower. Why? Because the Corkman was subject not only to a Heritage Overlay but also to a Design and Development Overlay (DDO). DDOs specify what development is regarded as appropriate. The Victorian Ministry of Planning is pushing hard for these to accommodate more intense development and many areas of Victoria are now covered by DDOs.

It is true that, had the developers acted legally, they would probably have been forced to keep the facade of the hotel and build their apartment tower behind it. So, what happened to the threats to make the developers rebuild the hotel? The developers had legal opinions that the Planning Act couldn't be used to punish them and that seems to have convinced the Minister and the Council. They are thus getting a bonus for their crime: they can now build a 25-metre facade, giving them extra space for apartments to sell. Crime does pay.

DDOs apply regardless of whether a building in the area is also covered by a Heritage Overlay. The responsible authority (Council, subject to appeal to VCAT) must decide how much of the heritage building to retain, if any. Typically, the front few metres of the heritage building will be retained, and the rest will be demolished and replaced by a much higher development.

The Corkman is only the most dramatic instance of the weakness of local heritage controls. I want to put before you one further instance that demonstrates another set of problems with Heritage Overlays.

Last August, the RHSV Heritage Committee received an appeal for support from residents fighting the redevelopment of the former London Chartered Bank building on High Street Northcote. This is a splendid building with wonderful original interior features. The proposal was for an 8-storey development with 5 storeys to be erected on the High Street behind the facade. The planning authority (Darebin Council) had rejected the proposal, arguing that 'a building at the height proposed will be overwhelming when viewed from the public realm (both street frontages) and will compromise the character of the activity centre'.

The developer took the Council to VCAT. At a mediation hearing last October, the developer made substantial concessions to the residents, dropping the top 2 storeys but maintaining the demolition of the heritage building to make way for a 5-storey building behind the facade. The Council dropped its opposition. I protested that the building was covered by a Heritage Overlay and should not be demolished. The Council Planning Officer, who was also present in his capacity as Conservation Officer, pointed out that although the building was in an area covered by a Heritage Overlay, it was not cited individually, and the interior had not been covered. The Council was therefore satisfied that retaining the facade, even crushed beneath a 5-storey monolith, conformed to the Heritage Overlay and the Tribunal Member agreed.

This highlights further issues with Heritage Overlays:

- 1) Councils often don't want to put resources into detailed heritage studies that make clear what has to be preserved. In this case, there was only a precinct overlay. Without a detailed citation covering the building itself, the Heritage Overlay protected only the facade.
- 2) Councils rarely employ a heritage officer, preferring to engage consultants or leave it to planning officers. So, there is often no one who takes on heritage issues as their first priority.
- 3) In the current world, planning and heritage experts navigate the public and private sectors. They need to keep their options open to work for developers. Even the prestigious Lovell Chen Heritage Consultancy has walked both sides of the street: they were engaged by the Melbourne City Council to justify the Doyle Plan for the QVM.

To sum up. It is hard to get Heritage Overlays. Scare campaigns, the competing pressures on Council budgets and the lack of zealous career Heritage Officers combine to prevent or (as in the London Chartered Bank) to weaken Heritage Overlays. If you do get a Heritage Overlay, it is unlikely to protect the whole building. In many of the most contested areas, DDOs will be given precedence, if not at the Council level, then on appeal to VCAT.

Within the existing planning system, local historical societies can play a significant role in preservation. They can:

- Make sure that local heritage is covered.
- Speak out when heritage is debated and help prevent fear campaigns.
- Lobby councillors to defend buildings threatened by development.

I have, however, made a case that the planning regime set up in the 1990s puts heritage at risk. So, I'd like to go further and offer five suggestions for reform of our planning and heritage system, in the hope that the history and conservation movements can together begin to tilt the balance back toward the preservation of local heritage.

- 1) Local councils are under-resourced to deal with heritage matters. The state should provide adequate heritage expertise and support to local councils. There was some support until a decade ago, but it was cut on budget grounds. It should be restored and increased.
- 2) For State heritage listing or for hearings for permits to alter or demolish registered buildings, the demonstrated attachment of citizens to an historic site is taken into account by the Heritage Council and by Heritage Victoria. A similar criterion should apply for local heritage, so that Councils and VCAT must take public opinion into account in deciding on applications involving heritage sites.
- 3) Many places valued by local communities have been rejected for inclusion on the State heritage register, but as they are not protected by local heritage overlays either, they fall through the crack and are lost. The Heritage Act should be amended so that unsuccessful nominations to the Heritage Register will trigger interim local heritage controls, with a requirement for Councils to investigate permanent protection.
- 4) The underlying problem is the failure of Councils to protect local heritage. Councils should be required to complete full, detailed heritage studies of the area of their jurisdiction within a reasonable time frame and to proceed with appropriate controls based on these studies. The Melbourne City Council is in the process of completing an exemplary heritage study for the

Hoddle Grid and has begun the process of implementation for the first of two stages. We should demand that similar processes be completed throughout Victoria, by 2030 if not 2025.

5) Once a Heritage Overlay has been accepted by the State, the State should guarantee its integrity. A Heritage Overlay should give the same protection as State Registration does, that is, it should mean that the designated heritage aspects of the building are truly protected. The State should set up a separate heritage tribunal to hear all applications to alter or demolish the protected parts of any building with a Heritage Overlay. Applications to alter or demolish buildings with Heritage Overlays should go before that tribunal before they can be put to planning authorities.

Two aspects of the French heritage and planning experience might offer us some ways to think about these issues. France established a national register of historic buildings in 1840 and its current protection register was established in 1914. Like us, the French have two levels of protection, national and local. The difference is that responsibility for protection of local heritage rests with the Prefect, who is a delegate of the central government and less subject to local political pressure than elected officials.

In the 1970s the questions of preservation and development were widely debated and the French government responded on three planes to the housing, office space and intense development pressure on Paris:

- 1) They created five green fields activity centres outside the existing urban area. Each of these was fully planned around a centre linked to Paris and to the surrounding area by both rail and metro. A fully pedestrian shopping strip was set up at the heart of each centre. Parks, schools and hospitals were ready before people moved in.
- 2) They set aside a slum area to the west of Paris where office towers and apartments were encouraged.
- 3) Within the designated historic areas, internal modernization was encouraged and funding was set aside to bring buildings up to date.

This worked remarkably well. Private developers were given certainty and plunged ahead building housing in record time.

A proactive state-wide planning system has a lot in its favour. Our current, decentralized, case by case planning system gives heritage short shrift because in each case heritage is pitted against development. We need a proactive planning authority that looks to channel development so that it takes advantage of heritage and integrates with it, so that more people can benefit from it. Melbourne once had a central planning authority in the Board of Works.

To save our heritage and to use it effectively in building Melbourne for the 21st century, we will need to change the State-driven planning system. Beginning with local historical societies, we could all begin to push for reforms with our MPs. Opposition parties are often more open to such proposals. Heritage matters most at the local level, because that's where we experience it every day. Local historical societies need to be at the forefront of local preservation. We shouldn't be afraid to engage to defend our heritage.

“QUAMBY” – 39 ALMA ROAD, CAMBERWELL - HISTORY FROM 1853

Dr Peter Harms



- 12/9/1852** First land purchase of 39 acres by Robert Cam – farmer. Approximately Burke Road to Camberwell Road and Alma Road to Seymour Grove, authorised and signed by Gov. C. La Trobe (picture of signature on next page).
- 28/3/1883** “Robinswood” sold to Percy Dobson - accountant and land is probably subdivided by him (see picture of the estate on next page).
- 28/3/1883** John Langford purchased two blocks on the one title - 39 Alma Rd and 524 Burke Rd, Camberwell. I presume that Clements Langford then built the two homes on these blocks.
- 10/2/1902** John Langford died and left the property to Louisa, his widow, and Clements Langford.
- 28/8/1902** Rear easement created.
- 4/9/1919** Clements Langford became sole proprietor of 524 Burke Rd, Camberwell.
- 28/8/1903** 39 Alma Rd sold to Eva Francis Bowkett, widow, of Tivoli Place, South Yarra.

CAMBERWELL HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEW MEMBERS

Camberwell Historical Society would like to welcome the following new members: David Tink, Kerry Hampton, Penny Runge and Liz Burton.

REPORT OF MEETINGS 2019

Tuesday 26 March 2019

Dr Sybil Nolan – Robert Menzies: Bastion of Middleclass Liberalism

Sybil Nolan is an editor and historian. She lectures in publishing and communications, and researches in publishing, print culture and Australian political and media history. Sybil has worked as a journalist and in book publishing for more than 10 years. She currently lectures at the University of Melbourne in the School of Culture and Communication. Her PhD thesis was entitled 'The Age and the Young Menzies: A Chapter in Victorian Liberalism'.

Menzies came from a modest background and was educated through a series of scholarships. There was an element of insecurity in Menzies makeup. Menzies had a solid career, a middle-class life but below the surface were many conflicts and uncertainties. Menzies can be viewed through his middle-class accoutrements, all looking to improve his status: House, Library, Holiday Home, Clubs.

House

Robert Menzies moved through a series of houses – Grange Road, Studley Park and then to 10 Howard Street, Kew, always looking at improvement in location.

Library

Menzies acquired a varied library through signed presentation volumes, gifts and purchases. The collection tended to reflect Menzies personal connections. The Menzies Collection was donated to Melbourne University. The Menzies' bookplate was designed by Lionel Lindsay.

Holiday Home

'Illira' the Menzies' holiday home, was a timber Victorian-era house in the foothills of Mount Macedon. It burnt down in November 1941.

Clubs

Menzies joined the Melbourne Savage Club first and served as its president from 1947 to 1962. It was a short walk from his chambers. He then joined others. Clubs were a social networking resource.

Tuesday 28 May 2019

Rebecca Jones - Slow Catastrophes: Living With Drought in Australia

Rebecca Jones is an historian of climate, the environment, rural health and wellbeing. She has published widely in environmental history, drought history, organic farming and gardening as well as rural mental and emotional health. She has worked at the Australian National University and Monash University as well as for Museum Victoria, Heritage Hill Museum, Heritage Victoria, Australian Heritage Commission, community groups and local government.

Rebecca's book *Slow Catastrophe: Living With Drought in Australia* deals with one of the biggest issues of our times. Climate change scenarios suggest that in the next fifty years global warming will increase both the frequency and severity of these phenomena.

Early settlers greatly misunderstood drought in Australia. Drought was regarded as a temporary condition rather than a regular occurrence. People have adapted to drought with luck, resilience, strategies and careful decision making. *Slow Catastrophe* is based on farm diaries supplemented with research and interviews. The histories of eight farming families focus on private lives and inner thoughts.

The diaries are rich and revealing, they are written by men and women from different areas, different types of farms and different social groups: all are written over an extended time frame. The earliest starts in the 1870s, the last finishes in the 1950s. They all combine an agricultural diary with a personal diary. The diaries show evidence of being consulted (indicated by annotations) to check for weather patterns over a number of years. All diaries begin at a time of transition such as: marriage or the purchase of a property. They are practical and personal. Together the diaries paint a rich picture of the rhythms of everyday experience with both the exceptional and the unexceptional recorded.

Charles Coote's diary covers four severe droughts in its 50-year record and how he learned and changed his farming practices. Charlie Grossman reveals the diversification that could protect a family income. The diaries reveal that much of a farm's income could come from wild foraging. The diaries also reveal that many families left a property during drought to go and work elsewhere, returning to the house and property after the drought to reestablish themselves.

Boroondara Historical Societies Valuation Day

When: Sunday 25 August 2019 1 - 4pm

Where: Hawthorn Community Precinct (next to the Hawthorn Library) 584 Glenferrie Rd, Hawthorn. **Cost:** \$5.00 for 2 items. Afternoon tea provided.

Queries: 98078081 or hawthornhistoricalsociety@gmail.com

HMAS Cerberus visit Wednesday 2 October 2019

Included: RAN band performance, entry to the Museum, lunch and coach hire.

Cost: \$45 minimum 30 participants (payment with booking please)

Pick up: 7.45 am for 8:00am corner Camberwell Road / Bowen Street, Camberwell

Departure from HMAS Cerberus: 3:30pm.

Please note: To gain access to the Royal Australian Naval Base you must provide some form of photographic identification which also shows your signature.

HMAS Cerberus website

<http://www.navy.gov.au/establishments/hmas-cerberus>



Thank you to Hugh Waldron for his work in organizing this visit.

For more information phone: George Fernando 9885 9927 or enquiries@chs.org.au

DATES FOR MEETINGS 2019

25 Inglesby Road, Camberwell

Saturday 22 June	2pm	Gillian Yung - Thomas Meagher and Mary Reiby (25 Inglesby Road)
Saturday 27 July	2pm	Ann Blainey - Charles Kingsford Smith (25 Inglesby Road)
Saturday 24 August	2pm	AGM (25 Inglesby Road)
Wednesday 2 October	8am	HMAS Cerberus visit \$45 (including bus, band, lunch and museum entry) 30 people minimum

CAMBERWELL HISTORICAL SOCIETY DONATIONS TO THE COLLECTION

Camberwell Historical Society welcomes donations of the following items relating to the former City of Camberwell: photographs and prints, documents, letters, diaries, maps, plans, books, pamphlets, and reminiscences of former residents and people who worked in the area.

Contributions to *Camberwell History* contain the opinions of the contributors and do not necessarily reflect the views of Camberwell Historical Society, its committee or members.

CAMBERWELL HISTORICAL SOCIETY SUBSCRIPTIONS RENEWALS 2018

Camberwell Historical Society's financial year operates from 1st July to 30th June. Subscriptions for the 2018 – 2019 financial year are due and payable on or before July 1st, 2018. Single \$30 Family \$40. Camberwell Historical Society, BSB 633-000 Account No 142260678 Cheques to Camberwell Historical Society, PO Box 1274, CAMBERWELL 3124

CAMBERWELL HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC

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Committee members — Bryony Cosgrove, Alister Bennie and Jennifer McArthur

***Camberwell History*: Editor — Adèle Fernando-Swart**

The Society's logo is taken from an illustration by, and used with the permission of, Bill Beasley. *Camberwell History* is printed in the office of Josh Frydenberg, MHR, Federal Member of Parliament for Kooyong