

## Saving St James Church

The National Trust of Australia (NSW) has launched the St James Church King Street Conservation Appeal. The Hon Moreton Rolfe QC reports.



Photo by Christopher Shain.

The Parish Church of St James is a beautiful building. It was designed by and built under the supervision of Francis Greenway in the early 1800s and consecrated in 1824. It is Sydney's oldest church standing proudly amongst other Greenway buildings, such as The Mint and Barracks buildings and the original Supreme Court.

All these heritage buildings have immense significance to the city both as buildings and in the purposes they serve. The Hon T E F Hughes AO QC described St James, in his eulogy at John Lockhart's memorial service, as 'the parish church of the law', whilst Dan Cruikshank, in his recent television series *80 Treasures of the World*, described it as this city's treasure. It is a wonderful building with a strong association with the law and it must be preserved as such.

Set in the centre of the legal precinct, St James provided comfort, solace and joy to many members of the legal profession and,

in particular, members of the bar over a vast period.

As with all buildings, especially heritage ones, the church needs constant maintenance and renovation. Architects, expert in working with heritage buildings, have identified three main areas to which urgent attention must be given. The spire, once the most prominent sight in Sydney, needs to be restored and the copper cladding replaced. This work is already underway with the interior being cleaned out. Soon work on the exterior will begin.

The roof's slate tiles must be replaced. It is proposed that this work should follow that of the spire. It is feared that when the tiles are removed further work to their supports will be found to be necessary. Finally, certain of the brickwork requires remedial work and the perimeter fence must be restored.

In all, the work has been estimated at costing some \$3 million. This includes not

only the actual work of which the architects are aware, but a contingency sum of an additional 20 per cent and the costs of the appeal. The carrying out of the work has the full support of the National Trust, which has organised that funds given to the appeal, which must be to the St James Church King Street Conservation Appeal, will attract tax deductibility.

An Appeal Committee has been working now for some 18 months. The money needed to repair and reclad the spire has been raised. Barristers have been generous in their support on an ecumenical basis, as they rightly were with the extensive work carried out at St Mary's, and it is hoped that many more will support the appeal over the next two years for more money is needed to carry on the work.

The official appeal launch will be held at 6.00pm on 11 February 2009 in the church and its crypt, and all barristers are welcome, and encouraged, to attend the launch. As appeal chairman, I ask members of the bar to consider seriously supporting this appeal, notwithstanding the rocky financial period we are all now experiencing, thereby ensuring that St James continues to flourish as a vital part of the community generally, but also as a very special part of the community centring on the bar.

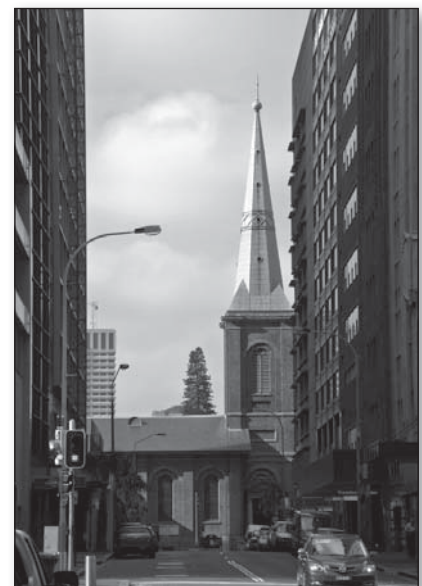


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