

# End misuse and abuse

THE Land and Environment Court has delivered a stinging rebuff for Ashfield Council ("Trinity's plans pass despite ticking off locals", *The Sun Herald*, November 11). The plain and simple fact is that yet another local council has been caught misusing heritage rules to block important community renewal. Plans by Trinity Grammar to build a swimming pool, a new hall, extra classrooms and underground parking have been held up for 20 months. The Land and Environment Court said that the council and resident opposition could only be explained by their "long-standing frustration and animosity in the relations with the school."

The 11 houses to be demolished are owned by the school. They were not heritage buildings. The council merely claimed they were "suitable" for heritage listing. If you take that argument to its logical extension, half of Sydney could be regarded as "heritage".

This is only the latest attempt by councils misusing the state's heritage laws to block well-planned urban development. Last month, efforts by Parramatta City Council to heritage-list up to 12 ordinary 1960s and 1970s homes in Toongabbie and Epping were exposed. Last year, the Land and Environment Court found that an apartment building listed as a heritage item by North Sydney Council didn't satisfy the listing requirements. Despite the ruling, the building is still listed by the council as heritage protected.

Heritage laws are being heavily misused by the "not-in-my-backyard" brigade working hand-in-glove with some councils. Heritage laws are too important to be misused in this way. This kind of blatant abuse must end.

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