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**From:** Caroline Miley <[REDACTED]>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, 15 August 2018 11:23 AM  
**To:** [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** Sale of churches

Dear Ms Archer

I am writing to ask for your assistance in preventing the mass sale of churches and graveyards proposed by the Anglican Diocese of Tasmania.

I am an art, architecture and cultural historian who grew up in Tasmania. I have undertaken substantial research into Tasmanian churches and arts and crafts. I am dismayed by the proposed loss to the State and the nation of such a large portion of the State and national heritage and its impact on local communities.

I ask that you act to prevent the proposed sales taking place.

I attach a summary of the significance of the 76 churches and 42 cemeteries included in the proposed sale.

Thank you

Sincerely

Dr Caroline Miley

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

## **SALE OF TASMANIAN CHURCHES: SUMMARY OF IMPACT**

### **Summary of what is to be sold:**

76 churches  
32 heritage listed  
42 cemeteries  
6 listed historic organs.

### **The sale of these properties will severely affect:**

#### **Religious use**

1. Numbers. The churches listed for sale may not have large congregations, but those who do attend value them highly and are often very long-term members. The particular church is closely bound up with their spirituality, which is not easily transferred to a new place some considerable distance away. It is a known fact in the church that every time you close a church you lose members. A few here and a few there may not seem significant to those who count figures, but taken in the aggregate over the 76 closures, they will add up. And people, especially in the country, wish to be married, buried and baptised in the family church, even if it's the only time they enter it.

2. Diversity. A large number of small churches has the potential for much diversity of worship and community. The removal of this huge number of churches must have a massive effect on diversity of worship and spirituality in the State, especially if they are to be replaced by large worship centres on the Sydney model.

#### **Community use**

Despite low attendances, most small country churches play a significant role in their local communities. They are frequently the only place that belongs to everyone and is freely available. They often offer the only convenient meeting hall, utilised after bushfires or for local groups to gather. They form the symbolic centre of many villages, even for those who don't enter. They contain the honour boards and memorial of citizens who have died, including at war; they hold Anzac Day and other important services; they offer an occasional refuge for those in trouble; they run op shops and co-ordinate community activities. The church hall is where the local scout or ballet group meets, where the CWA holds its meetings. At least one, there is a Cultural Centre and Avenue of Honour. Many Tasmanians have expressed the view that if the church is closed, it will be the end of their community. They have already lost the bank and the Post Office, perhaps. They should not have to lose their church as well.

#### **History and Heritage**

In heritage circles, it is understood that the artefacts held in any one museum or site in a country form part of what is called 'the distributed national collection'. They may technically belong to that individual museum or community, but in a broader sense they belong to the nation as a whole. The early history of Tasmania in the nation's story means that a disproportionate quantity of Australian history is located in Tasmania. Tasmania's history and heritage of the colonial and pioneering era is the

Australia's history.

It is unconscionable that such a massive number of buildings, artefacts and precincts should be lost to the National Estate in one fell swoop. The single fact that 32 out of the 76 churches proposed for sale are already Heritage Listed tells its own story of the recognized significance of these buildings. These premises, in the first instance, should be completely exempt from any sell-off.

These are buildings built and attended by convicts and their jailers. They were built on land donated by early State Governors, notable pioneers, State politicians. They were built with funds donated by these colonials and opened by the likes of Sir John Franklin. The grounds of one is one of only two sites in Tasmania where the rare plant *Leptorhynchus Elongatus* can be found. They contain the Honour Boards, memorials and graves of those who fought and died in conflicts from the 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards.

In private hands, all this will pass out of the National Estate. Their significance is indelibly associated with their nature as a church, complete with its fittings. The removal of this purpose and furnishings will negate the heritage nature of the building. What is left is a mere shell, not accessible by the public.

### **Cemeteries**

There are 42 cemeteries whose loss will impact severely on local communities and on the country as a whole.

1. Local families have their relations buried in them and visit their graves. It is an important part of local identity. Locals wish to be buried near their relations and in some cases have already bought plots. People do not wish to have to be buried among strangers far away, and respect for the dead means that the possibility of graveyards being closed or resumed is totally unacceptable.

2. Local history: These cemeteries contain much local history and heritage, recording family history and the history of the district in their headstones and burial registers. Because of early settlement dates, many of the graves are among the earliest in Australia and are therefore of national significance. They are a resource for historians and genealogists for years to come. They must not be privatised for this reason alone. Among the nationally significant burials are those of Sir Richard Dry, Premier and early opponent of the convict system, Elizabeth Flexmore, a First Fleeter, VC winner Lt-Col John Bisdee and noted artist Tom Roberts, as well as numerous individuals important to Tasmanian history.

### **Architecture, art and craft**

The loss to the State's (and nation's) architectural, art and craft heritage would be immense, comprising:

- 2 churches by James Blackburn,
- 4 churches by Henry Hunter,
- 4 churches by Alexander North,
- 3 churches by Alan Walker,
- 1 connected with William Butterfield,
- 1 by Robert de Little

as well as others by Tasmanian and international architects such as Crawford Cripps Wegman of Sussex, England. Many of these are of early date in Australia's history and some are in the rare (in Australia) Georgian style or in idiosyncratic Tasmanian Carpenter Gothic.

Art and craft include:

- a rare painted altarpiece by Arthur Boyd;
- a dozen significant, mostly large-scale woodcarvings by Ellen Nora Payne,
- a suite of rare woodcarvings by Marjorie Wilson, the only large-scale works known by her;
- stained glass by UK artists Michael O'Connor and Hardman's, and Australian artists Auguste Fischer, George Dancey, William Montgomery, Mathieson & Gibson, Brooks Robinson, J Radecki and Ferguson and Urie, etc;
- an internationally important set of communion plate by UK architect William Butterfield, among other important works.

Two of the churches have very rare stone altars; there are numerous carved Honour Boards; wood, brass and stone memorial plaques, including many war memorials; carved furnishings of local timbers, including rare use of Huon Pine for fittings; numerous examples of work by local craftspeople and overseas firms.

There are six listed heritage organs by important makers.

Together, the loss of this wealth of art, craft and architecture that is the historic churches of Tasmania – 32 of them heritage-listed – from the National Estate will be a devastating blow, a loss that can never be made good.

## **Tourism**

Tasmania has two great drawcards for tourists which are emphasised in advertising and tourist literature: its natural environment and its colonial and convict history. The latter is promoted through heritage trails, local museums, signposting and history-based activities and artefacts. Overseas, historic buildings and their contents, including churches, form a staple of tourist visiting and in Tasmania historic churches such as St Michael and All Angels, Bothwell are rightly listed as tourist destinations. At present this valuable resource is somewhat under-utilised as a tourist draw, and could be substantially increased with targeted promotion. The removal of 50% of all such churches and their contents from public access, plus the associated pioneer cemeteries, must strike a serious blow not only to individual communities' potential to exploit their resources, but to the future of Tasmania's credibility as a destination for tourists interested in early Australian history and heritage. It would seem short-sighted in the extreme to remove at one blow dozens of significant heritage buildings, memorials and art and craft, not to mention seriously compromising many of the picturesque village and country streetscapes and landscapes Tasmania is famous for.

The demands of the Tasmanian tourist industry alone require that these churches remain in their current situation.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, I beg that you will investigate the proposed sale and act to prevent this mass destruction of so much of the State's, and the Nation's, heritage.

Thank you

Dr Caroline Miley

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