



FELLOWSHIP OF  
AUSTRALIAN  
WRITERS  
WA Section (inc)

"Tom Collins House"  
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Dr John McLaren  
Editor  
Australian Book Review  
PO Box 89  
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Dear John

I am hoping that you will be willing to provide a brief statement about the significance of Tom Collins House as one of Australia's important literary museums.

As you know the house stands in the path of a planned major highway. We have assurances from the Metropolitan Region Planning Authority that the house can be removed and that the Fellowship of Australian Writers will receive compensation from the loss of the site.

For some time we have been negotiating with Nedlands City Council for a site for the house and, until the last Council meeting, believed the Council was prepared to consider a magnificent location adjacent to Allen Park and less than one kilometre from the present site.

But now the Council wants further evidence to convince them that they should support the proposal to 'dump a crummy old cottage' (not quoted verbatim, but that's the general idea) on a piece of prime Nedlands real estate.

In particular, they want to be assured:

1. that Joseph Furphy did in fact build the place;
2. that the building and its contents are of literary and historical importance.

Despite the mischievous challenge to authenticity mounted a few years ago by Les Marchant and Hal Colebatch, I don't really think that's in question. I'm enclosing a copy of a statement by Furphy's granddaughter, Emily Main. Among other evidence which authenticates that Tom Collins House is the house that Furphy built and in which he lived for several years is my own checking of electoral rolls for the period 1907-12.

As an aside, I must mention a personal interest in Emily's statement. The Thomas Reinfeld referred to is my wife's great-uncle. He jumped ship in Perth where he lived for a while before going to Victoria. There he married the aunt of Zoe's mother and the family moved back to Cottesloe. Thomas and all but one of his children died of tuberculosis. The surviving child, Freda Reinfeld (now aged about 77) lives in Melbourne.

What I would like from you is a statement which I can submit to Nedlands City Council. I would like you to stress that literary/historical importance of the house as a national asset and as a suitable place for the storage and display of Furphy (and other literary) memorabilia.

I hope you are willing to do this for us. We need all the support we can get. What we want, of course, is for Nedlands Council to give us the site so that we can spend the compensation money on urgent maintenance (estimated to cost about \$9,000), on shifting the house to another site, and also on adding a meeting room so that the house itself can be used almost exclusively as a museum. If funds are insufficient for all these things we will probably launch a public appeal.

But the important thing is to convince Nedlands Councillors not only that they should cooperate, but also that they should positively encourage the shift of Tom Collins House to their territory.

Yours sincerely



DON GRANT  
President  
FELLOWSHIP OF AUSTRALIAN WRITERS (WA)