

Barossa rails against train station demolition

Elle Spring



The once-bustling Nuriootpa Railway Station is set to be demolished.

To the casual observer, the once-bustling Nuriootpa Railway Station is nothing more than a beat-up, graffiti-covered eyesore, but it is the last remaining example of the temporary wooden buildings which dotted the SA countryside 100 years ago.

Built in 1911, it was the social hub of Nuriootpa and after just one year the station was expanded to keep up with demand.

It even played an important role in SA's wine economy. Penfolds Nuriootpa Winery was one of the largest wineries in the world, and it was through the station's freight doors that the world got a taste of the renowned wines.

These are just a few reasons why the station is on the Local Heritage Place list, yet the Barossa Council and Adelaide-based rail freight operator Genesee and Wyoming Australia (GWA) plan to tear it down.

The demolition wheels have been set in motion, but local resident Kim Michelmore, who has fond memories of the working station,

is fighting in court to save it. "The only grounds that can be used for demolition for a heritage-listed building is that the building is grossly unsound and cannot be rehabilitated," he said. "While it is unsound, it's certainly not grossly unsound, and it can be rehabilitated quite easily."

The Barossa Council has a different view. "One of the council's building surveyors did an independent assessment on the structural integrity and indicated the building was not structurally sound," council planning services

manager Louis Monteduro said. "A heritage architect had a look at it as well and agreed it was going to be difficult to restore."

Mr Michelmore argues there is a conflict of interest, as Barossa Council is already in negotiations with GWA over development of the land. "At this stage the only reports we have seen are those from council staff. They have a vested interest in it because the council wants to develop the area as a recreational park," he alleges.

The council rejects this claim. Its heritage advisor stated in an email

on April 13, 2010: "This building is listed as Local Heritage Place and ideally should be conserved. However, it appears the building is currently unsafe, in poor condition and has little hope of being restored by its owners. Due to the safety risk issues associated with its condition, there appears to be little option other than demolition. The costs of restoration would also now be significant."

Yet the building was ageing gracefully until 2004, when it was still in use. Once vacant, however, it became a vandals' paradise and was

allowed to fall into disrepair.

It was not until June 2008 that GWA lodged its application for demolition, which was approved in June this year. Yet GWA, which is leasing the site from the SA Government, is responsible for keeping buildings on the land clean and in good condition.

The Barossa Council said it had been lobbying since 2008 for GWA to maintain the building. "Buildings that are being leased by GWA are being allowed to go to ruin. We're still struggling to get a straight answer from them," Mr Monteduro said.

Mr Michelmore said community use of Tanunda railway station was an example of what could be possible at Nuriootpa.

"There is a men's group in Nuriootpa that are desperate for a place and they would really love to have it. That would be an ideal use for it because you have a group of people who would be able to maintain the building and who would utilise it."

This could be a chance for the community to turn an eyesore back into the bustling social hub it once was.

Drug puts backs on track

Harry Thring

A nameless drug, developed in Adelaide to stop the brain swelling after major trauma, might also have the potential to revolutionise the way spinal injuries are treated.

Adelaide University Professor Robert Vink, who heads the Adelaide Centre for Neuroscience Research, has overseen the drug's development for eight years.

"When a brain swells after major injury, enormous pressure is built up. This cuts off blood flow to the area, which cuts off the supply of oxygen and nutrients," Professor Vink said.

A similar phenomenon occurs when a spinal cord is injured. Swelling restricts the supply of oxygen and nutrients, making the injury far worse.

"The drug stops that swelling and we think it could do the same thing for spinal injuries," he said.

The drug is yet to be tested on spinal injury models and a testing program would cost \$5 million.

"If it works on a spinal injury model, it would ensure a lot of

people save a lot of their function," Professor Vink said.

It was never his team's aim to develop the drug for use with spinal injury. It was only after Professor Vink was approached by the Neil Sachse Foundation that its potential alternate use was mentioned.

The Neil Sachse Foundation was established by former champion footballer Neil Sachse and is dedicated to finding a cure for spinal injury. A sporting accident suffered during his second match for Footscray in 1975 left Sachse a quadriplegic.

The incident is widely recognised as the worst injury suffered at the highest level of Australian football.

"We made first contact with Robert about three years ago," said Jay Richards, general manager of the Neil Sachse Foundation.

"You can sustain up to 80 per cent damage to your spinal cord and retain full mobility. If that was all that happened, the body could



Quadriplegic Neil Sachse and Neil Sachse Foundation general manager Jay Richards believe a new drug could change the lives of spinal injury patients. Photo: Kate Elmes

recover on its own merits ... but it's not, unfortunately.

"The swelling around the affected area very quickly increases that damage to 85 or 90 per cent and beyond. That's when you get

irreversible damage."

Mr Richards said that if the drug worked on spinal injury models, it would be hard to calculate how significant it would be for people here and around the globe. "You

can't measure the impact this drug could have on the individual," he said.

"There are 400 cases of significant spinal injury in this country each year. Australia spends approximately \$1 billion annually on spinal injury care.

"The lifetime care costs for a paraplegic are estimated at around \$5 million - it's almost double that for a quadriplegic.

"We're talking about the opportunity to keep someone out of a chair, rather than a lifetime of paralysis. The benefit of that for the individual, their family, their community - you can't put a price on it."

The drug has been licensed out to Eustralis Pharmaceuticals, which is looking for a pharmaceutical partner to commercialise it before it goes on the market to treat brain injuries.

Mr Richards said it was one of the Neil Sachse Foundation's primary goals to raise the necessary funds to begin testing on spinal injury models.

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