

# The Sydney Morning Herald

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HD **Sydney's buildings tell the story of where we have come from**  
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## EDITORIAL

In Point Piper, among the most expensive **residential** real **estate** in Australia, the majestic mansion Craig-y-Mor has been reduced to rubble. Demolition began last week. It was **sold** in 2008 for \$32.4 million to **Chinese** buyers who are redeveloping. Nearby, the historic Italianate waterfront **property** Altona, which **sold** for \$52 million last year to another **Chinese** buyer, could also become a demolition job. A heritage assessment has recommended against a heritage order on the **property**. Even the distinctive fame and grandeur of Paradis Sur Mer at the tip of Point Point turned out to be too valuable not to redevelop.

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Many buildings which had the air of permanence or history have been flattened for Sydney's permanent state of reinvention. With real **estate** in the CBD, the harbourside and beach suburbs among the most expensive in the world, there is a mania to replace or renovate to maximise market value and return on investment. Look how impermanent even the large-scale Sydney Convention and Exhibition Centre turned out to be. Opened in 1988, it barely lasted 24 years.

There is a constant battle in Australia's oldest and largest city between heritage conservation and **property** rights. That battle extends right down to advertising signs on the side of buildings. At a certain point in the life of an ad, it evolves into cultural heritage. The old Chesty Bond singlet ads are perhaps the most classic and nostalgic of this genre. Very few such signs have survived in Sydney.

We support efforts to protect as many of these remaining vestiges as possible to conserve the city's sense of its past, no matter how modest they seem. It is especially pleasing to see the conservation of the work of cartoonist Syd Miller, who created the Chesty Bond character in 1938, taking place at the old Bond's factory in Hampshire Lane, Camperdown, which has been redeveloped and reinvented as the Sydney Nursing School. As we report today, the heritage-listed Chesty Bond sign is being given a conservation make-over to bring the picture back to life.

Other venerable advertising signs are being preserved around the city even as the buildings on which they have been placed are torn down. The current wave of preserving old signs on new buildings has been given a name - ghost signs - thanks to the work of Stefan Schutt, of Victoria University. After finding a trove of decades-old jobsheets from the Melbourne signwriting **company** Lewis & Skinner in a building under demolition, he has archived them so they can be used for conservation.

People are entitled to develop their own **property** in accord with their own tastes and needs but we would hope there is a respect for conserving signposts from our past whenever possible. Advertising tells a story. It tells us who we were, what society consumed, what was popular. Even small gestures offer a window into the generations that went before, and on whose shoulders we stand.

More importantly, Sydney's unique heritage buildings tell us the story of where we've come from and on whose cultural and architectural foundations this great city has been built.

Conservation matters.

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