

04/01/2019

The Editor
The Ovens and Murray Advertiser
Wangaratta, VIC

Dear Editor,

Re: Beechworth's Historic Goods Shed Restoration?

Recently I attended an information session at the Beechworth Railway Goods Shed and was told (not for the first time) that Indigo Shire Council was “restoring” the Goods Shed.

The Oxford Dictionary of English defines “restore” as:

Repair or renovate (a building, work of art, etc.) so as to return it to its original condition.
‘the building has been lovingly restored’.

Whatever the Council is doing it is not restoring the Goods Shed. It seems they are going to turn it into a 5 or 6 star rated building to house a cafe, art gallery, cycling hub, etc. to suit various business interests, hardly a loving restoration of its original condition.

I was also told that the remaining railway track would be buried in concrete because it was a “tripping hazard”. I did point out to the Shire's representatives that I had recently visited the Seymour Railway Heritage Centre where visitors were allowed to walk on the tracks and climb on the engines and carriages. They had no answer to this. It became increasingly obvious that Shire's “restorers” knew very little or nothing about the railway age in Beechworth.

The railway to Beechworth was opened on September 30th 1876. The last train ran on January 3rd 1977. Indigo Shire appears not to care about a hundred years of Beechworth's history. The Goods Shed is the only largely intact building remaining from the railway age in Beechworth and as such should be restored and preserved not “morphed” into a shadow of its former self.

This is just another example of Indigo Shire's disregard and neglect of the colonial history of Beechworth. There is the lax or non enforcement of heritage signage rules and the approval of inappropriate development near the historic heart of Beechworth. There is an overwhelming obsession with cycling tourism to the detriment of the heritage which makes Beechworth a very special place. Is the Council ashamed of our colonial past? Is it not politically correct enough for them? Perhaps they just don't care.

It is important that what remains of Beechworth's priceless history is protected and preserved for future generations. Once it is gone it is gone forever.

Yours sincerely,

John Harvey
Beechworth