

# The Australian

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## David Crean McMansion threat to Tasmanian temple

- by: Sue Neales
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Historian Alison Alexander at the Lady Franklin Gallery at Acanthe Park in Hobart, which is under threat from a property development by Simon Crean's brother. Picture: Peter Mathew

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**A SANDSTONE Grecian temple built in Australia's early colonial days to help civilise rough Tasmanian society is under threat from a "McMansion" property development by former state treasurer David Crean, brother of federal cabinet minister Simon Crean.**

Nestled in the foothills of Mt Wellington, about 10km from Hobart's heart, Ancanthe was built in 1843 as a museum, pastoral farm and botanical park by the remarkable Lady

Jane Franklin, wife of the Tasmanian governor and Arctic explorer Sir John Franklin.

Yesterday, heated debate filled the historic chambers of the Hobart City Council, as locals, historians and art lovers fought a proposal to allow a 16-lot suburban subdivision on Ancanthe's boundary.

They claim the all-important "sense of place" that was part of Lady Jane's vision of a cultural paradise where the wilderness of Tasmania was both tamed and enjoyed as a wild backdrop, and cultural and scientific pursuits flourished, will be lost.

But Mr Crean, a former Tasmanian Labor treasurer, argues his privately-owned land is zoned for residential development and that the new houses will not be intrusive.

Mr Crean used to live in the original Lenah Valley farmhouse next to Ancanthe, but several years ago sold the house while retaining the surrounding land for his subdivision proposal .

A Tasmanian historian and author of a forthcoming biography of Lady Franklin, Alison Alexander, yesterday had no doubts the temple, its parkland setting and Lady Jane's encompassing vision were so special that they should be nationally protected.

"She was an utterly unusual woman of the 19th century who used to tramp up Mt Wellington in long skirts, traversed Tasmania at a time when there were no roads and who hated domesticity and was fascinated by natural history," Ms Alexander said.

"And Ancanthe is no folly; it's absolutely a unique national treasure that should be preserved both for itself, but also for what it says about Australia's and Tasmania's early past."

Local Lenah Valley ratepayers association president Joss Fenton wants the council to buy the land from Mr Crean to preserve the beautiful pastoral setting of Ancanthe, which is nestled between mountains, hills, two rivulets and Hobart city.

Ancanthe and 10 acres of parkland around the temple, now a public artists' space, were left by Lady Jane to the people of Hobart on her return to England, not long after the building's completion.

It is listed as being of national significance on the national and Tasmanian heritage registers.

But Mr Crean's representative, consultant planner Neil Shepherd, told a Hobart city council meeting that the property development was adjacent to the heritage site and would not detract from its value.

He said that as long as a buffer line of trees was built between the home subdivision and Ancanthe, its heritage would not be adversely affected.

However, Hobart City Council senior cultural officer Brendan Lennard recommended to councillors that they reject Mr Crean's development application.

Mr Lennard said the proposed subdivision would envelop the Ancanthe estate in suburban encroachment and was out of keeping with its significance.

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