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Robbs

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Lynchin' talk over building



The National Trust fears the Robbs Building in Collins Street will be demolished following the Historic Buildings Preservation Council's refusal to consider classifying the building.

Trust chairman, Rodney Davidson said the Trust applied to the HBPC for a hearing to classify Robbs but the council refused to hold a hearing. No reason was given for the refusal.

A recent application to the Melbourne City Council to demolish Robbs was refused by the former councillors.

Rodney Davidson believes the HBPC's decision will weaken the opposition to further demolition applications.

The decision astounded visiting expert, Robbie Collins, a member of the US equivalent of the

National Trust. Mr Collins, an Oregon businessman, has been touring Melbourne's historic buildings at the invitation of the National Trust.

He said demolition of buildings like Robbs and the Rialto complex would be a "crime".

Mr Collins said US developers were given concessions to save historic buildings and suggested the State Government should move to introduce similar preservation incentives.

In the US, building regulations are relaxed to allow recycling of historic buildings and tax concessions are granted to developers who retain and restore old buildings.

Mr Collins said legislation should be introduced which would make using

historic buildings competitive with demolition and building sky scrapers.

He said the Victorian Government was wrongly encouraging development with incentives to high rise developments.

Mr Collins believes preservation of Melbourne's historic buildings will be economic by encouraging tourism and profitable use of the old buildings.

He enthused about surviving buildings in Collins Street and said if they were demolished he and many other tourists would have no reason for visiting Melbourne.

When told of demolition threats surrounding many of Collins Street's buildings he asked: "How could developers do it publicly, wouldn't the people hang them?"