Letter

Dear Editors

The Australian Association of Consulting Archaeologists Inc. (AACA) has read with interest Ms Helen Temple’s article 'A House Fit For a Governor? the investigation of the site of First Government House.' (Historic Environment IV, 4) The article is a useful summary of research and activity to date at the site, and will be widely referred to. Because of this, however, the Association would like to take the opportunity to raise certain ethical and political issues which relate to the relationships between consultants and government agencies and to the differing interpretation of government action.

Ms Temple is a specialist archaeologist with the Department of Environment and Planning (DEP), and has a role in administering some government historical archaeological projects in New South Wales. The DEP (Heritage Council) has legislative responsibility for historical archaeological sites in NSW, and commissions many research reports from archaeologists to which it holds copyright.

In the case of First Government House (FGH) the Department employed Anne Bickford and Helen Proudfoot to historically research and excavate the site. Their reports are housed with the DEP and are unpublished. They have been used by Helen Temple as the major source in her article for your journal. The AACA is not aware of the details of this particular case, and does not wish to imply that the consultants were not consulted about the use of their work in this way, or that such use is unethical. However, the AACA does believe the impression has been created that the consultants who did the research have not been properly acknowledged.

This is a matter of concern to the AACA. While being aware of the usual government and private sector practice of the client retaining copyright over reports, the Association feels that editors have a particular responsibility in such cases to ensure that the relationship of client and consultant, and the role of the researcher, are made clear for readers in any articles which discuss such work. In such cases joint authorship would appear to be the ideal solution. Where this is not possible, editors have a particular responsibility to ensure that the role and contributions of client, supervisor and consultants are made clear.

In the situation where a client or client’s agent is reporting on consultants’ work of which the client has copyright, it is crucial that the editors be meticulous in ensuring detailed acknowledgment. For example in the article by Helen Temple there are three instances of insufficient acknowledgment of Anne Bickford's work:

- p.16 fig. 3: This figure is taken directly from two reports by Anne Bickford to the DEP dated 7th October 1983 and 4 March 1984. There is no acknowledgment of this fact on the figure itself, nor on p.21 where the sources for figs 2, 4, 5 and 6 are cited.

- p.19 footnote 8: Anne Bickford's work is acknowledged in paragraph 1, but the relevant footnote, 8 (see p.21), does not appear in the text. Presumably this is an editorial error.

- p.21: The argument relating to the significance of the footings has been taken from Anne Bickford's report to the DEP, dated 4th March 1984 (p.7), without acknowledgment of this source. The argument developed by Bickford has been elaborated in a paper by Bickford and S Sullivan (1984): 'Assessing the research significance of historic sites' in S. Sullivan and S Bowdler (eds), Site Surveys and Significance Assessment in Australian Archaeology, Department of Prehistory, ANU,

Historic Environment, V, 3 (1986)
Canberra. This article is not referred to by Ms Temple at any stage in her paper.

The Association would also like to comment further on the history of the FGH site since its discovery. Ms Temple as a public servant is constrained in her comments in this area, and probably also constrained by space. While the NSW government is to be commended in choosing to forego the funds forthcoming in leasing the site for development, and in resolving to conserve the site in its entirety and present it to the public as a site museum, the telescoping of events in the paper gives the government more credit in hindsight than it deserves. The unqualified support for the project by the government implied in the article was not immediately forthcoming. The Australian Archaeological Association's Statement of Cultural Significance, from which Ms Temple quotes and paraphrases extensively in her section 'The Significance of the Site' (p.20) without adequate acknowledgment, was produced in the absence of any action from the government to indicate its intentions towards the site, at a time when the site was threatened by a development negotiated by the government.

It should also be noted that the decision to save the site was made in a climate of considerable public protest for example by the Friends of the First Government House Site, which was formed specifically to pressure the government to support the conservation of the site when this appeared not to be the government's preferred option, and through pressure from many professional bodies (including AACA) and the media.

Yours sincerely

Dr Helen Brayshaw,
PRESIDENT.