

# Knocked flat: town loses mine heritage

By Penelope Bradley

Captains Flat residents are outraged after a piece of their town's mining heritage was demolished soon after it was restored with taxpayers' money.

The town's railway ore loader was torn down on Monday on the orders of the Australian Rail Track Corporation because it was deemed a safety risk.

A \$14,000 restoration job on the loader, funded by the NSW Department of Industry and Investment, had only just been completed.

The building was used to load ore on to trains outside the town, south-east of Canberra, during its mining heyday.

Captain's Flat Community Association president Peter Marshall said the loss was a blow to efforts to



**"SAFETY RISK"**: The restored railway ore loader was demolished on Monday.

preserve the history of the town. "The very fact that it was used for the front page of our tourism brochure is

a good indicator of its historical significance for Captains Flat," Mr Marshall said.

The restoration work included surface water draining, erosion stabilisation and reinforcing the loader's footings.

Monaro MP and Primary Industries Minister Steve Whan wants answers from the track corporation, a company set up by the NSW and federal governments to maintain rail infrastructure.

Mr Whan said mining was an integral part of the identity and history of Captains Flat and the loader structure played a significant role in attracting tourism to the area.

"I expect to have discussions with ARTC about restoring this monument given their pre-emptive action in demolishing it without consultation," he said.

Heritage consultant Barry McGowan prepared a report in 2006 for the NSW department's derelict mines program that identified the structure as having the capacity to meet heritage listing criteria.

"One government department spends money to restore the area and another agency comes in and knocks it down; you couldn't write a comic strip better than that," he said.

A spokesman for the track corporation said the decision to demolish the structure was made following an inspection that deemed it "highly dangerous" because of rotten wood on the support structure and the rusted corrugated iron on the top planks.

But Dr McGowan said that there should have been further consultation before the demolition.