

Valuing a Haunted House

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Does a resident ghost increase or decrease the value of a home? Unfortunately, this important issue remains unresolved in Australia although in *Descas & Descas* [2013] FMCAfam 69, the wife tried to argue that it had a detrimental effect on the home's value.

There is some overseas evidence which suggests that a ghost can reduce the value of the house. However, a ghost (rather than a recent murder or suicide) can also increase its value, or at least increase its marketability.¹

The valuer in *Descas* found no evidence of a ghost, but had a strong sense of humour. He replied to the request from the wife's solicitors that the haunting be taken into account in the valuation with:

“Exorcism is not one of our many specialty services and unless the ghost was held captive in the room [to] which we could not gain access it must have been at lunch.”

The Federal Magistrate found the wife's assertion of haunting was ludicrous, and that the assertion was fabricated for the ulterior purpose of trying to influence the valuer to give the house a low value so that she could retain it. It probably did not assist the wife's argument that she slept in the room that she said was haunted. The wife also alleged that slugs commonly inhabited the shower.

¹ “A haunted house can affect the price of property, research suggests” 31 October 2011. Viewed on 17 February 2013 at <http://www.propertywire.com/news/europe/haunted-house-property-price-201110315729.html>; “How being haunted affects a house's value” by Jimmy Lee Shreeve in “The Independent” on 4 February 2009 at <http://www.independent.co.uk/property/house-and-home/how-being-haunted-affects-a-houses-value-1544600.html> last viewed on 17 February 2013; “Buying a real haunted house” by Holden Lewis. Viewed on 17 February 2012 at <http://realestate.msn.com/buying-a-real-haunted-house>.