

1 April 2016

ACT Heritage
Environment and Planning Directorate
GPO Box 158
Canberra ACT 2601

By email: heritage@act.gov.au

Dear Sir/Madam

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the ***Heritage Strategy Discussion Paper***.

The Property Council offers commentary on the following:

- Opportunities for growth, development, and adaptive reuse
- Heritage guidelines

Opportunities for Growth, Development, and Adaptive Reuse

The Property Council supports adaptive reuse of existing properties. As such, we are enclosing with this letter, illustrative cases of successful adaptive reuse initiatives.

Refurbishing/repurposing of old buildings often involves a similar order of cost to building from scratch. This can render a development project unviable once costs in getting approvals through the current planning framework and lease variation charges are factored in. There are also significant costs in bringing buildings up to Code and making the space more usable.

Attempting this with a heritage listed building or property is generally a more challenging task due to restrictions on modifying façade and other requirements of the heritage listing. That said, our members have had positive outcomes on such projects.

The Council believes that there needs to be a common understanding between developers and the Heritage Council regarding the purpose of adaptive reuse of heritage buildings. Although such projects need to maintain conservation or preservation integrity elements, they also need to be fit-for-purpose in a contemporary context, where the ongoing preservation of the building is inherently reliant on the commerciality of the development.

Heritage Guidelines

The Property Council is supportive of a broader use of guidelines in relation to heritage places with the view that use of such guidelines would result in the reduction of consultation/requirement for development approvals in respect of each action on a heritage listed project.

Thank you again for the opportunity to comment in this Discussion Paper. We look forward to reviewing the draft strategy once released.

Yours faithfully,



Merlin Kong
ACT Executive Director
Property Council of Australia

ACT HERITAGE ADAPTIVE RE-USE CASES

1. New Acton – Hostel Accommodation

New Acton1 Pavilion was completed in 2008 and forms the adaptive re-use of the old Hotel Acton buildings, courtyards and extensive landscape surrounds. Its heritage structures have been sensitively restored to provide an 80-room boutique hotel (now leased to Peppers Hotels), 599m² of restaurants and cafes including the A. Baker café, bar, 608m² of personal services (day spa and hairdresser), 777m² of office tenancies including Molonglo Group's headquarters and 240m² of cultural space.

2. Weedon Lodge in the old Cameron Offices in Belconnen

The major focus for the Cameron Offices project is heritage conservation, with the building being listed in 2005 as a Commonwealth heritage place. As part of the conservation plan the renovation will not compromise the buildings' concrete structure, and any changes to the external colouring of the building will be kept consistent with the original colour pallet.

3. Powerhouse Museum – Kingston Foreshore

Canberra Glassworks provides facilities for glass artists to produce high-quality, commissioned glass art and exhibition work within the former Kingston Power House. The glassworks is entirely housed within the existing building, the fabric of which is left 'as found', without refurbishment or renovation.

4. John Gorton Building Bunker – King Edward Terrace Parkes ACT

Now a light-filled open plan workplace for 185 staff of the Australian Greenhouse Office (AGO). Several aspects of the building's heritage were retained and conserved during the refurbishment, including a 1970s foyer, a graffiti wall, a light wall and an in situ mural painted by Aboriginal artist Johnny Bulun Bulun.

5. National Archives Building (East Block)

In 1998, East Block was sensitively refurbished to create a high profile, permanent headquarters for the National Archives of Australia. The refurbishment successfully represents the government's commitment to preservation of cultural heritage values and the principles of adaptive reuse.

6. Old Parliament House

Adaptive reuse of the Parliamentary library and private dining rooms at Canberra's Old Parliament House has restored and protected a significant 1927 building filled with social, political and historical values and created new spaces for art, dining and functions. The project retained the library's original fabric, new works are reversible and consistent with previous uses, making the adaptive reuse of the space highly successful.

INTERSTATE HERITAGE ADAPTIVE RE-USE CASES

1. Building 7, Chowder Bay, NSW

Conserving the run-down historic Submarine Mining Depot at Sydney Harbour's Chowder Bay so it could accommodate a range of uses compatible with its heritage significance was a challenging job for the Sydney Harbour Federation Trust. The adaptive reuse project repaired and conserved the main building, removed renovations that confused interpretation of its heritage significance and introduced modern facilities and services to cater for a range of possible uses.

2. Warehouse, Garden Island

The adaptation process preserved the only complete surviving hydraulic power system known in Australia. Prominently located within Garden Island, the four-storey warehouse lent itself to use as an office. The adaptive reuse of the warehouse saved the cost of demolition and reconstruction, which could have been significant considering the access, transport and security issues, associated with its island location.

3. The Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery

The redevelopment of the derelict Launceston Railway Workshops into a new cultural hub for the city of Launceston included the transformation in 2001 of a large proportion of the site into a new venue for The Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery. True to best practice adaptive reuse principles, the project created a strong distinction between original and new works.

4. Portico, The Scots Church Redevelopment

This project saw TZG transform the disused heritage-listed Scots Church in Sydney's CBD – originally designed by Rosenthal, Rutledge and Beattie in 1927-30 – into a residential development. Sitting atop the original six-storey building, the form of the new zinc-clad addition borrows from the neo-Gothic language of the church. For structural support, the project makes use of an existing steel frame, installed when the church was first built as support for an additional six storeys – a plan later abandoned with the arrival of the Depression.