

ADAPTIVE REUSE – THE CREATIVE CHALLENGE



'The Establishment Hotel'
The former George Patterson
House
Photograph: Kerime Danis, 2004

Adaptive reuse of old buildings plays a major role in heritage conservation practice in NSW. In line with the changing social and economic conditions and the increasing development pressures in the cities, many of our culturally significant buildings and sites have been successfully adapted for their new functions. As a result, many buildings and sites that were originally accessible by a limited group of people are now able to be enjoyed to the general public in the forms of established residential precincts, commercial buildings and tourism and entertainment venues.

Beside its principal goal to assist in conservation our cultural heritage, the adaptive reuse of old buildings has also brought long-term benefits to cut the environmental, social and economic costs of urban development and expansion in a sustainable manner. The adaptation of old buildings also provides opportunities for architects and designers to create innovative design solutions within the context of recognised heritage values.

In order to assist local councils, architects, designers, developers, building owners and managers the Heritage

Office and RAI NSW Chapter are developing a design guidance on the adaptive re-use of heritage buildings and sites. This guideline is the second in the series that commenced with the infill design guideline 'Design in Context', published in 2005.

The aim of the publication is to provide guidance on the appropriate conservation and adaptive reuse of heritage items and promote high quality design. The guideline will include illustrated case studies demonstrating best practice solutions.

It aims to achieve:

- increased certainty for owners and developers of appropriate adaptive re-use of heritage items;
- clear articulation of Heritage Council policy and consistency by decision makers;
- assistance to owners and developers on best practice; and
- celebration of high quality design and heritage outcomes.

In addition, the purpose of this publication is to raise quality of the built environment, to promote architecture and, in particular, to promote the role of the RAI in achieving this aim.

It is intended to provide a wide spectrum of applications in the publication, from small buildings (such as local electrical substations) to large scale urban regeneration/gentrification projects (i.e. Walsh Bay or Prince Henry Hospital). The examples will canvas urban, suburban, rural and regional examples across a variety of architectural genres. It is aimed that the case studies will provide opportunities for architects to promote their projects in the public realm.

The project is overseen by a committee of representatives from the Heritage Office and NSW RAI Heritage Committee and architects with expertise in the field. The Committee is seeking exemplar projects to feature in the guideline. To participate please go to www.heritage.nsw.gov.au and select "What's New". Detailed information and a case study form are provided for those interested in contributing to the guideline. Please contact Murat Gul at the Heritage Office if you have further questions murat.gul@heritage.nsw.gov.au .

A limited number of case studies that exemplify best heritage and design practice will be featured in the document. Additional case studies may also be made available by means of electronic publication.