

HERITAGE IMPACT STATEMENT :-

Wesley Church Complex
124-144 Lonsdale Street, Melbourne

This Statement forms part of a permit application for:-

Alterations and additions to the interior of the Church building including construction of new DDA compliant toilet, new kitchenette, upgrade of existing flower preparation area, removal and replacement of nave pews, replacement of all light fittings and existing AV system, repairs to existing floor surfaces and alterations to existing floor coverings. External works are limited to replacement of existing heating plant, including new enclosure and installation of an exhaust vent in the east wall of the building.

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Prepared for: SEMZ

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1. Why is the place of cultural heritage significance?

The Wesley Church is one of the buildings in the Wesley Church Complex which is included in the Victorian Heritage Register (H0012). The place is a site of historical, architectural and social significance to the State of Victoria as described in the following Statement of Significance.

What is significant?

The Wesley Church and Wesley Mission Victoria Complex in Lonsdale Street consists of ten buildings including: The Church (1858); The Manse (1859); and The School House (1859) all designed by Joseph Reed; a Caretakers Cottage (1914); the Princess Mary Club (1926), designed by AS Eggleston and Nicholas Hall (1938), designed by Harry Norris. The North Boundary wall along Little Lonsdale St (1869) incorporates remnants of a stables and also includes a section which was rebuilt in 1914 during the construction of the Caretakers Cottage. The Lonsdale Street boundary is defined by a set of basalt central gateposts, the basalt plinths of a cast iron palisade fence and the bases of a smaller set of gates which led to the Manse (1873). Standing in the forecourt of the church is a bronze statue of John Wesley by Paul Montford (1936). The Methodist Church has had a presence in Melbourne since the beginning of European occupation and the Wesley Church has been at this site since 1858 having moved from a site in Collins Street. The Wesley Church complex has been the core of Wesleyan Methodism in Victoria since this time and the headquarters of the Wesley Mission Victoria since 1893.

How is it significant?

The Wesley Church and Wesley Mission Victoria Complex is of historical, architectural and social significance to the State of Victoria.

Why is it significant?

The Wesley Church complex is of architectural and historical significance as a complete and substantial collection of related mid to late nineteenth and early twentieth century ecclesiastical buildings.

The principal group of 1858-59 buildings (Church, School House and Manse) are of architectural significance as the earliest intact church complex in the state. Conceived and completed as a single building project, the 1858-59 buildings are also architecturally significant as an early and essentially intact group of ecclesiastical buildings designed in a correct Gothic Revival Style. This group of buildings is of architectural significance as being the work of noted nineteenth century Melbourne architect Joseph Reed. The School House is of architectural significance as the only known Denominational school in Victoria designed by an architect.

The Wesley church is of architectural significance as an early and highly accomplished example of Gothic Revival styling and for the unusual combination of a gallery on all sides with a cruciform floor plan. The spire is the oldest surviving, and is believed to be the first, spire built in Victoria. The spire is also significant as having been a major landmark in nineteenth century Melbourne.

The Wesley Church is of architectural significance, representing the acceptance of the Gothic Revival style into the mainstream of Wesleyan and other non-conformist churches.

Nicholas Hall is of architectural significance as a fine and intact example of a

church hall designed in a Moderne style and as the work of prominent interwar architect Harry Norris.

The Wesley Church complex is of historical significance as a major focus for Methodists in Victoria. The church itself has a symbolic position and prominence in the history of the Wesleyan Methodist Church in Victoria.

The site and complex are of social and historical significance for their long association with various welfare initiatives and programs since the 1850s, in particular those of the Wesley Mission Victoria.

The Wesley Church site is of historical significance for its associations with A M & G R Nicholas, founders of the Nicholas Chemical Manufacturing Company who had a longstanding philanthropic association with the Wesley Church.

The Princess Mary Club is of historical significance in the history of women's employment in Victoria as a rare surviving example of a 1920s hostel for young women coming to the city to work and study, enabling the greater inclusion of women in the workforce.

The School House is of historical significance as a representative example of a nineteenth century denominational school.

The School House is of social significance as housing the offices of the Wesley Mission Victoria when it was established in 1893.

2. Existing conditions and current use of the registered place :-

The site is currently undergoing a large redevelopment project. This current application relates to the Church building only and is not directly associated with the existing redevelopment project for the site. The Church building is in reasonable condition and continues to function as a place of worship for two congregations. The works proposed with this current application are intended to upgrade the existing facilities to provide for the ongoing use of the place by the two congregations.

3. What are the proposed works?

The proposed works to the place are detailed on the following drawings and it is these drawings which have been referred to in the preparation of this Heritage Impact Statement.

Architectural	Prepared by Blight Blight Blight Architecture
A000	Drawing Cover Sheet
A001	General Notes
A100 Rev2	Ground Floor Plan – Existing Conditions
A101 Rev3	Ground Floor Plan – Proposed New Works
A200	First Floor Plan – Existing Conditions
A201	First Floor Plan – Proposed New Works
A300	Reflected Ceiling Plan – Ground Floor
A301	Reflected Ceiling Plan – First Floor
A600 Rev5	Disabled Toilet Detail Drawings
A601 Rev6	Kitchenette, Joinery Drawings
A603 Rev1	Ground Floor Pews
1406	Door Hardware Schedule

1406 Fixtures Fittings & Appliances Schedule
1406 Materials and Finishes Schedule

Structural Engineer Prepared by Irwin Consultants
SK1 Floor Strengthening for new Organ Console

Hydraulic Services Prepared by Rudd Consulting Engineers
H000 RevA Cover Sheet
H001 RevA Scope of Works, Legend and Notes
H300 RevA Ground Floor – Sanitary Drainage
H301 RevA Ground Floor – Water Service

Mechanical Services Prepared by Rudd Consulting Engineers
M000 RevA Cover Sheet
M001 RevA Legend & Schedules
M002 RevA Scope of Work Sheet 1
M003 RevA Scope of Work Sheet 2
M100 RevA Ground Floor – Existing Equipment Layout
M300 RevB Ground Floor – Proposed Equipment Layout
M400 RevA Ground Floor – (Tender Option)

Fire Services Prepared by Rudd Consulting Engineers
F000 RevA Cover Sheet
F001 RevA Legend & Scope of Works
F300 RevA Ground Floor – Fire Services Layout

Electrical Services Prepared by Rudd Consulting Engineers
E000 RevA Cover Sheet
E001 RevD Legend
E002 RevC Scope of Work
E100 RevB Ground Floor – Demolition Plan
E101 RevB First Floor – Demolition Plan
E300 RevB Ground Floor – Lighting Layout
E301 RevB First Floor – Lighting Layout
E400 RevC Ground Floor – Power and Comms Layout
E401 RevA First Floor – Power and Comms Layout
E500 RevA Lighting Control Schematic
E600 RevA Single Line Diagram
Services Equipment List

The categories of proposed works are summarised as follows –

A. Demolition

The extent of demolition work is limited to elements that are being replaced and/or where new additions are to be installed. The extent of demolition includes the following -

- All nave pews including associated subfloor heating system (note gallery pews will remain intact),
- All existing floor finishes including carpet as shown on drawings,
- All existing light fittings (with the exception of the spotlights focused on the altar),

- All existing AV fixtures and fittings,
- External hydronic heating plant,
- Creation of an opening in external wall for disabled toilet exhaust outlet.

B. Conservation

The existing timber flooring is to be retained and repaired where necessary.

C. Alterations

Minor alterations are proposed to the existing including –

- New sink and bench area within flower preparation space,
- Changes to existing floor finishes including areas of new carpet and tiles and areas of polished timber floors (refer to drawing A101 for various finishes proposed),
- Nine rows of new timber pews (using original pew ends) are to be installed in the nave,
- Replacement of the boiler plant including new enclosure,
- Replacement of existing projector and screen on east gallery railing,
- New light fittings throughout the building

D. Additions

The new additions to the existing building can be summarised as follows -

- Installation of a DDA compliant toilet in the East Vestry,
- Installation of an organ console in the East Transept,
- Creation of a kitchenette in the south east corner of the nave,
- Additional light fittings,
- Floor strengthening for new Organ Console
- New data and power points,
- New ceiling fans
- New digital screens and projectors within the nave

4. What physical and visual impact will result from proposed works?

A. Demolition

The impact the demolition work proposed will have is limited to the removal of the pews, light fittings and hole in wall for toilet exhaust. The removal of existing floor finishes, hydronic heating plant and AV fixtures and fittings are not considered to have any detrimental impact.

Light fittings

The existing light fittings are not original and are in some instances intrusive to the heritage significance of the place. The removal of the light fittings is deemed to be a positive or neutral outcome.

Pews

The removal of the pews will have some negative heritage impact. The current configuration of the pews and their physical condition are such that they are no longer suitable for use by the two church congregations. The existing pews are thought to be the original church pews, albeit in a modified layout, altered form and materials and are generally in poor condition.

Toilet exhaust

The hole for the toilet exhaust is 150mm diam and will have little impact due to discrete (powdercoat finish color matching) vent cover.

B. Conservation

The conservation works to the original timber floors will only have a positive physical and visual impact on the heritage significance of the place.

C. Alteration

The extent of the proposed alterations are generally in response to the condition of the existing fixtures and fittings within the Church building. The existing flower arrangement cupboard contains joinery items that are old and lack in bench space. The replacement with a more convenient modern arrangement will have no impact on the heritage values of the place.

Floor finishes

The proposed floor finishes include some change from carpet to polished timber or matting, partially in response to the need to improve the acoustics of the space. Currently the acoustics is poor, and the extent of carpet is adding to the problem by deadening the sound attenuation. With the change to some areas being polished timber floor boards and the children's area having matting, the acoustics will be somewhat improved.

Pews

The alterations to the pew arrangement is required to accommodate modern service requirements. The flexibility of seating arrangements is required with the different services held and as required by the different congregations. The traditional timber pew is no longer considered appropriate for an aging population and the lack of flexibility of seating arrangement with pews is also no longer accepted by the congregation. However, understanding that the pews are an important component of the heritage values of a church, there are no changes proposed to the existing pews in the gallery and there will be 9 rows of new pews (constructed using the original pew ends) that can be used within the main nave area. These pews will be on castors and can be moved around within the church as required.

Hydronic heating

There will also be alterations made to the existing hydronic heating plant on the west side of the church building. The existing boiler unit will be removed and replaced with a newer, larger capacity unit. The existing unit will be removed, as will the chain mesh surround and a powder-coated cabinet housing the new unit will be installed. This alteration will be an improvement on the current situation in terms of being less visually intrusive.

AV equipment

The existing system will be replaced. The precise details of the new equipment that will be required is currently being determined. It is respectfully requested that this aspect of the application be addressed with the inclusion of a Permit Condition.

Lighting

The existing lighting throughout the building is poor. There are no original fittings. It is proposed that all existing fittings will be removed and replaced with new fittings that are less visually intrusive than existing, provide a better light level for the building users.

D. New Addition

The new additions to the Church that are proposed with this scope of work are minimal and limited to providing an appropriate level of amenity for the ongoing use of the space.

DDA compliant toilet

The existing toilet facilities on the site are in adjacent buildings. The clergy and the congregation propose to provide a disabled accessible facility within the church building. The vestry spaces are currently underutilised and provide an opportunity to include this function. A DDA consultant and building surveyor have confirmed the facility as detailed on drawing A601 meets the requirements. The design is such that the facility could be removed at any time in the future without compromising the existing building fabric with the exception of the 150mm diameter core hole required in the masonry wall to provide for the necessary ventilation.

Organ console

An existing organ console is intended to be located in the northern transept behind the original pew screen which is being retained. The organ console will enable the organist to remain part of the congregation during the services rather than having to go up and down the stairs to the main organ console in the gallery space behind the altar. The organ console will be freestanding but will require cabling connection through the AV system.

Additional data and power points

There are proposed to be new power and data points provided throughout the church building. These points will be discretely located and simple surface mounted conduit run where required.

Ceiling fans

To assist with the heating of the church it is proposed to include large ceiling fans. Currently, the heating system is inadequate and although the system will be improved with this current scope of works, the problem with heat rising into the ceiling space of the church remains. To assist with this, the ceiling fans will be employed to help move the heat back down from the high level. The ceiling fans are of a simple unadorned design and will be a dark colour to blend with the dark ceiling timbers to minimise visual impact.

AV system

The audio visual system has not yet been fully detailed and it is suggested that the installation be subject to a permit condition. The need for a comprehensive AV system is acknowledged, particularly by the large Chinese congregation who rely heavily of the system throughout their services.

5. Design considerations made to mitigate detrimental impacts

Various design proposals have been explored prior to settling on this current proposal. This has largely been the result of responding to the requirements of the two congregations who use the Church building and achieving a balance between the user ideals and the heritage considerations. Changes that have been made to the design to mitigate detrimental impact include the following.

Kitchenette

The size of the kitchenette and the location of the facility has been determined with consideration to minimising impact on the existing space. Ideally, the kitchenette would

be larger than what is currently proposed however, as a measure of compromise it has been reduced to the bare minimum functional facility. The congregation members have advised that refreshments are served to 60-80 people regularly and the space required for such numbers can not be accommodated elsewhere in the church building. If the kitchenette was to be located in a different space other issues of OH&S arise when transporting hot liquids etc. The congregation members have advised that while basic preparations are done before the service begins, towards the end, those rostered move back to finish preparations and pour drinks. These people must not be excluded from the liturgy by being shut away in a kitchenette space outside the main nave.

Replacement of Pews

The existing pews in the nave are in poor condition. They are thought to be the original pews albeit having been modified and repaired a number of times over the years. The current layout of the pews is not original. As a compromise between the desire for modern individual and flexible seating and the acknowledgement of the heritage value of the pews, the congregation have decided to replace the existing pews with a combination of modern flexible seating that can be moved throughout the space as required, and a series of new pews that will be manufactured using the original pew ends. The new pews will have castors to enable reconfiguration of the seating arrangements as required for the individual services.

Heating

The existing hydronic heating boiler with panels throughout the main church does not adequately heat the space. Various means of improving the heating including increasing the boiler capacity and introducing a further system of radiant heaters was explored. The increase in capacity of the existing boiler is being proceeded with and is included in this package of works. The consideration for the introduction of radiant heat panels is acknowledged as requiring the introduction of a number of new elements into the space which have the potential for visual intrusion. As such, the congregation have compromised and are not proceeding with the radiant heat panels. The introduction of ceiling fans is also included in the scope and it is hoped that they will assist by pushing the hot air down to the ground level where the congregation will mainly be seated.

6. Conclusion

The works proposed to this place have been carefully considered in relation to the cultural heritage significance of the building. Through a process of discussions and reconsideration of the design some modifications to the original proposal have been made. The building users (the two church congregations) have compromised on their original brief requirements in order to achieve a heritage sensitive outcome.

The proposal, as described on the accompanying drawings prepared by Blight Blight Blight Architecture, Irwin Consultants and Rudd Consulting Engineers, is considered to be generally sympathetic to, and in some aspects there are positive improvement in respect of the identified heritage significance of the place. It is for these reasons, and the other matters discussed above, I recommend the application be granted a Heritage Permit.