**H0021 Wesley Church Complex**

**118-148 Lonsdale Street and 117-147 Little Lonsdale Street, Melbourne**

**Permit Application P31437**

**Why is Wesley Church Complex of cultural heritage significance?**

Wesley Church Complex is included in the Victorian Heritage Register under the provisions of the *Heritage Act 2017* for its historical, architectural and social significance to the State of Victoria.

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); and Nicholas Hall (1938), designed by Harry Norris. 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.

Nicholas Hall, the subject of this permit application, 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.

**What was the permit application for?**

In March 2020 Heritage Victoria received a permit application for works to redevelop Nicholas Hall (B4) for use as a food and beverage venue, proposed within the context of significant changes in the use and management of the broader Wesley Church Complex over the past five years.

The proposed works to Nicholas Hall (B4) included in the permit application were as follows:

* Adaption of the ground floor lobby and main hall for a restaurant including installation of two kitchens, mezzanine dining level, and back of house facilities;
* Demolition of the roof and ceiling and rear annex to construct a rooftop pavilion and two-storey rear addition;
* Internal and external conservation works; and
* Forecourt landscaping works.

The permit application was advertised between 18 March 2020 and 1 April 2020 with one submission received.

**Why has the permit been refused?**

The *Heritage Act 2017* requires the Executive Director of Heritage Victoria to consider various

matters in determining a permit application including the extent that the application, if approved,

would affect the cultural heritage significance of the place; the extent that refusal would affect the

reasonable or economic use of the place; and any submissions received in response to public notice

of the permit application.

On 25 August 2020, the Executive Director of Heritage Victoria refused the permit application for the

following reasons:

* If the application were approved, and the works were undertaken to facilitate the adaptation of Nicholas Hall to accommodate a food and beverage venue as proposed, it would result in an unacceptable detrimental impact on the cultural heritage significance of the Wesley Church Complex.
* The adaptation of Nicholas Hall to accommodate a food and beverage venue to the extent proposed, including irreversible changes to the main hall, construction of a rooftop addition, mezzanine level and rear dining space would result in extensive loss of original fabric and existing form that would physically and visually impact on the intactness and architectural merit of Nicholas Hall.
* Refusal of the permit application will prevent the economic benefits of the proposed use and development from being realised. Heritage Victoria accepts that a new use may be required for Nicholas Hall and that a food and beverage venue may be a reasonable use. However, the intensity of the use as proposed, is not compatible with the cultural heritage significance of Nicholas Hall and it has not been sufficiently demonstrated that a less-intensive food and beverage use, or other viable use, could not be accommodated without having such a significant impact on the registered place.
* The negative impacts of the proposal are not outweighed by the benefits, including the economic benefits.

**Can the applicant appeal the decision?**

The applicant can choose to apply to the Heritage Council of Victoria for a review of the Executive Director’s decision within 60 days of receiving the refusal notice. The Heritage Council is an independent statutory authority established under the *Heritage Act 2017.*