

Queen Street Toilet Block, Murwillumbah

Heritage Assessment & Options Report

March 2011

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1 Introduction

1.1 Preamble

Tweed Shire Council (Council) is currently considering undertaking a rationalisation of their public toilet infrastructure within the town of Murwillumbah, NSW, in order to provide the local community with safe and clean facilities. As part of this process, Council has determined that the Toilet Block located on Queen Street (Toilet Block) does not comply with the *Disability Discrimination Act* (DDA) and the work required to bring it up to those standards would have a prohibitive cost and require significant changes to the fabric of the Toilet Block.

As such, Council are considering options for the Toilet Block. However, the Toilet Block is located within the Murwillumbah Heritage Precinct as well as being close to several currently listed items and items identified for listing by the draft Tweed Community Heritage Study. Additionally, there is potential that the Toilet Block itself may have heritage significance, both individually and as part of the broader Murwillumbah streetscape.

As such, Council have commissioned this report in order to determine the heritage significance, if any, of the toilet block and to determine appropriate future reuse options for the site.

1.2 Aims & Methodology

The aim of this Heritage Assessment and Options Report is to:

- Review any available documents and history of the Toilet Block;
- Undertake a brief physical assessment of the site;
- Assess the significance of the Toilet Block itself and of any contributory significance it may possess in the wider context of the Murwillumbah streetscape;
- Determine viable re-use options for the site;
- Outline the potential heritage impacts of the re-use options;
- Outline the relevant legislative requirements relating to the site's heritage value or contribution to the street's heritage value; and
- Develop appropriate management recommendations for any future development.

The methodology used for this project is consistent with the *Australia ICOMOS Burra Charter* and the NSW Department of Planning – Heritage Branch publication *Assessing Heritage Significance* and *Statements of Heritage Impact*.

The methodology included primary and secondary research, analysis of aerial images and historic plans, a site inspection and an analysis of past use of the site, in order to assess the site's significance. The significance assessment together with an outline of statutory requirements informed the impact assessment and recommendations.

1.3 Location

The subject site is located on Queen Street, Murwillumbah, on the Far North Coast of New South Wales. The site is part of the road reserve.

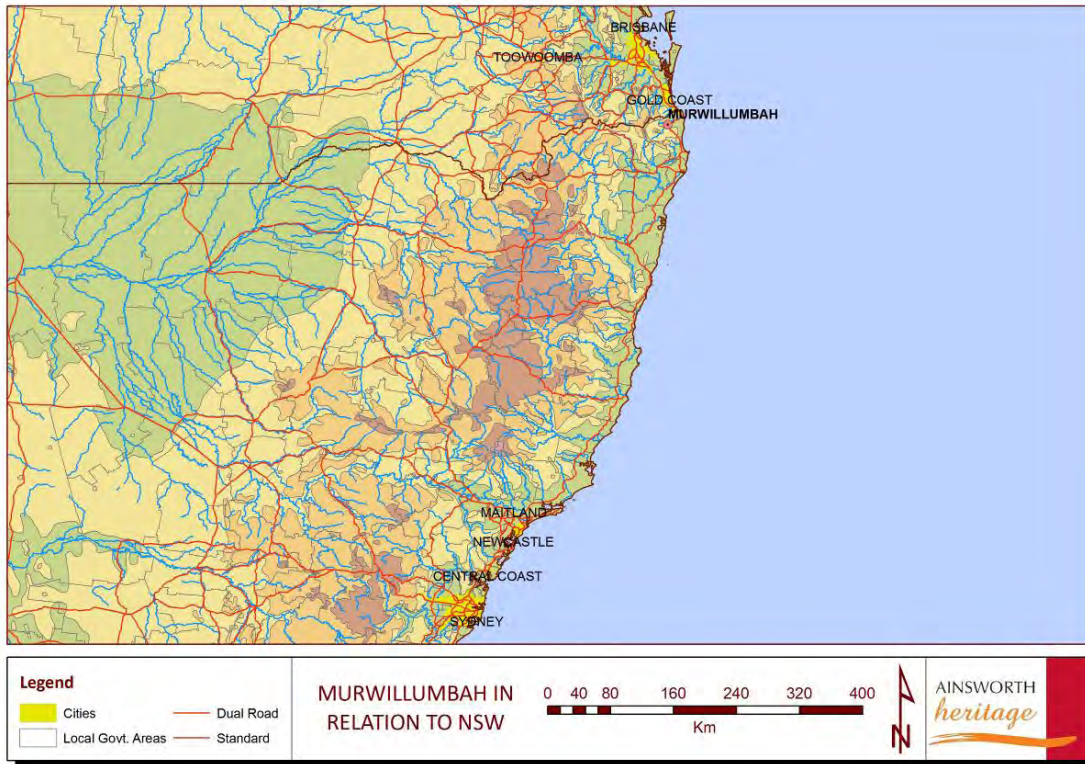


Figure 1.1: The location of Murwillumbah on the Far North Coast of NSW (Ainsworth Heritage).

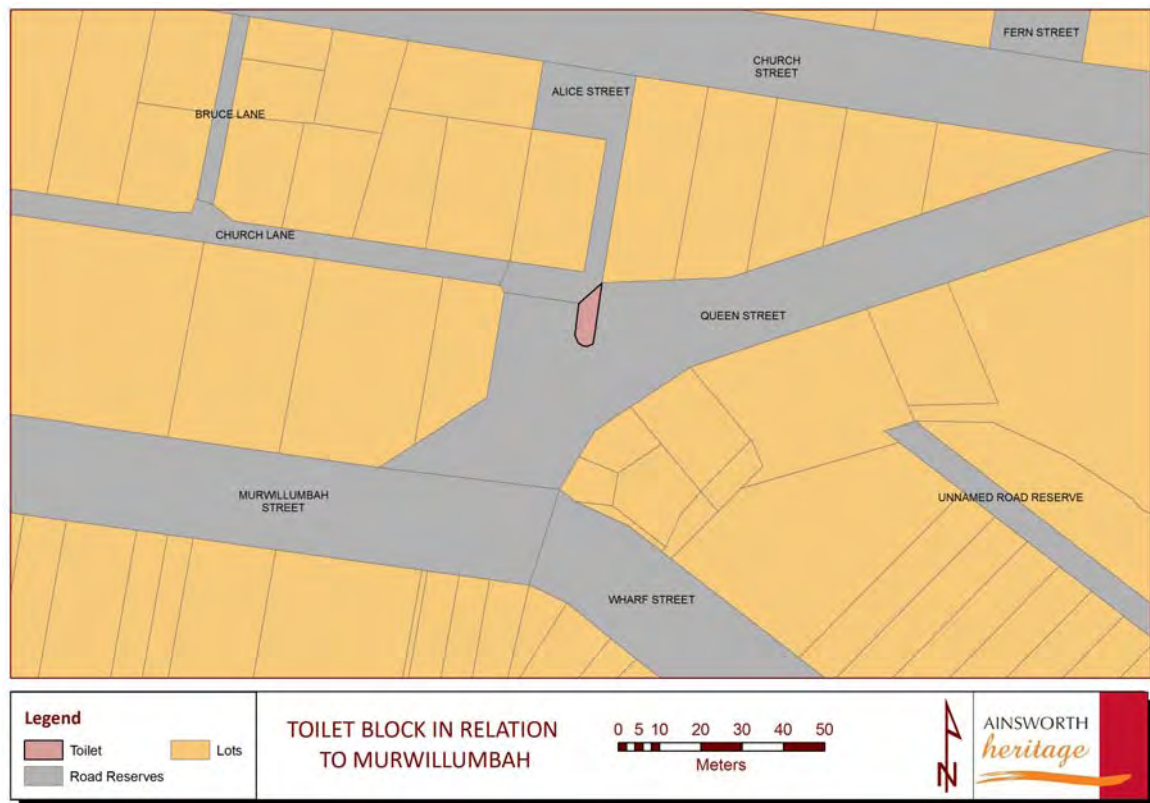


Figure 1.2: The subject site, on Queen Street, within Murwillumbah. (Ainsworth Heritage).

1.4 Previous Research and Heritage Recognition

The subject site has not previously undergone an in depth historical assessment and is not listed on any statutory or non-statutory heritage register.

However, the site is within the listed *Murwillumbah Main Street Conservation Area* and is noted in the *Tweed Community Heritage Study* as being a contributory part of that Heritage Conservation Area.

1.5 Scope and Limitations

The aim of the report is to inform Council of the sites individual and contributory significance, if any, and ensure that the Council meets its statutory obligations under the *NSW Heritage Act 1977* and the *Tweed Shire LEP*.

The site did not involve a detailed fabric assessment and research outside of local archives was limited to a desktop assessment.

1.6 Study Team & Report Authors

The Heritage Assessment and Options Report was prepared by Jane Ainsworth and Matt Alexander. The physical inspection was undertaken by Matt Alexander on 15 December, 2010.

1.7 Acknowledgements

The following organisations and individuals are thanked for their assistance with this report and those who responded with information from the NSW Heritage Advisors list:

- Joan Flemming and Martin King – Murwillumbah Historical Society;
- Stewart Brawley, Andrea Hamann and Bill Miller – Tweed Shire Council;
- Sue Jackson-Stepowski – Jackson-Stepowski Heritage Planning;
- Fiona Binns – URBIS;
- Peter Woodley – Heritage Advisor, Canterbury Council;
- Chris Betteridge – Heritage Consultant;
- Kerime Danis – City Plan Heritage;
- Suzannah Plowman – Victoria Design and Management; and
- Colin Brady – Waverly Council; and
- The Murwillumbah community members who responded to the requests for information.

2 Site Background

2.1 Preamble

The Chapter provides a brief overview of the site and its history; however, there was little available information on the site available in Council and local archives, limiting the scope of any contextual overview.

2.2 Early History of the Tweed Valley

The settlement of the Tweed River was underway by the 1850s, like much of the Northern Rivers, and was first used by the early cedar getters to access to the stands of Red Cedar in the valley. Sites on the lower river, like Chinderah, were used as base camps to enable easy access to the upper reaches of the valley.¹

Demand for cedar remained significant into the late 1800s when the land was opened up for free selection, following the Robertson Land Acts, and continued to be in high demand for a further two decades, with other timbers also becoming increasingly important during this period. As the land was opened up graziers followed the cedar getters, however, most of the North Coast lands were better suited to cultivation or dairy farming.²

Over time regional centres arose, often located at sites either on the mouths of the major Rivers (i.e. Tweed Heads, Ballina, Yamba) or at the highest navigable points on the river (i.e. Murwillumbah, Lismore and Grafton). These river centres would become the focus of local industry and trade, with many vital services becoming centred within these towns. The lack of good roads until post-World War II and the limited access to the rail line, from the early 20th Century, led many to rely on the services of the coastal steamers, run by such companies as the North Coast Shipping and Navigation Company.³

2.3 Early Development of Murwillumbah

The area of Murwillumbah was first taken up by Joshua Bray, one of the district Pioneers, beginning the process of white settlements and the displacement of the local Bundjalung Aboriginal peoples. Murwillumbah was one of many small villages located along the banks of the Tweed River by the 1870s and would become the major town of the valley due to its advantageous position at the highest navigable point on the river and from 1894 as the terminus of the rail line to Lismore and later Sydney.⁴

¹ Boileau. J. 2004. *Tweed Community Based Heritage Study: Thematic History*. Tweed Shire Council. p.76.

² <http://www.liscity.nsw.gov.au> Feilding. L. D. no date. *Introduction to a History of Lismore*.

³ Alexander. M. 2008. *Archaeological Assessment for the Proposed Ballina Surf Life Saving Club Shaws Bay New South Wales*. Report prepared for Ballina Council.

⁴ Parish Map Preservation Project – 1883 *Map of Town of Murwillumbah*.

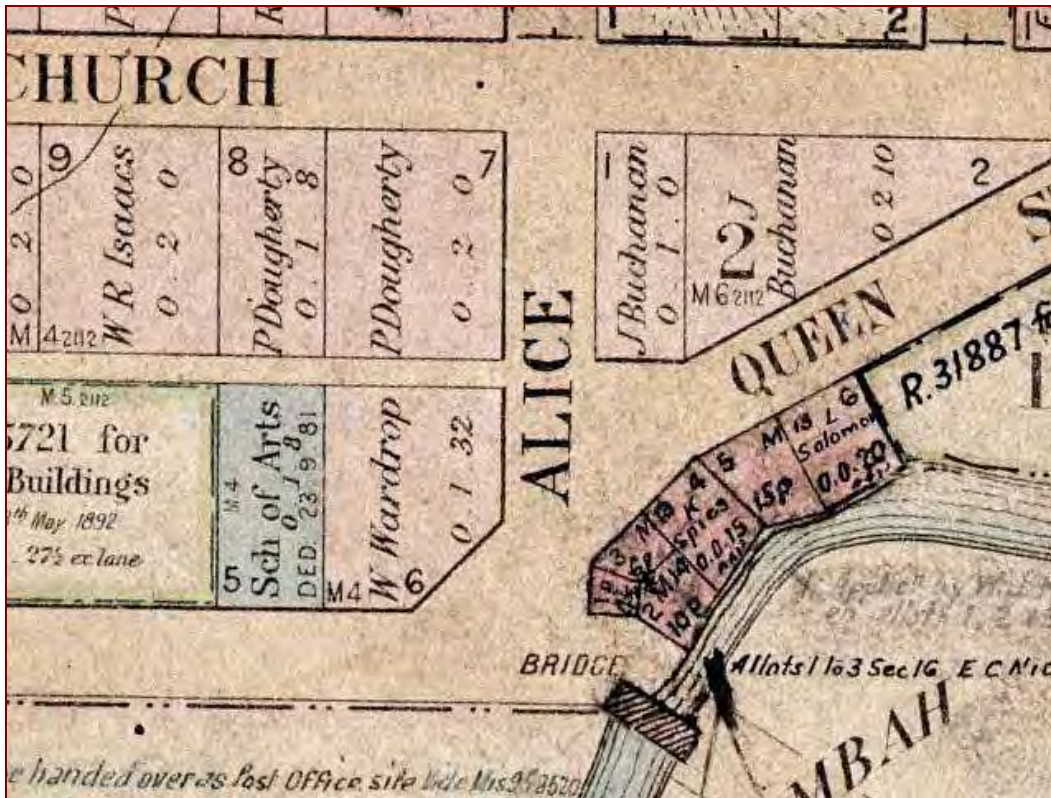


Figure 2.1: Parish Map of the Town centre, 1893 (Parish Map Preservation Project).



Figure 2.2: Parish Map of the Town Murwillumbah, 1893. (Parish Map Preservation Project).

The earliest parish maps of the Murwillumbah area (which are pre-1900) show the settlements of Byangum and Murwillumbah, as well as much of the land that is now part of the town that was once owned by Joshua Bray. The earliest town map (1893), following the auctioning of sites in the newly proclaimed town in 1881, shows that the area where the Toilet Block is situated was in the Alice/Queen Streets intersection road reserve, next to the allotment taken up by J. Buchanan. Buchanan went on to build the two story Queensland style Australian Hotel, which sat immediately to the east of the later site of the Toilet Block. In 1917, the Hotel was demolished by the photographer Angus McNeil, who built the existing shops that now sit to the east of the toilet block.



Figure 2.3: The Australian Hotel. The subject site is to the right of the photo (Tweed River Regional Museum).



Figure 2.4: The Original Broadway Store before its extension. The subject site is to the left of the photo (Tweed River Regional Museum).

2.4 Sanitation Facilities

As with any town, sanitation becomes a critical issue in the growth, development and ongoing health of the town and its residents. From the earliest urban civilisations, the successful and efficient removal of waste from within urban centres has been one of the hallmarks of successful civilisations. Cities such as Rome would not have been possible without the engineering of sewers that allowed for large and dense populations.

As the industrial age began, mechanically driven sewer systems became possible, and their institution a mark of a progressive and advanced nation. The great pumping stations at Crossness and Abbey Road in London and the gothic decorated sewers of Paris are example of the dawning of the modern era of waste disposal, that were on of the critical issues underpinning the successful growth of modern cities.

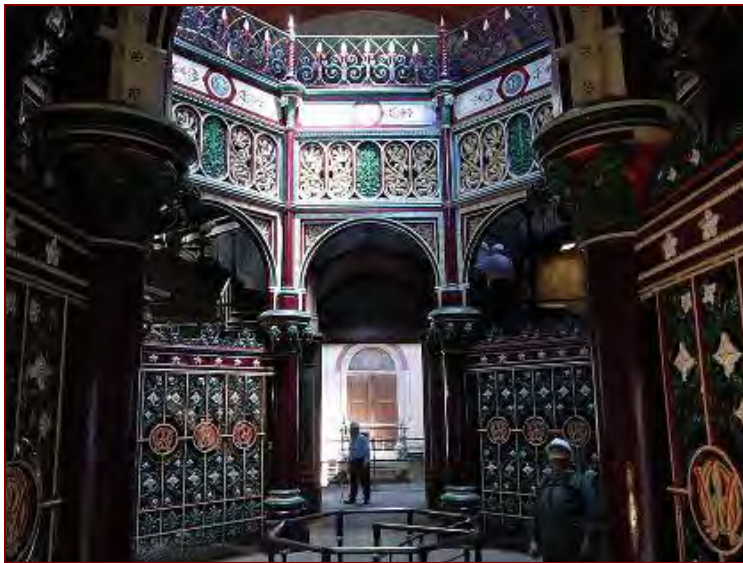


Figure 2.5: The interior of Crossness pumping station in London, showing the pride cities once showed in their sewerage infrastructure.

As the industrial era gave way into the twentieth century, advanced sewerage systems became the norm, rather than the exception and as they became more widely used the detail once lavished on them was removed and they faded into the background of towns and cities; a vital, but seldom seen element of an urban centres infrastructure.

However, some of the associated above-ground infrastructure of the sewer systems would continue to see more detailed design; that of the public toilet block, especially when required to conform to the aesthetics of a public space in which they sat. The toilet blocks at Belmore in Sydney and within the underground city circle stations of the central business district of Sydney are excellent examples designs where the blocks in question have been provided with excellent aesthetic characteristics, which make these blocks more than just public utilities.⁵ However, in rural areas, research has not indicated the prevalence for such detail, likely due to the costs involved. Nonetheless, the town of Murwillumbah would make the choice to build a more lavish design for their residents.

⁵ Public toilets, The Boulevard, Punchbowl – Heritage Inventory Sheet

Murwillumbah itself was not a recipient of a reticulated town sewerage system until after World War II. In 1954/56, the town underwent a public works process that saw the installation of a modern sewerage system, one which was instrumental in assisting in the town's growth and enabled the construction of public toilet facilities such as that at Queen Street, which could be attached to the main system.⁶

2.5 The Toilet Block

It is unclear exactly when the Queen Street Toilet Block was built, however, photos from 1932 do not show the Toilet Block, whereas an image from 1962 does (see Figure 2.3). This thirty-year window falls within the estimated dates for the major design elements of the Toilet Block; all of which are late inter-war or post-War design elements⁷. However, the choice of design elements by the Council⁸ of the time, though modern when constructed, were subtle enough to allow for the Toilet Block to become a part of the existing streetscape without unduly impacting upon it.

A request for information from the community, in order to aid in the dating of the Toilet Block's construction, garnered a strong response. However, there were some conflicting reminiscences of the use and construction of the block, with the most accurate and supportable information coming from former Council employees. This evidence points to the construction of the Toilet Block at or around 1954-1956, with the completion of the town sewerage system and the closure of the School of Arts toilets. Those toilets, and the School of Arts, were located opposite the location of the current Toilet Block on Queen Street.⁹ Additional recollections place the Toilet Block as being built before October 23, 1954, as one member of the community prepared for her Wedding Ceremony across the road and members of her group used the Toilets on the way to the ceremony.¹⁰ However, this would place the construction of the Toilet Block at the very earliest phase of the town sewer project. Other recollections have the Toilet Block being referred to as Lennon's after flash hotel of the same name on the Gold Coast, due to the modern and new nature of the toilet Block, coupled with the garden bed that used to exist at the front of the Toilet Block.¹¹

The Toilet block itself is believed to have been designed by Doug Board, as was the Arcade across from the Toilet Block, the former NRMA mechanics shop behind the Murwillumbah Theatre and the Main Street Medical Centre.¹² These buildings all display a similar architectural style, with rounded facades and detailing (such as the glass bricks) that references Doug Board's famous father, F. J. Board, who was noted for using decorative brickwork. F. J. Board was one of the most prominent architects in Lismore and the Far North Coast in the early years of the Twentieth Century, with his practice being continued by his son. F. J. Board was noted for his many public buildings, many of which were attractively detailed and have come to provide the town of Lismore with its distinctive character.

Oral testimony has the builder of the toilet block as George Hanna a young sole trader, who later founded a company, which eventually became 'Hanna & Edmed.' The company also built the old RSL club (where the medical centre is across the road), and is believed to have built Red Cross hall in 1951/52, the Parish Hall in 1952 and Sunrise Motors, next to Murwillumbah Cinemas. Oral testimony also stated that the '6 inch' square/oblong concrete window frame was signature

⁶ Pers Comm. Ken Forster

⁷ Pers Com Colin Brady

⁸ It is assumed that Council built the Toilet Block, as it is public infrastructure; however, there is no actual evidence to support this assumption.

⁹ Pers Comm. Ken Forster

¹⁰ Pers Comm Lesley Morrison.

¹¹ Pers Comm Ross Johnson.

¹² Doug Board's involvement is currently anecdotal and based on oral testimony.

of either D.J Board and or George Hanna which is also common to a number of buildings in town.¹³

One of the plumbers who worked on the Toilet Block, a Col Reeve, remembers that Council started putting the sewer in along Proudfoots Lane, tunnelled up through and across to the Police Station, then built the sewer in both directions from there; all this being undertaken as a Department of Public Works project. Mr. Reeve was employed by Public Works when the sewer was put in, and then for the plumber E.J Watson on the weekends, who was responsible for installing plumbing into the toilet block. Mr. Reeve remembers altering the plumbing installation three times because the foundation levels were changed several times.

The construction of the Clock Tower by the Rotary Club of Murwillumbah in 1952 may have coincided with the construction of the Toilet Block, however, no documentary evidence was found to support this and it would pre-date the town sewerage system.¹⁴ Oral testimony and original stall doors point to the toilets having been coin operated for a time, but it is unclear when this practice ended. Over time, the interior of the Toilet Block was modified, with a new concrete floor and tiling added and the galvanised services added in 2000.¹⁵ These new services were required due to localised subsidence that caused damage to the original earthenware piping. Additional security through lighting, steel doors and the removal of the louvered windows and their replacement with a metal mesh also occurred over time as the Toilet block became a target for vandals.¹⁶

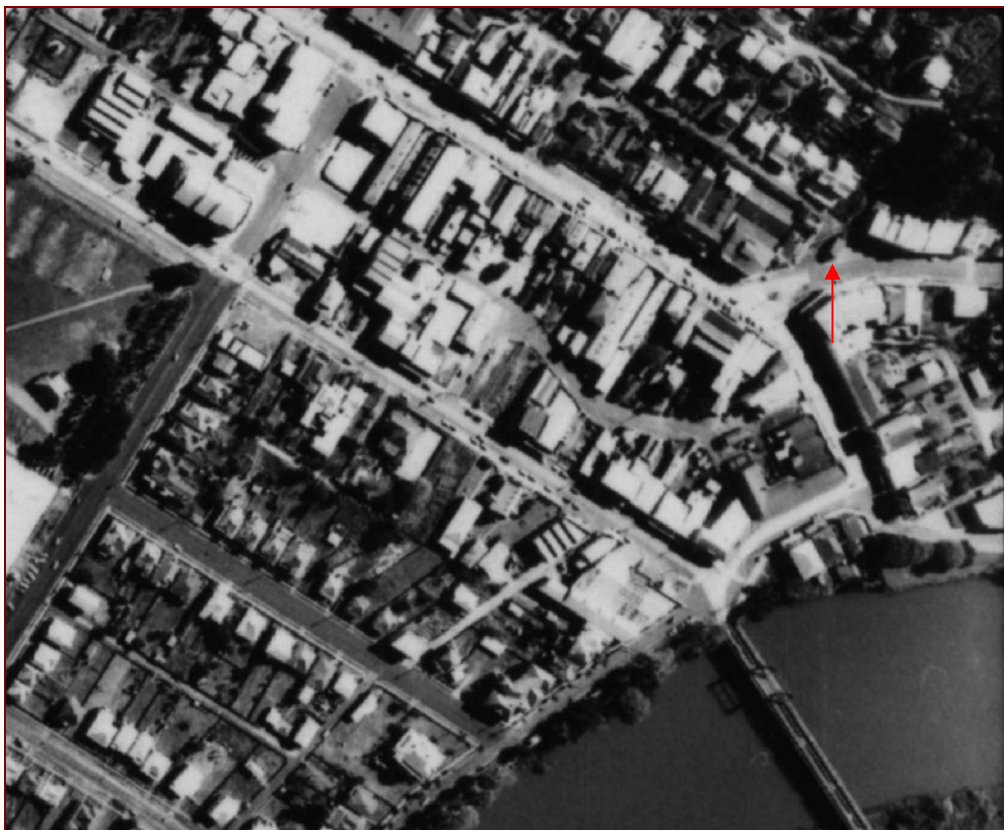


Figure 2.3: 1962 aerial image showing the Toilet Block (indicated by the red arrow).

¹³ Pers Comm Ross Johnson.

¹⁴ Johansson. R. 2005. *Tales of Our Times Vol. XII*. Tweed River Regional Museum. p.29.

¹⁵ Pers Com Bill Miller

¹⁶ Pers Com Bill Miller.

3 Physical Analysis

This chapter provides a physical description of the site and its setting. It focuses on the site and its immediate environs.

3.1 Site Description

The subject site sits within the road reserve of the intersection of Alice and Queens Streets, bordering Lot A DP 392514 to the east.

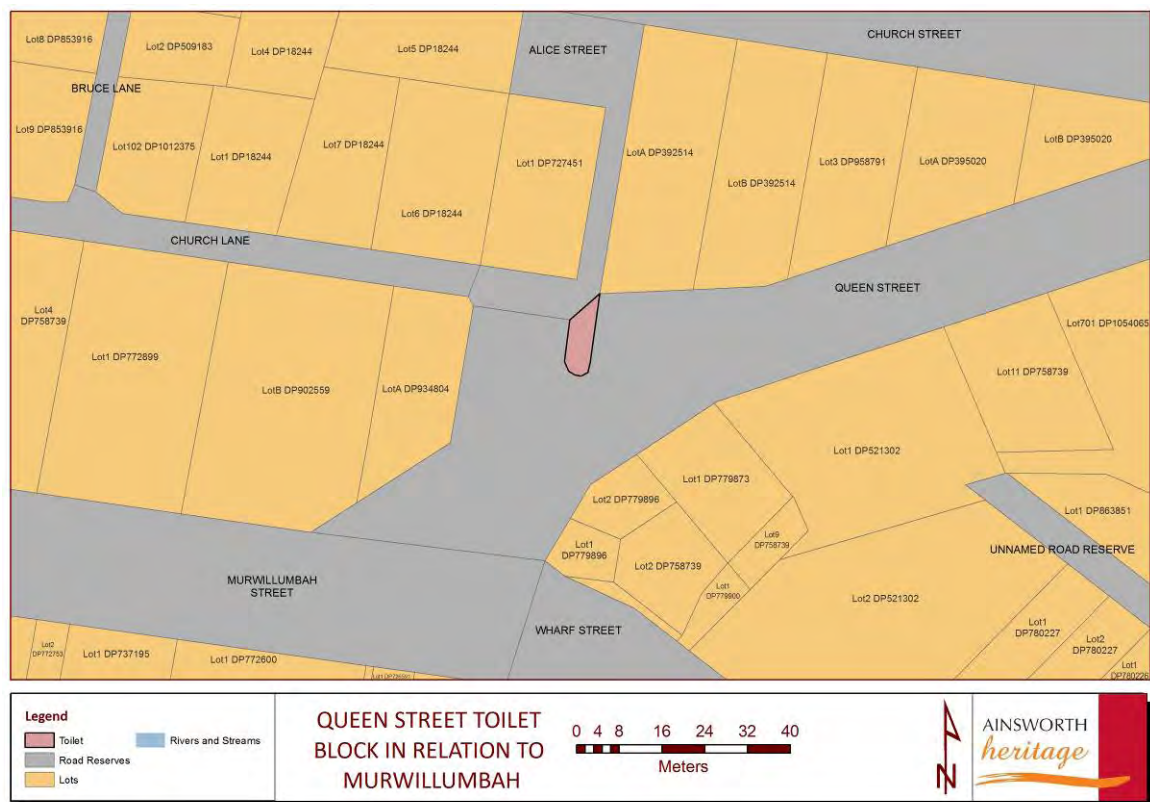


Figure 3.1: The site (in pink) and the nearby lots.



Figure 3.2: Current aerial image of Murwillumbah, with the site outlined in red.

The site is rectangle shaped (approximately 9 meters by 4.5 meters), with the long axis running north/south. A semicircular bay fronts Queen Street and dominates the façade of the toilet Block. The site contains the Toilet block building and its associated access points. Most of the Toilet Block sits on the hill or on footings, all combined to provide a level surface.

3.2 Settings and Views

The Toilet Block is set above the Alice Street/Queen Street intersection on a small spur of Hospital Hill, with a view along Queen Street to the east and into Murwillumbah Street intersection where the town clock stands. The rear of the Toilet Block is surrounded by some regrowth vegetation which shades the rear of the building. The east, south and west edges of the site all face directly onto Queen and Alice Streets, with the rear leading up the spur and into the Alice Street.

The Toilet Block sits within the Murwillumbah Conservation Area, which was described in the draft Murwillumbah Community Heritage Study as:

“The number, variety and quality of the inter-war buildings is unique for a country town...with quality examples of Georgian Revival, Mediterranean, Spanish Mission, Art Deco, Free Classical and Functionalist...An important sub-theme provides representative examples of the development of the modernist movement in architecture in Australian country towns with quality representatives of Inter-war functionalist and Art Deco and post-war Internationalist styles.”¹⁷

¹⁷ Tweed Community Based Heritage Study Inventory Form 102.

3.3 General External Description

According to the Murwillumbah Community Based Heritage Study, the Toilet Block is a “*Brick functionalist amenities building of the post-war era, with glass brick feature in curved tile front façade.*”

The Toilet Block also exhibits several other characteristics of post-war architecture. A number of aspects suggest Post War rather than Inter War construction, such as:

- The zigzag metal balustrade is a classic early 50s feature;
- The use of split faced granite retaining wall which imitates the flagstone 'crazy paving' style of 1950s architecture;
- The blue painted render, which mimics glazed, architectural terracotta. The use of glazed terra cotta manufactured as simple rectangular blocks or panels was a notable post war detail. Wunderlich manufactured these up until 1962 and had a production site at Sunshine in Queensland;
- The curved façade and protruding roof line indicate 1950s construction;
- The glass bricks are also notably clearer than Inter War examples, when green tinted and striated types were favoured; and
- The lettering is of a font favoured in the 40s – similar to those used for trailers to cinema cartoons from the 40-early 50s. It is more condensed than the elongated lettering favoured during the Inter War period.¹⁸

The Toilet Block also has some characteristics that are shared with some of the 'baby health centres', built during the period of 1930-1950. These were constructed as part of a program to assist in the eradication of diseases, such as TB, polio, measles, hopping cough, and in the case of building public toilets -water borne diseases.¹⁹

These post-war characteristics were also call the P&O style from time to time, though some architects frown upon this term. Nevertheless, the general aesthetic and architectural characteristics of the building would point to a post war construction, tying into the possibility of its construction coinciding with the erection of the clock tower.

Additional information also points to the local firm of Dunn’s of Murwillumbah having provided the Terrazzo for the flooring and stalls.²⁰

¹⁸ Pers Com Colin Brady.

¹⁹ Pers Com Sue Jackson-Stepowski.

²⁰ Pers Com Bill Miller.



Figure 3.3: View across Queen Street to the toilet Block.



Figure 3.4: View up Queen Street, looking east.



Figure 3.5: View south to the town clock.



Figure 3.6: View to the south-west.

3.4 North Elevation

The North elevation consists of the rear of the building and is shaded by a stand of regrowth vegetation, some of which has overgrown the back of the Toilet Block. The back wall is brick, with a single concrete framed rectangular window running most of the length of the elevation directly under the eaves.

A small rubble retaining wall forms part of the slope, which joins the ridge spur coming down from Hospital Hill. Photos across the roof from the north, looking south, also show some of the cracking in the roof slab, which is causing significant ingress of waters and degradation of the block.

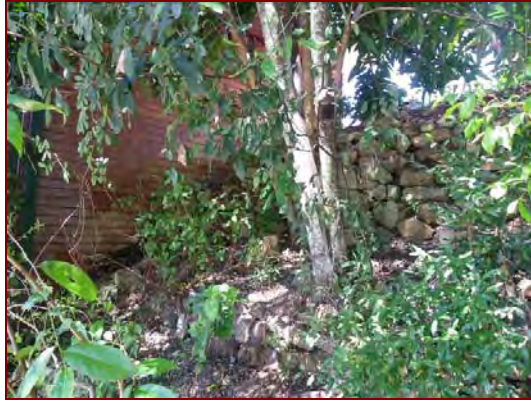


Figure 3.7: North elevation, showing the retaining wall.



Figure 3.8: North elevation showing the rear window and roof overhang.



Figure 3.9: North elevation showing cracking of roof slab.

3.5 East Elevation

The east elevation faces up Queens Street and is dominated by the stairs to the Men's section of the Toilet Block. The east elevation is the tallest, as it sits off the spur itself, having a height from ground level of approximately four meters. To the left of the elevation is the retaining wall, which has its split faced granite imitating the crazy paving style, upon which sits the small grassed lawn on the Toilet Block's south elevation. The door to the Men's toilets is located on the north of the elevation, with a small window next to this opening into the men's toilets, and a larger, rectangular window providing light into the Women's toilets. The stairs are concrete with a hand rail of a similar zigzag style to that which runs around the south elevation of the toilet block and has several old planting under their northern end.

There is some evidence of cracking in the eaves of the east elevation with water damage present around the cracking and underneath the stairs.



Figure 3.10: Stairs on the east elevation.



Figure 3.11: Cracking and water damage under the eaves of the east elevation.



Figure 3.12: The east elevation from looking south west.



Figure 3.13: The stair supports, with later steel support. Water damage can be seen on the bricks behind.

3.6 South Elevation

The south elevation is the front of the Toilet Block, where most of the notable external architectural features are present. The front of the elevation consists of a split faced granite retaining wall (which mimics the crazy paving style of 1950s architecture), that gradually reduces in height from east to west. Upon the retaining wall is a zigzag railing with a small grassed area between the railing and the front of the toilet block.

The south elevation is dominated by the semicircular bay, which has been rendered and painted to mimic decorative terracotta. This rendered façade is further detailed by a split twin row of glass bricks, some of which have been broken on the western side. The front of the semi-circle has a small blue painted bench, which is 30cm deep and faces to the south.

The door to the Women’s bathroom is located to the west of the elevation, with a small step up into the entrance and a florescent light above the entrance. The labelling for the Men’s and Women’s toilets is located on the south elevation.

The elevation shows some decay, with mortar missing from between some brick, especially closer to the door, with vegetation growing from the wall around the door and some bricks having begun to crumble from damp issues.



Figure 3.14: Southern elevation, dominated by the semi-circular bay.



Figure 3.15: Southern elevation showing the retaining wall



Figure 3.16: Broken glass bricks on the south elevation.



Figure 3.17: Damaged bricks and vegetation on the south elevation.

3.7 West Elevation

The Western elevation consists of a brick wall, with a small rectangular window on its north which lights the Men’s bathroom and a longer rectangular window that faces into the Women’s bathroom. The wall of the west elevation extends approximately half a meter higher than the roof line, creating a parapet, likely designed to prevent easy access to the Toilet Block’s roof. The carpark in Alice Street abuts the side of the Toilet Block along this elevation. There is some

evidence of water damage along this elevation and further vegetation has gained a foothold along the roof line.



Figure 3.18: Western elevation.

3.8 Women's Section

The front room of the Toilet Block is occupied by the Women's bathrooms. The Women's bathrooms are painted white and have mosaic tiled floors, however, these are not the original floors as the Toilet Block was re-floored by the laying of a new concrete floor, which was then tiled. This can be seen in the height difference of some of the toilets, with the older toilets having been concreted around and now being lower than new toilets installed on the current floor.

The Women's section is broken into three distinct areas; the entrance, semicircular bay and stall area. The entrance is 1.06 by 1.23 meters wide and opens to the right into the semicircular bay area. The semi-circular bay area is 1.57 meters wide and 1.12 meters deep, with what appears to be the original sink underneath the glass bricks. There appears to have once been a mirror above the sink, but it has since been removed. If the Toilet Block been built with elements of a Baby Health Centre, there may once have been a changing table or bench in this area.

The stall area is 2.72 by 4.33 meters and contains five stalls, the entrance area taking the place of a sixth stall. Each stall is 1.7 by 1.86 meters, each with a modern toilet, the older concrete cisterns being removed following an accident when one fell and pinned a woman to the floor.²¹ Some of the original terrazzo stalls remain, but these have been painted over, as have the remaining original doors, distinguished by the marks of former latches.

The entire Women's section is lit by the two rows of glass bricks and facing rectangular windows on each long wall of the stall area. These long windows originally contained louvered windows; however the glass has been removed and replaced with steel mesh. The original services have been removed and replaced with modern services, leaving little of the original interior fabric intact.

²¹ Pers Com Bill Miller.



Figure 3.19: Interior of the semi-circular bay.

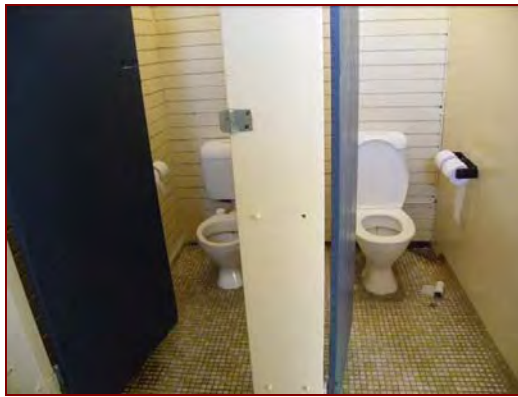


Figure 3.20: Two stalls, showing the older, lower toilet on the left of the photo.



Figure 3.21: Original stall door with circular latch and later bolt.

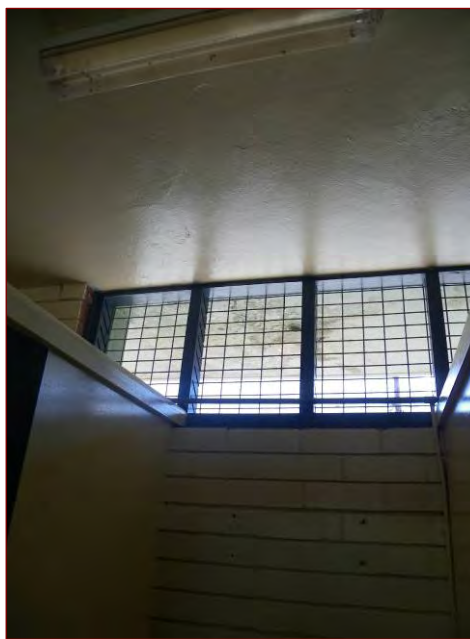


Figure 3.22: Windows showing where louver panes would have originally sat.

3.9 Men's Section

The men's section of the Toilet block which is accessed by the stairs on the eastern elevation has dimensions of 4.32 by 2.93 meters. The south wall has a double urinal, half a meter in depth, which still possesses the original spouts, but new cisterns. There are three stalls, the two northern stalls with dimensions of 1.6 by 0.98 meters and the western stall with dimensions of 1.98 by 0.80 meters. There is a single basin of the same type as the basin on the women's section and a small mirror. The interior décor is the same as in the Women's section, with the notable difference being the remnant of the coin slot on one of the stall doors, from when the toilets were coin operated.



Figure 2.42: Men's urinal, note the original water spouts



Figure 2.43: Coin slot in original door.



Figure 2.44: some of the original terrazzo visible behind the basin in the men's toilets.



Figure 2.45: Men's toilets basin and tiling.

3.10 Heritage Items in the Vicinity

There are several nearby heritage items that are all part of the Murwillumbah Conservation Area, which itself was identified as being the central facet of the heritage of the original areas of the town. The nearby heritage items include:

- On Queen Street:
 - The Salvation Army Citadel; and
 - The Broadway Building;
- On Wharf Street:
 - Tweed Arcade;
 - Main Street Clock; and
 - GBF House.



Figure 2.46: BGF House viewed from the Toilet Block.



Figure 2.47: Tweed Arcade viewed from the Toilet Block.



Figure 2.48: Town Clock viewed from the Toilet Block.



Figure 2.49: Broadway Building viewed from the Toilet Block, with the Salvation Army citadel just visible in the background.

3.11 Comparative Toilet Blocks

There are no other known examples of Toilet Blocks that are similar to that of the Queen Street Toilet Block on the NSW State Heritage Register or Inventory. Although there are several listed toilet blocks, none of these share the design characteristics of the Queen Street Toilet Block. A request was made for information on the NSW Heritage Advisors Network and several items were noted, with general consensus being that the Toilet Block was a good example of its type.

Toilet blocks, like those at Canterbury in Sydney, have been identified for inclusion on local heritage registers, in recognition of their contribution to the overall aesthetic of an area, street or park. Additionally, Mullumbimby, within the Byron Shire, has listed one of its toilet blocks however the design is not similar to the Queen Street Toilet Block.

Other buildings associated with toilets on the NSW Heritage Register do share some characteristics with the Toilet Block, but these buildings are not Toilet Blocks themselves, or have other additional uses, such as the Punchbowl Bus Station and the Palm Beach Pavilion.



Figure 2.46: Toilet in Canterbury Council area at Punchbowl (Photo courtesy of Chris Betteridge).



Figure 2.47: Punchbowl Bus Station, showing some similar design elements to the Toilet Block. The station is now a store room for the local park (Photo courtesy of Chris Betteridge).



Figure 2.48: Palm Beach pavilion (Google Earth).



Figure 2.49: Baby Health Care Centre in Punchbowl (NSW Heritage Register).

4 Significance Assessment

This chapter assesses the significance of the Queen Street Toilet Block. An assessment of significance is carried out to determine and establish the level of importance or value that a place, site or item may have to the community. Assessments of significance are based on an understanding of a place's history together with a physical analysis and an appreciation of the comparative level of rarity or representativeness that a site possesses.

Cultural heritage significance is assessed using the NSW *Heritage Act 1977* criteria and best practice guidelines such as the *ICOMOS Burra Charter*. The criteria relate to the site's historic, aesthetic, architectural, technical or social significance and its degree of representativeness and rarity.

The assessment below is preliminary and may change based on information received from the local community.

4.1 Assessment of Significance for the Queen Street Toilet Block

4.1.1 Criterion A: Historic Significance

An item is important in the course, or pattern, of NSW's cultural or natural history (or the cultural or natural history of the local area).

As part of the integrated sewerage system, which helped drive the development of the town, the Toilet Block has some local significance as part of that infrastructure, but individually the block is not significant historically.

Overall level of Historic Significance: Limited LOCAL

4.1.2 Criterion B: Associative Significance

An item has a strong or special association with the life or works of a person, or a group of persons, of importance in NSW's cultural or natural history (or the cultural or natural history of the local area)

The Toilet Block is associated with the firm of Hanna & Edmed, a company which was founded by George Hannah. The company also built old RSL club (where medical centre is across the road), and is believed to have built 1951/52 Red Cross hall, 1952 Parish Hall and Sunrise Motors, next to Murwillumbah Cinemas. Additionally, the toilet Block is associated with Doug Board, son of the famous F. J. Board, both prominent local architects who did much to influence the aesthetics of the towns of the Northern Rivers.

Overall level of Associative Significance: LOCAL

4.1.3 Criterion C: Aesthetic Significance

An item is important in demonstrating aesthetic characteristics and/or a high degree of creative or technical achievement in NSW.

The Toilet Block displays a noted significance for its external aesthetic qualities such as the zigzag metal balustrade, split faced granite retaining wall which imitates the flagstone 'crazy paving' style, the blue painted render, which mimics glazed architectural terracotta, the curved façade and protruding roofline, glass bricks and the lettering font used.

These characteristics are all indicative of post-war characteristics that are similar to the P&O style, with additional elements from the post-war functionalist style, which all combine to create a small but architecturally balanced and notable contribution to the streetscape. This design was repeated in other works by Doug board within Murwillumbah, such as the Main Street Surgery.

Additionally, as part of the Murwillumbah Conservation Area, the Queen Street Toilet Block is a contributory item that adds additional significance to the overall streetscape through its aesthetic qualities and the time it has been present as part of the streetscape, which is at least fifty years.

Overall level of Aesthetic Significance: LOCAL

4.1.4 Criterion D: Social Significance

An item has strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group in NSW (or the local area) for social, cultural or spiritual reasons.

Does not meet this criterion, as there are no known groups within the local community who identify strongly with the Toilet Block.

Overall level of Social Significance: Does not meet this criterion

4.1.5 Criterion E: Scientific/Technical Significance

An item has potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of NSW's cultural or natural history (or the cultural or natural history of the local area).

Does not meet this criterion, as the Toilet Block has no archaeological or unique architectural element that could inform future research into such disciplines.

Overall level of Technical/Scientific Significance: Does not meet this criterion

4.1.6 Criterion F: Rarity

An item possesses uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of NSW's cultural or natural history (or the cultural or natural history of the local area).

The Toilet Block, due to the lack of similar blocks on the NSW Heritage Register, or within the local area can be considered as rare for its type, as the search of the register returned some buildings with similar elements, but none of which exhibited the same overall form as a toilet block. As such, the Toilet Block on Queen Street can be considered rare locally and most likely regionally, however, further research would be required to determine if it was rare at a state level.

Overall level of Rarity: REGIONAL

4.1.7 Criterion G: Representativeness

An item is important in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of NSW's cultural or natural places or environments (or the local area's cultural or natural places or environments).

The Toilet Block is a good representative example of post-war architectural styles applied to public infrastructure, through its use of functionalist and P&O style elements, which allow the Toilet Block to become part of the streetscape of Murwillumbah, without impacting negatively upon it. As it is the only known example in the region it also has significance regionally as a representative example of its type, however, further research would be required to determine if it was representative at a state level.

Overall level of Representativeness: REGIONAL

4.1.8 Summary Statement of Significance for the Toilet Block

The Queen Street Toilet Block is significant locally for its individual design elements, each of which can be found within other structures in the region. The Toilet Block displays a noted significance for its external aesthetic qualities such as the zigzag metal balustrade, split faced granite retaining wall which imitates the flagstone 'crazy paving' style, the blue painted render which mimics glazed, architectural terracotta, the curved façade and protruding flat roofline, glass bricks and the lettering font used.

These characteristics are all indicative of post-war characteristics that are similar to the P&O style, with additional elements from the post-war functionalist style, which all combine to create a small, but architecturally balanced and notable contribution to the streetscape.

Due to their use together in a public infrastructure utility, they have at least regional significance due to the rare nature of their use in such a building and their representative nature in the use of such styles in public infrastructure.

The toilet Block is also associated with the local firm of Hannah and Edmed, and the local architect Doug Board, son of the prominent Lismore architect F J Board.

Additionally, as part of the Murwillumbah Conservation Area, the Queen Street Toilet Block is a contributory item that adds additional significance to the overall streetscape through its aesthetic qualities and the time it has been present as part of the streetscape, which is at least fifty years.

5 Legislative Obligations

This chapter summarises the statutory obligations of this report for Tweed Shire Council

5.1 Tweed Shire Council Local Environmental Plan

Part 8 of the Local Environmental Plan (LEP) requires that the following types of development to places listed on the LEP Heritage Schedule may be carried out only with development consent (i.e. by lodging a development application):

The following development may be carried out only with development consent:

(a) demolishing, defacing, damaging or moving a heritage item or a building, work, relic, tree or place within a heritage conservation area, or

(b) altering a heritage item or a building, work or relic within a heritage conservation area by making structural changes to its exterior, or Altering a heritage item or a building, work, relic, tree or place within a heritage conservation area by making structural or non-structural changes to its exterior, such as to its detail, fabric, finish or appearance.

(c) altering a heritage item or a building, work or relic within a heritage conservation area by making non-structural changes to the detail, fabric, finish or appearance of its exterior, except changes resulting from any maintenance necessary for its ongoing protective care which does not adversely affect its heritage significance

Part 5.10 of the draft 2010 LEP further states that such development applications require heritage impact statements where development on land:

(a) on which a heritage item is situated, or

(b) within a heritage conservation area, or

(c) within the vicinity of land referred to in paragraph (a) or (b), require a heritage impact statement to be prepared that assesses the extent to which the carrying out of the proposed development would affect the heritage significance of the heritage item or heritage conservation area concerned.

Although the Toilet block is not yet on the Schedule for the Tweed Shire LEP, as it has been determined that the Toilet block is of significance Tweed Council will need to undertake a Statement of Heritage Impact (SOHI) for any future use options undertaken for the Toilet Block which will impact its own significance, or that of the Murwillumbah Conservation Area.

5.2 NSW Heritage Act, 1977

Should future research determine that the Toilet Block's rarity and representativeness are of State Significance, it would need to be managed in accordance with the provisions of the *NSW Heritage Act, 1977* (the Heritage Act), even if not gazetted, as its significance would warrant the more detailed management. These provisions should be considered by Tweed Shire Council

prior to any re-use option being decided upon, as the current assessment was not extensive enough to allow for an accurate determination of the Toilet Block's higher significance.

6 Re-Use Options and Potential Impact

This chapter determines some potential re-use options and the effect each would have upon the significance of the Toilet Block and the Murwillumbah Conservation Area.

6.1 Potential Re-Use Options

Ainsworth Heritage has identified several re-use options, but it must be noted that these are indicative uses. The local community should also be consulted regarding the Toilet Block as it has been an element of the streetscape for many years and has been determined to be of at least regional significance.

6.1.1 Option 1 – Continued Use as a Toilet Block

The option for re-use as a Toilet Block remains, as maintaining a building's intended use is always the preferred heritage option. However, since the Toilet Block's commissioning the legislation that governs public infrastructure and disabled access has changed greatly. Therefore, in order to bring the building up to current standards, Council would have to spend large amount of money and make significant alteration to the fabric of the Toilet Block. Additionally, due to the proximity of the adjoining roads, the Toilet Block would likely still be non-compliant as the steepness and proximity of the roads make it very difficult to ensure the buildings compliance.

Option 1 – Advantages:	Maintains original use of the Building
Option 1 – Disadvantages:	Cost factors and public safety and DDA
Legislative Requirements:	Statement of Heritage Impact (under advice from Tweed Shire Council Planning department)

6.1.2 Option 2 – Re-Use a Council Store Room

The option for the use of the building as a storeroom, much like the Bellmore Bus Station, exist however, a suitable plan for the re-use would be required which minimised impact upon the exterior fabric and confined major alterations to the Toilet Block's fabric to the interior, where much of the original fabric has been removed. Cost would again be a factor, but may be mitigated due to the lack of public access to the building. This option maintains the use of the building, always important, but accepts that the original use in no longer appropriate. A potential new entrance could be made on the north elevation to allow for safer access for Council staff. Provided any new entrance was confined to the north elevation his would maintain the existing front facade, without undue impact.

Option 2 – Advantages:	Maintains use of the Building for the benefit of the community
Option 2 – Disadvantages:	Cost factors in remodelling, original use lost
Legislative Requirements:	Statement of Heritage Impact

6.1.3 Option 3 – Re-Use as a Community Asset

The Toilet Block could be remodelled to provide a new community use, like that which was undertaken for one of the Taylor Square toilet facilities in Sydney which are now used as a public art gallery.²² The community would need to be canvassed with regards to the new use, with a potential new entrance made on the north elevation to allow for safer public access. This would maintain the existing facade, without undue impact as well as allowing ongoing community use of the facility.

- Option 3 – Advantages:** Maintains use of the Building by the general community
- Option 3 – Disadvantages:** Cost factors in renovation and potential public safety if renovations and remodelling not undertaken.
- Legislative Requirements:** Statement of Heritage Impact, DDA

6.1.4 Option 4 – Decommissioning and Retention

The option of decommissioning the building and retaining it as part of the streetscape exists, however, this is a poor choice as far as impact on the building over time is concerned. Buildings that are not used quickly deteriorate and this option would likely condemn the Toilet Block in the medium to long term. Although the short term benefits of maintaining the streetscape would be achieved, the materials in the building would likely deteriorate so that future reuse of selected materials would not be possible.

- Option 4 – Advantages:** Maintains building as part of the streetscape, short term financial benefits to council through reduced maintenance charges
- Option 4 – Disadvantages:** The building is unused and will eventually decay to a point where it and its fabric are lost
- Legislative Requirements:** Statement of Heritage Impact

6.1.5 Option 5 – Decommissioning, Removal and Reuse

The structural integrity of the building must be assessed by a qualified Building Inspector before this option can be considered. The removal of a heritage building, especially within a Conservation Area, is a last resort after all other options have been exhausted as it has high negative impacts on the value of the place. If this option were ever considered, retention of the retaining wall, fence rail and grassed area could be undertaken, creating a small green space in the conservation areas. Additionally, elements of the Toilet Block, such as the south elevation bench seat, could be reused within such a space to maintain a link to the original building. A covered area that follows the lines and scale of the original building could also be considered, further adding to any green spaces utility and connection to the sites earlier use.

Additionally, materials such as the glass bricks and rendered façade, along with the general architectural style, could be reused in any replacement Toilet Block that may be erected within the Conservation area, maintaining a link to the original building, whilst providing more modern services.

- Option 5 – Advantages:** If designed sympathetically, could maintain some connection to the earlier building and maintains public access to the site

²² Daily Telegraph, 18-12-2008.

Option 5 – Disadvantages: Public safety may still be an issue, loss of building from original location, highest heritage impact of all the options

Legislative Requirements: Statement of Heritage Impact

6.1.6 Option 6 – Decommissioning and Demolition

This is the least preferred option, as it simply has the building removed from the site with no re-use of material, style or use for the community and either leaves the space empty or allows its use in an unsympathetic way.

Option 1 – Advantages: None

Option 1 – Disadvantages: Complete loss of site for public use and impact upon the Conservation Area’s significance, highest heritage impact of all the options

Legislative Requirements: Statement of Heritage Impact

6.2 Impact of the Potential Re-Use Options

The following table summarises the impact upon the various significant aspects of the Toilet Block by the six options presented above.

Option	Significance Impacted On				
	Aesthetic	Rarity	Representative	Streetscape	Overall Impact
1	None	None	None	None	None
2	Minor	Minor	Minor	None	Minor
3	Minor	Minor	Minor	None	Minor
4	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
5	Major	Major	Major	Moderate	Major
6	Major	Major	Major	Major	Major

7 Recommendations

This chapter provide management recommendations for the ongoing use, or re-use of the Queen Street Toilet Block.

7.1 Structural Assessment

Due to the cracking evident within the roof slab and the deterioration of some of the brickwork, both externally and internally, Council's building inspector should undertake a full inspection of the Toilet Block to determine its structural condition and any works required for future stabilisation. This step will be critical in determining the future use of the Toilet Block.

7.2 Request for Information from the Community

As the documentary record for the Toilet Block is so fragmentary, an appeal for information to the community may be able to shed additional light on the Toilet Block's age and who designed and built the structure. Council should make such a request in its next TweedLink publication and any information gathered included as part of the final report.

7.3 Community Consultation

As the Toilet Block has been assessed as significant and the potential exists for future community use of the building or site, the wider Murwillumbah community should be given the opportunity to provide input into any future re-use option selection and development.

7.4 Council Options

Council should, as part of the ongoing process, determine what options would be most appropriate for Council, should the community have no interest in the process. Council should seek to determine an appropriate re-use and not simply opt for demolition, as this will still require a SOHI and would run counter to the Tweed LEP. In particular, the option should balance the heritage significance of the site, its contribution to the streetscape and financial aspects together, and seek to minimise impact on the heritage significance wherever possible.

7.5 Archival Recording

Should the Toilet Block be found to be structurally unsound and beyond recovery, or major changes are required, an archival recording should be undertaken to record the notable elements of the building prior to any demolition work, with the resulting information appended to this report and stored in the local historic archives.

7.6 Records for the Archives

This report and any subsequent information on the Toilet Block should be passed onto the Murwillumbah Museum for future historical reference.

7.7 Reuse of Materials

Should it be determined that the Toilet Block cannot be retained, the significant elements of the design from the facades should be rescued for use in any subsequent toilet block designed for the Murwillumbah Conservation Area or as part of any retention of the current site for another public use. These materials will provide a link to the original building and have less impact upon the Murwillumbah Conservation Area's significance than new materials.

7.8 Future Design

Should the toilet block be removed, the design elements of any new structure on the current site, or of a new toilet block in the Murwillumbah Conservation Area should seek to follow the architectural style of the current Toilet Block. This does not mean that any design must slavishly mimic the current building; however, any new design should incorporate these elements in such a way as to show their influence. These design elements will provide a link to the original building and have less impact upon the Murwillumbah Conservation Area's significance than new materials.

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Ainsworth Heritage – Queen Street Toilet Block: Heritage Assessment and Options Report

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