



Historic Fabric Future Use Advice

For

The Queen Street Amenities Block, Murwillumbah, NSW

on behalf of

Tweed Shire Council

May 2013

Introduction

Ainsworth Heritage was commissioned to undertake a heritage fabric inspection of the Queen Street Amenities Block, Queen Street, Murwillumbah, NSW (the site), in order to provide guidance on any future design for refurbishment and reuse of the site, which would include changing its use from a toilet block to some other, as yet, unspecified use.

This site summary and historic fabric inspection (the assessment) is designed to ensure that any design and reuse of the site, is sympathetic to the heritage character of the site and the surrounding Murwillumbah Main Street Conservation Area.

The Site

The site is located within the road reserve of the intersection of Alice and Queens Streets, bordering Lot A DP 392514 to the east and faces south, towards the main section of the Murwillumbah Main Street Conservation Area and the town clock. The site is a single story amenities block, set within the road reserve of Queen Street on an elevated platform.

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.



Figure 1: Site location.



Figure 2: Main elevation of the site.

Significant Fabric

The significant fabric of the site is largely represented in the exterior of the site, due to successive internal modifications removing or covering much of the original fit out.

Exterior Fabric

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, all of which contribute to its own and the conservation area’s heritage significance, 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.

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.

These post - war characteristics were also called 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.



Figure 3: Main façade.



Figure 4: Main façade showing men's toilet entrance on side of the block.



Figure 5: Western elevation.



Figure 6: Eastern elevation.



Figure 7: Northern elevation.

Interior Fabric

The front room of the Toilet Block is occupied by the Women's bathrooms. 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. This bay area is the notable interior feature of the site.

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 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.

The original services have been removed from both areas and replaced with modern services, leaving little of the original interior fabric intact.



Figure 8: Interior of bay.



Figure 9: Original doors with marks of original fittings.

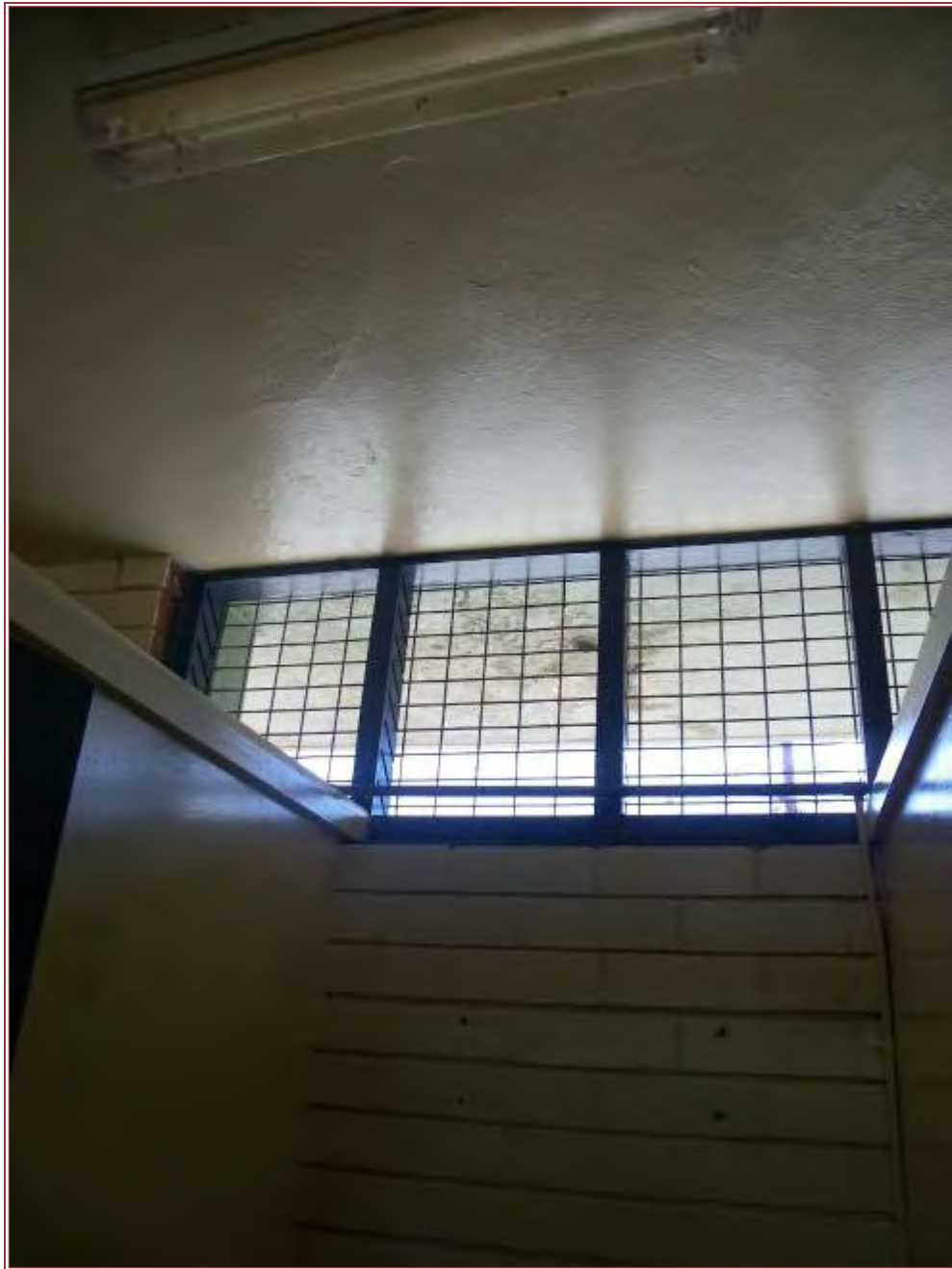


Figure 10: Louvered windows with glass removed and wire mesh installed.



Figure 11: Terrazzo flooring showing successive new layers laid over original.

Summary Statement of Significance

The 2011 Heritage Assessment summarised the site's heritage significance as follows:

“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 EdMed Constructions, the current incarnation of the company which built the Toilet Block and the local architect Doug Boar, 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.”

Site Management

Due to the recognised significance of the site and its contributory part in the Murwillumbah streetscape, the following management guide will need to be implemented in and redesign and reuse of the site.

Any future works on the site that would normally require a development application for the refurbishment/reuse program, would require a Statement of Heritage Impact. However, this would be a straight forward impact assessment, as the existing Heritage Assessment can already be used as the basis for the SOHI and this fabric advice as the basis for the management section, saving on both time and funds.

Tweed Shire Council's *Heritage Guide for Tweed Shire Staff*, available through the Planning Reforms Department would guide the process for any SOHI.

External Considerations

Element	Contributory Significance	Management Requirements
The zigzag metal balustrade	Primary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Should be retained; • If replacement required, new balustrade must match the pattern and finish of the original
Split faced granite retaining wall	Primary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Should be retained; • If replacement required, new facing must match the pattern and finish of the original
Blue painted render	Primary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Should be retained; • If replacement required, new material and finish must match the pattern and finish of the original
Glazed terra cotta tiles	Primary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Should be retained; • If replacement required, new material and finish must match the pattern and finish of the original
The curved façade and protruding roof line	Primary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Should not be altered in any way.
Glass bricks	Primary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Should be retained; • If replacement required, new materials must match the original bricks
The original lettering	Secondary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be removed, but a copy should be taken for the archives and included with the original heritage assessment
Grassed Terrace	Primary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Should be maintained but can be enhanced through benches and garden elements; • Any benches should be of a style that reflects the other primary elements of the street façade.
General Brick Work	Secondary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be maintained as is or painted, dependent of future requirements;

Element	Contributory Significance	Management Requirements
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Any future painting must not seek to overpower or clash with the main façade or cause undue impact on nearby elements of the main street conservation area.
Doors	Secondary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> These can be replaced with new doors as required by future use; However, any door must be sympathetic to the existing fabric and styles.
Windows	Secondary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> These can be replaced with new windows as required by future use; However, any window fitting must be sympathetic to the existing fabric and styles.
Concrete Roof Top	Secondary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The rim of this must be retained as it is a distinct element of the façade; The central part of the roof can be opened up to allow more natural light into the interior of the site through the use of light wells.
Surrounding Gardens	Secondary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> These can be improved, but should not attempt to dominate the existing site.

Internal Considerations

Element	Contributory Significance	Management Requirements
Front Bay	Primary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Should be retained and be a obvious feature in any new fit out, not being concealed by walls or permanent furniture;
Toilet Fit Outs	Secondary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Though central to the buildings original use, these can be removed prior to any future fit out. Recordings of these elements were made as part of the original survey, so no further recording would be necessary.
Interior lighting	NA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This can be updated and improved as necessary.
Interior Walls	Secondary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In order to make the building more useable, the interior wall separating the men's and women's rooms can be opened up.

Element	Contributory Significance	Management Requirements
		Recording of the existing layout has already been undertaken as part of the heritage assessment.
Flooring	Secondary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This can be updated and improved as necessary.
Natural Lighting	NA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The central part of the roof can be opened up to allow more natural light into the interior of the site through the use of light wells.
Security and Safety	NA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This can be updated and improved as necessary.