

Wollongong Central  
Section 75w- Architectural Report  
Rice Daubney



# Architectural Design Report to support 75W

## Introduction

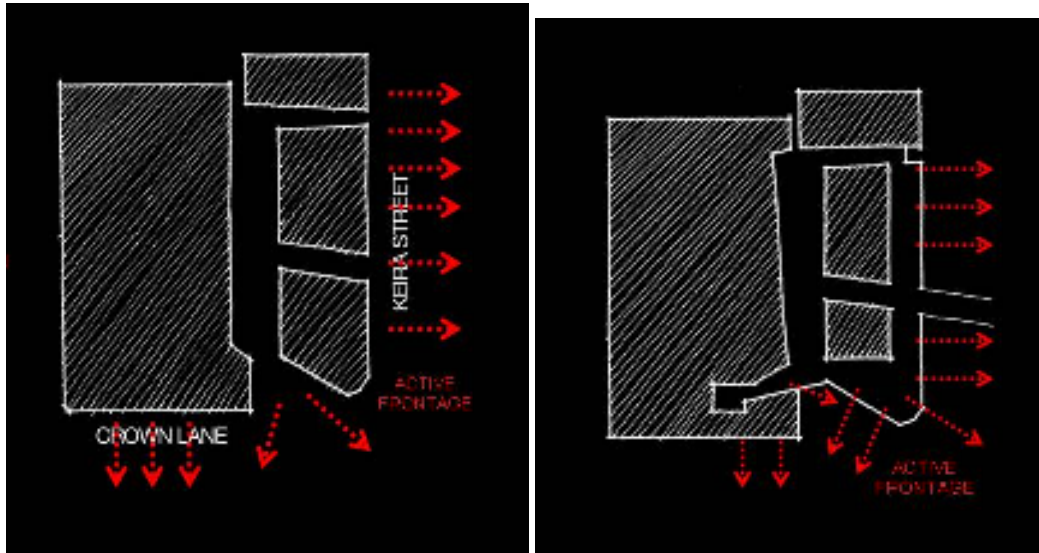
Since the approval of the Project Application for Wollongong Central in December 2007, and the two modifications that followed, the proponent has undertaken a further detailed design review alongside urban design firm Civitas. Simultaneously with this ongoing process, tenders were invited for architectural firms to undertake the architectural works and Rice Daubney were appointed in this role. Rice Daubney's analysis complimented the work that Civitas were undertaking and this has provided a strong urban design focus and a compelling architectural character which support the urban design objectives.



The amendment seeks to strengthen the built form response by 'knitting' the building more closely into the existing grain of the city and as importantly 'seeding' the opportunity for greater permeability. The development then acts as a catalyst for greater street activation, in time, in the surrounding streets and importantly in Crown St; the retail and civic spine of the city.

The West Keira site plays a pivotal role in the ability of the Wollongong CBD to transform itself into a permeable, connected network of streets and spaces. The growing mixed use precinct to the north and the ability to provide strong connections to the south to the Mc Cabe Park precinct as well as the existing Crown Central site can be facilitated through this site. This role of connection and further the, multiplicity of connection, is one of the key objectives for the design of the West Keira site. Importantly this connection, however, is more than a ground plane connection; it is a connection to the sky and to the surrounding streets engaging the surrounding edges; it is a connection to the people, to the place and to history.



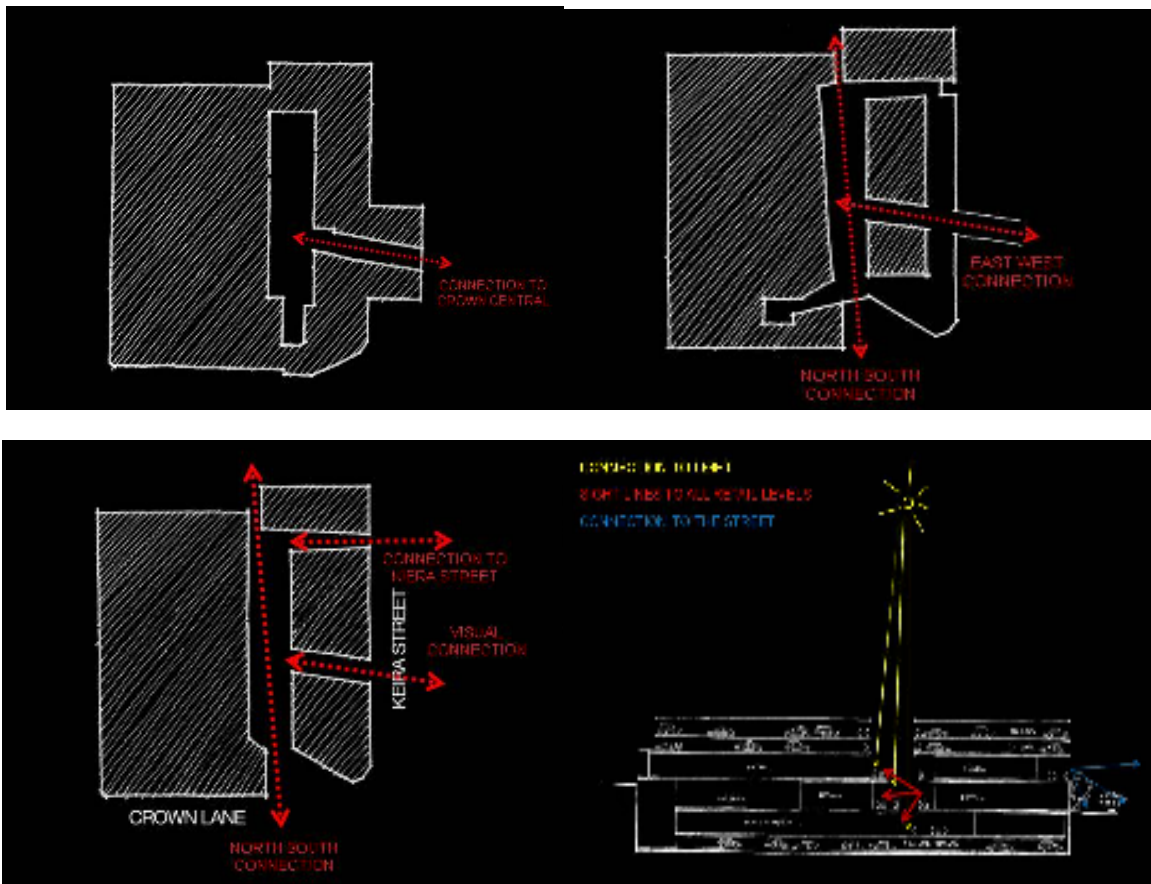


## 1.0 Active Street Frontages

This amendment builds on the existing application by continuing to increase the active street frontage by

- a. creating an entry forecourt which creates public domain with more active frontage opportunities while providing civic activity
- b. an entry forecourt which makes a more prominent response to the intersection and acknowledges the priority of this intersection as the 'gateway' to the city of Wollongong
- c. increasing opportunity for al fresco dining along Keira St including a lane way environment
- d. relocating the food court onto Level 1 (from its original location in the basement) hence providing an active frontage on this level which opens physically and visually to the streets below
- e. creating visual and physical connections to lower ground at the street level



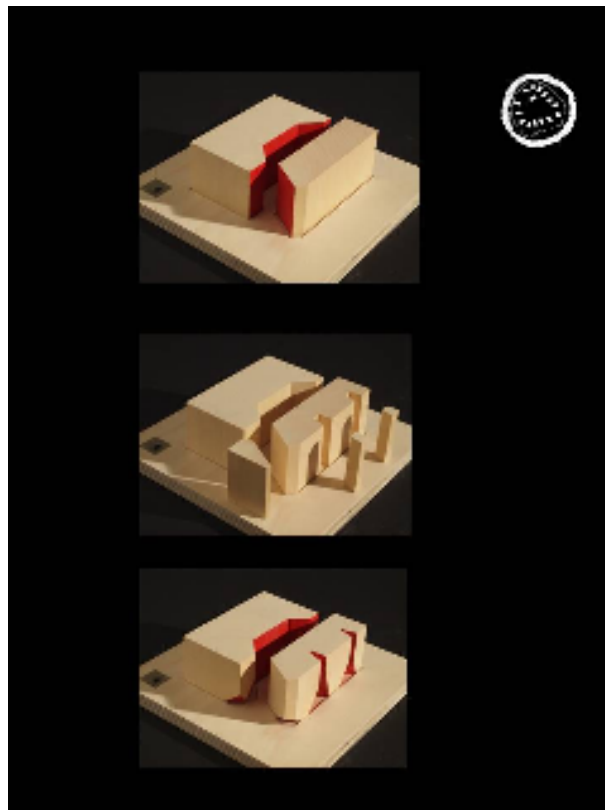


## 2.0 Connections and Permeability

Further connections enhance the overall permeability of the site

- a. The re orientation of the main circulation spine to north/south now allows for the connection through to Richardson Lane through to Keira St and Crown St. This in essence ties the northern commercial precinct and south precincts together in a permeable network of pedestrian movement
- b. This gives Richardson Lane the ability, in the future, to become an activated laneway environment
- c. Importantly this re orientation now allows for natural light to penetrate the levels of the centre establishing a connection to the outside
- d. Visual connections, from the street, are also made to both lower ground and level one
- e. The proposed retail plan also now forms a legible north south promenade over 3 levels



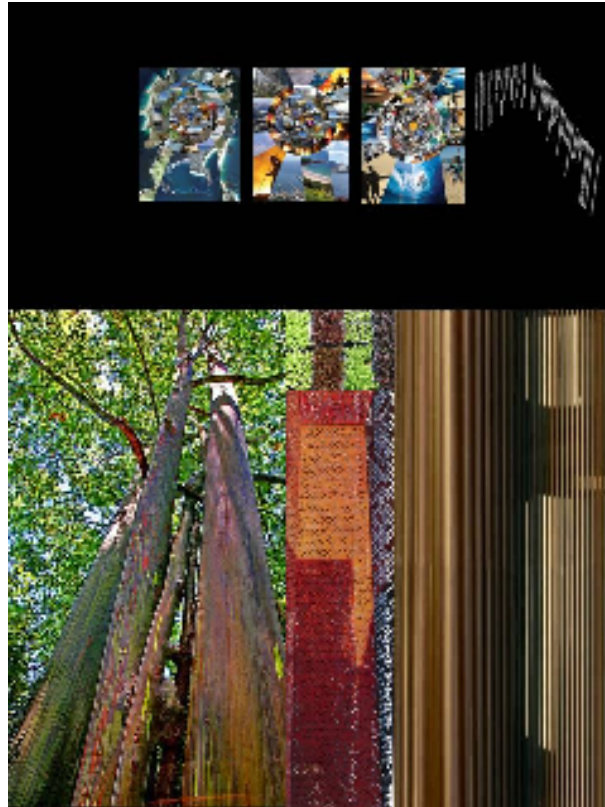


### 3.0 Built Form

The built form strategy is driven by a strong desire to have a clear and legible architectural language with a robust 'outer shell' which protects a 'soft inner core'; an appropriate analogy perhaps for the region which is often characterised by the steelworks yet is blessed by an extraordinary natural beauty.

Incisions are then made into this shell at the laneways, forecourt and void spaces and at these points the interior is revealed. This further activates the streets by providing a very strong connection between inside and outside. This in turn increases the active frontages by making the interior frontages readable at street level.

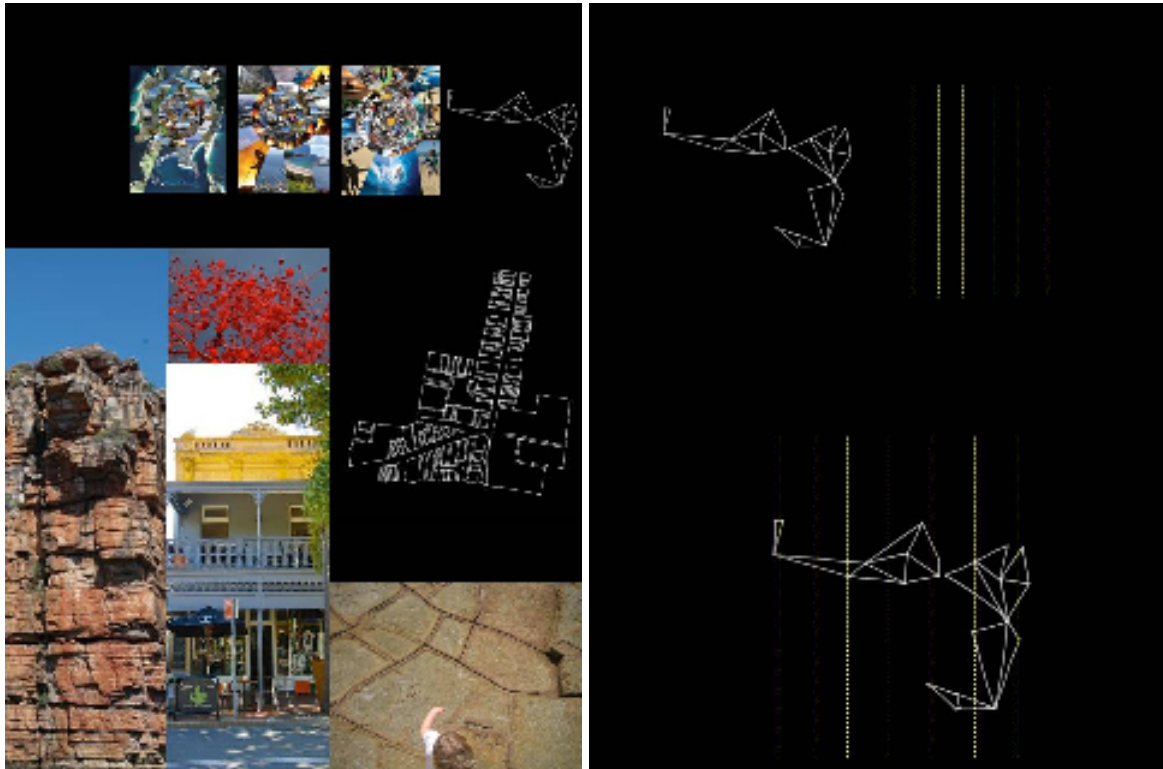




The Forecourt becomes the grand gesture which acknowledges the primacy of the intersection as the gateway to the city. It provides an important gathering space, creates public domain and immediately establishes a connection both physically and visually to the other levels of the development and simultaneously to the mall, Crown Central and Gateway centres. Importantly it also forms a link across Crown St and with Crown Lane beginning a wider dialogue of future permeability for the city.

The architectural expression speaks to the landscape of the Illawarra in the form of stands of tall gums and tallowwoods and takes the form of a series of variegated weathered steel blades as an obvious reference to the local steel industry and history of Wollongong





### Keira St and Crown Lane Facades

The development has the potential to transform the city and in so doing reconnect Crown St as a spine for retail and civic activity. The architectural expression therefore, of the street facades in particular, must be strong and iconic; speak of the place and engage with the streets. The life, the pulse of the place must be felt in the public domain.

Architecturally the building evokes the faceted and layered form of the escarpment which dominates the Illawarra coastline. We then note the softer flora form of the Illawarra Flame Tree which adds pattern to the facade. Contextually, the finer grain of the lot divisions historically ( much of which is currently in tact) is reinforced with a facade which is ordered with the same fine divisions making sense of the building in the context of the street. The long facade on Keira St is further broken with finer elements of window boxes which project onto the street where people can sit and engage with the street below and this becomes an iconic feature addressing the intersection. Facades which open up to give the feeling of sitting on a verandah on the upper level providing another level of activation at the northern end of Keira street. These components then allow the facade to take on differing qualities from season to season as the facade opens and closes and also from a daytime to night time, providing transformation and hence further activation..





The material palette of white patterned and perforated pre cast walls (or similar) is offset by softer elements of laser cut weathered steel screens and timber providing shadow and play across the facade. The perforations emulate the form of the iconic Illawarra flame tree and provide a playful and fluid patternation across the facade. These elements sit atop two storey high steel framed apertures which contain the retail frontages.





#### **4.0 Bridge Link**

The bridge link is reduced in width overall and tapers from a dimension of 7m internally to 5m internally and has been pushed further north and angled across Keira St. The overall height of the bridge has also been adjusted to taper; opening to where the bridge enters the buildings either side and narrowing where the bridge straddles Keira St. The aggregate outcome of all these adjustments is to reduce the dominance of the bridge on the skyline and in particular to give 'breathing space' to the important gateway intersection. Architecturally these amendments also make for a much more dynamic form and provide a more integrated visual link to the two buildings

#### **5.0 Vehicle Access**

The customer experience and accessibility from a vehicular point of view is equivalent to the current proposal. The amendment of changing the ramp from running along Keira St to now running along the Western boundary results in the ability to achieve active street frontages for the entirety of Keira St. This is of vital importance in ensuring the continuation of the emerging dining scene which exists along Keira St presently.





## Conclusion

The proposed alterations strengthen the built form of the proposal while significantly enhancing the connectivity of the development to the rest of the city, including the emerging precincts north and south of the site. The built form responds to the 'place' of Wollongong while respecting the fine grain nature of existing development patterns. A finely articulated and activated streetscape of changing operable elements and pattern evoke a dynamic building which provides a strong corner to, arguably, the gateway to the city. A civic scaled public forecourt marks the intersection and invites a dialogue with the surrounding streets. At the street enticing glimpses down to the lower ground connect pedestrians with the building vertically while the food court above opens and participates in the life of the street. This amendment, at its core, is about acting as a catalyst to revitalise the city by engaging activity and life in and out of itself, making new connections and strengthening existing ones with a built form which speaks uniquely to the place.

