

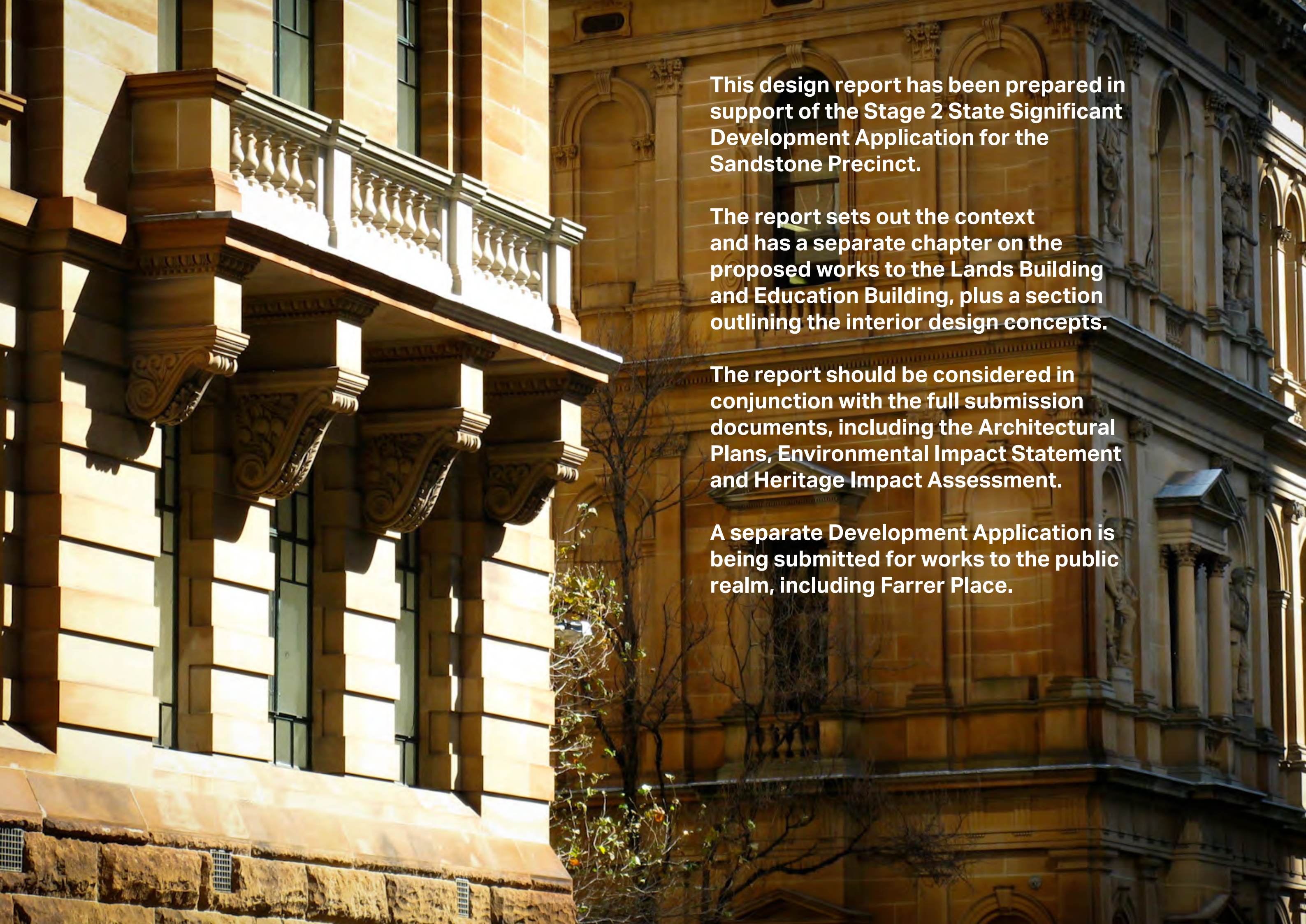
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The Sandstone Precinct Design Report

Date
October 2016

Stage/Revision Number
Stage 2 DA





This design report has been prepared in support of the Stage 2 State Significant Development Application for the Sandstone Precinct.

The report sets out the context and has a separate chapter on the proposed works to the Lands Building and Education Building, plus a section outlining the interior design concepts.

The report should be considered in conjunction with the full submission documents, including the Architectural Plans, Environmental Impact Statement and Heritage Impact Assessment.

A separate Development Application is being submitted for works to the public realm, including Farrer Place.



The Sandstone Precinct

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Context

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The site



The Lands Building

Built as part of the Bridge Street Government Precinct, the Department of Lands Building was built in two phases between 1883 and 1891. It has been in continuous use as an administrative Government office.

The building is in good condition externally but has had a series of modifications to the roof, most notably the ancillary linking roof element and the addition of various plant and lift housings. Internally, the original arrangements have survived generally intact, with much of the 19th-century joinery and plasterwork surviving.



The Education Building

This building was built in two phases: the northern section of 1915 housed the Department of Public Instruction (later renamed the Department of Education); and, the later 1930 southern section first housed the Department of Agriculture. The building has enjoyed continuous use as a government administrative office.

While externally the building's sandstone facade is in good condition, there have been significant alterations to the internal arrangements. In comparison to the neighbouring Lands Building, a relatively small number of the original spaces and detailing remain.

Context

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Stage 1 DA approval

Overview

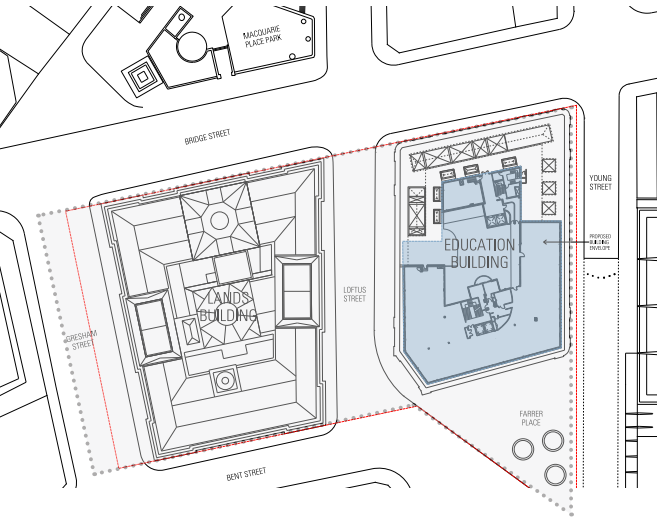
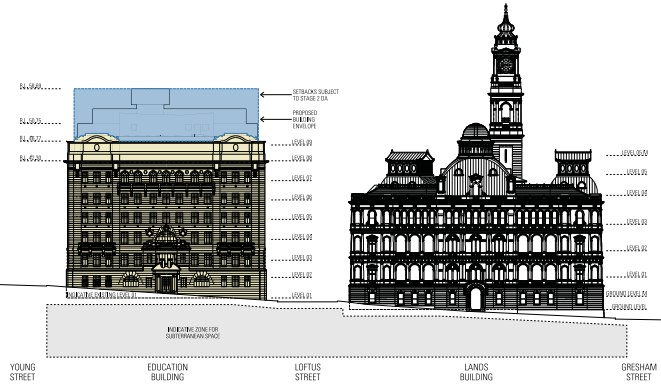
On 25 August 2015 the Department of Planning and Environment granted approval of a Stage 1 Concept proposal which related to the Lands Building, Education Building, Loftus Street, and parts of Gresham Street and Farrer Place.

In summary, the Stage 1 Concept Approval gave consent across three main areas:

1. Adaptive reuse of the Lands Building and Education Building for tourist and visitor accommodation and ancillary uses;
2. A new building envelope above the Education Building – this was described as being to the top of the tallest component of the existing building (the access and structures atop the northern lift core), and would allow approximately three or four additional storeys; and
3. An indicative subterranean building envelope below both buildings, Farrer Place, Loftus Street and Gresham Street.

A number of the Stage 1 DA conditions are addressed within this Stage 2 application, including

1. The establishment of a Design Review Panel that has met four times prior to the lodgement of the Stage 2 application.
2. Ensuring that the Education Building roof structure achieves a high-quality design; and,
 - Considers increased setbacks and articulation within the Stage 1 envelope, especially to the south;
 - Maintains visual prominence of the existing building, and legibility of its composition, architectural style, form and features;
 - Minimises potential overshadowing of 1 Bligh Street steps during 12 noon to 2pm in mid-winter;
 - Presents as a contemporary projection of the existing building and is visually subservient to the existing building;
 - Uses materials and detailing that respect and are submissive to the heritage sandstone facades; and
 - Maintains legibility of the existing lightwell as a central element with clear views of the sky.



The bid scheme

Overview

Following an Expression of Interest process, Pontiac Land Group (PLG) was successful in its bid to redevelop the Sandstone Precinct.

As an integral component of its submission, Pontiac Land Group held an internal design contest to develop design proposals for the Sandstone Precinct. The final bid was submitted in July 2015, with a presentation in August. PLG was named as the successful bidder in September 2015.

Make was invited to participate in the bid as one of the architectural competitors and was ultimately appointed as the design architect for the project. A full consultant team and survey have been working to test, consult and develop the submitted proposals.

The key themes developed within the bid scheme have remained constant, though the detail form of these has been refined and reviewed:

1. Delivering one of the finest luxury hotels in the world;
2. Opening up buildings currently closed to the public and actively engaging with the city; and
3. Setting up a respectful and active dialogue between the two buildings and their heritage.

The Education Building will be the grand hotel in the European manner, whereby it takes part in the city's life, acting as a drawing room or stage for events and meetings. This will directly address Farrer Place and house the majority of the guest rooms.

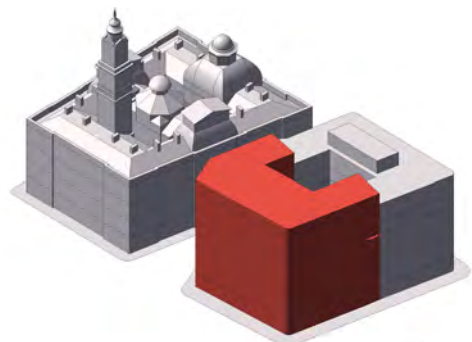
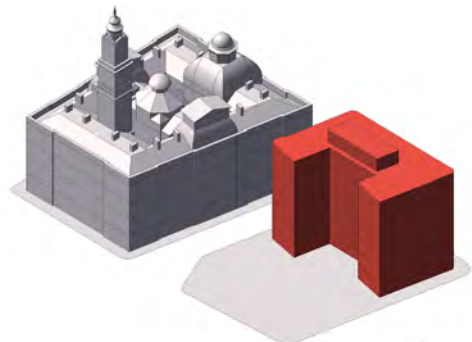
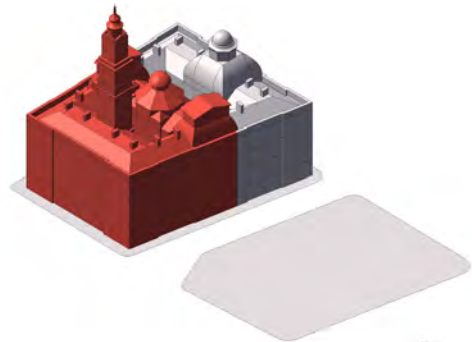
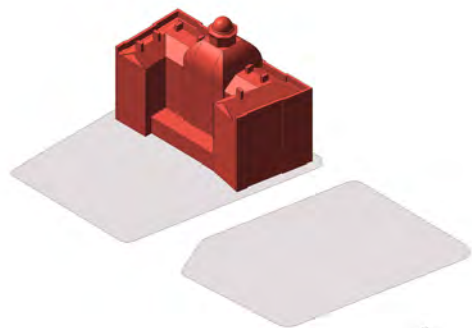
The Lands Building's form, with its clearly defined suites and sequence of spaces, will be the more discreet sibling. It will have fewer, but still grandly proportioned, rooms driven by the existing architecture. The Bridge Street level will be opened up to the public with carefully curated retail, cultural, and food and beverage offers.





The Sandstone Precinct

Historic evolution



1881

Designed by James Barnet and built by the company of John Young, the first, northern phase of the Department of Lands Building began with the Bridge Street frontage and the grand dome, which still dominates the local context.



1893

The second building phase completed the block, including the central Strong Room and clock-tower. Designs were overseen by Walter Vernon, Barnet's replacement as Government Architect.



1915

The first phase of the then Department of Public Instruction was designed under the new Government Architect George McRae and built of load-bearing sandstone in a restrained, formal external style derived from that of a Florentine palazzo.



1930

The second, southern phase completed the block and the design but was built in steel, with the sandstone used a thinner cladding material, providing shallower reveals and thinner walls. This helped increase the available floor space at a time of shortages and depression.

Skyline

When the Lands and Education Buildings were constructed, they were designed to be viewed from street and harbour. Thus, the most representative rooms of the Lands Building were found on the lower levels, while the roof was for ancillary functions, though given grand urban presence and form in the collection of domes and towers.

The tallest of these, the clock tower of the Lands Building, would have been one of the first city monuments seen by those arriving in the harbour. This visual dominance was reduced in later years by the proliferation of taller neighbouring structures.

Bridge Street

Bridge Street was conceived as a grand urban administrative and civic promenade, with imposing sandstone buildings once lining its length. The northern dome of the Lands Building exerted a visual presence on the street that was belied by its function. These structures were primarily visual architectural elements, marking entrance points and visually reinforcing the civic and administrative importance of the buildings.

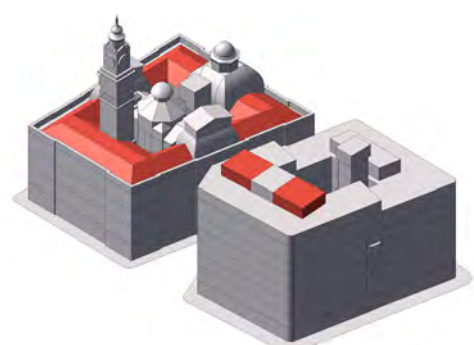
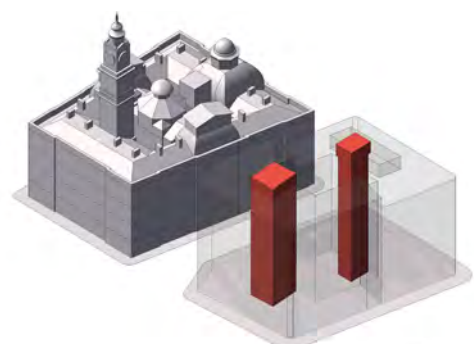
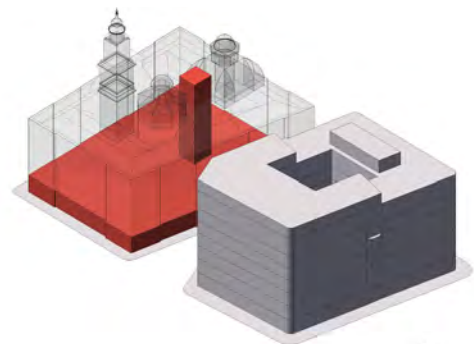
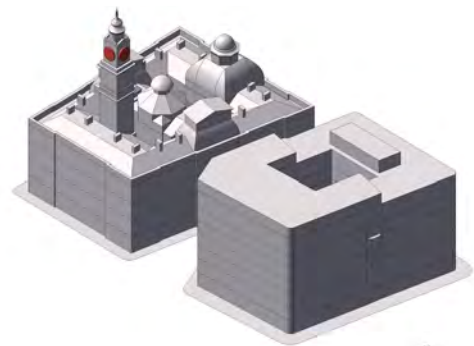
Despite the development of the surrounding area, the proportion, confidence and scale of the Lands Building is still clearly in evidence.

The fifth elevation

The arrival of the AMP Building at Circular Quay began the development of tall structures, which have clustered to form a clearly delineated eastern CBD grouping nestled around the two buildings, leaving only the northern corridor across Macquarie Place Park to the harbour open.

This has opened up a new 'fifth elevation' on the roofscape of buildings, which has often been overlooked and given over to the function requirements of plant and servicing. Both buildings present the opportunity to positively reimagine these areas, showcasing the unique, beautiful composition of the Lands Building and the architectural language of both.





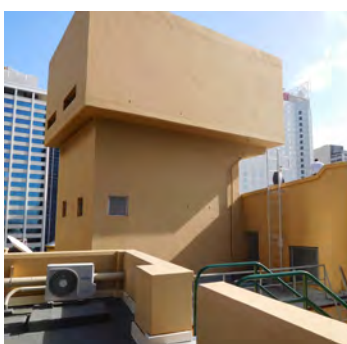
1938

The Department of Lands clock was added to the tower, each face with its own mechanism.



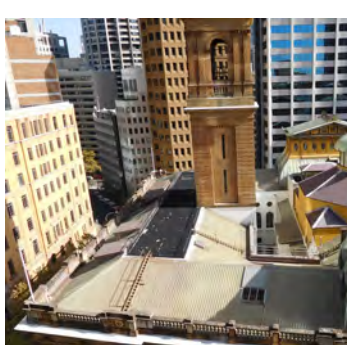
1958

Internal works were carried out in the Lands Building to respond to new fire regulations and the building's changing use, the northern stair was replaced with a utilitarian concrete lift and stair enclosure, and the Bridge Street level was infilled and closed up.



1974

The circulation to the Education Building was modified to remove all but the Loftus Street stair and the lower portion of the Bridge Street stair. The new lifts and stairs were primarily functional in form.



1970s–1980s

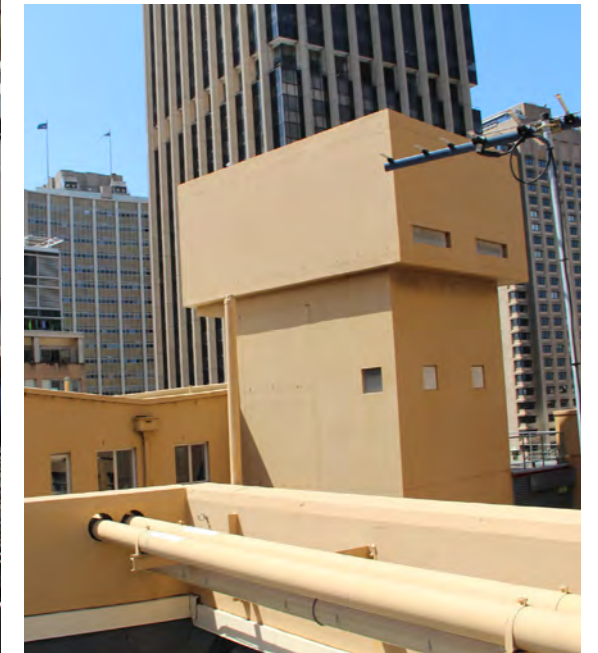
As building services were upgraded, new plants were added to both rooftops in an unsympathetic manner. During this period, the Lands Building's ancillary slate roof was replaced with a profiled metal sheet, augmented by access ladders, flues and ventilation grilles.

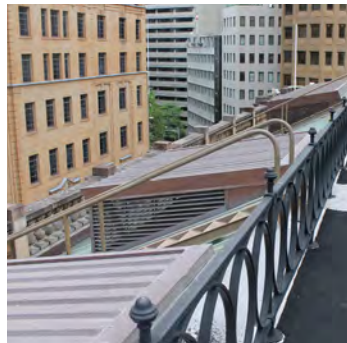
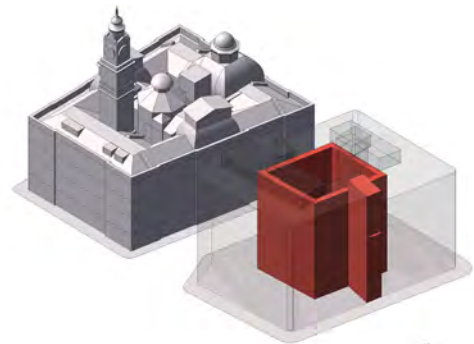
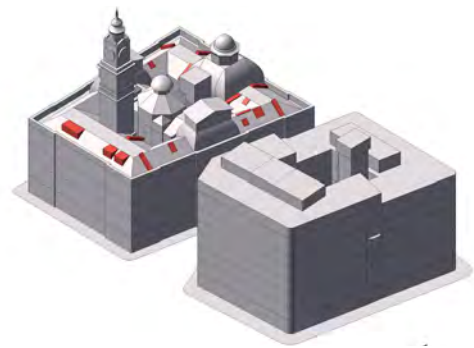


Right:
View of the existing Lands
Building roofscape

Left:
View of Education Building lift
shaft and caretaker's apartment

Below:
View of the existing roofscape
from the south





1980s

The Lands Building's roof was further modified to add mansards with air exhaust grilles as part of a wider services upgrade.



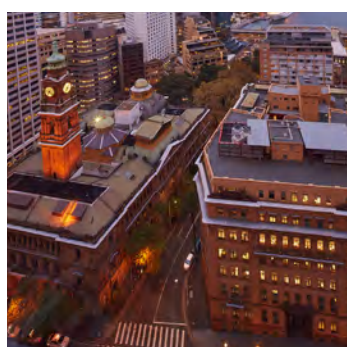
1996

The courtyard of the Education Building was reconfigured, with the insertion of new corridors and an escape stair at the heart of the plan.



2000s

In recent years, secondary glazing has been added to the Education Building. While addressing acoustics, the form and layout of these windows only have a passing relationship to the original (and retained in situ) external windows.



Today

Despite the changes made to the building fabric – in particular to the linking roof of the Lands Building and the internal arrangement of the Education Building – both are fortunate to have a substantially intact external sandstone facade. The Lands Building also has significant internal layouts retained.



View of the Department of Lands on the corner of Gresham Street and Bridge Street

Above – late 19th century
Below – early 21st century

- A comparison of the images illustrates that from street level the external fabric is largely intact.
- The proposals will seek to secure and safeguard this character.





The Sandstone Precinct

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Conservation and design principles

A series of overarching objectives, or principles, have been developed by the team. The most important of these is setting up a positive, engaged dialogue...



...with context.

- The original setting of the buildings has wholly changed.
- Where the clock tower once dominated the skyline, it is now surrounded and challenged by the dense towers of the CBD.
- The proposals seek to redress this unbalance and re-engage the buildings with the life and experience of the city.



...with history.

- We have explored the shared social and physical heritage of the two buildings, and their position within the Bridge and Macquarie Street Government Precinct, to allow the public and city to engage with the fabric.
- The proposals will provide a balance of interpretation while retaining the individual's ability to discover and explore for themselves.



...between the two buildings.

- The two buildings stand apart but are unified by their building materials and nation-building purpose, as well as a street-level view that is little changed.
- The 21st century has presented a new fifth facade or roofscape – unconsidered in the 19th century – and an opportunity to establish a positive dialogue between the buildings and the city.



...with the public.

- This is an opportunity to provide public access in a privately run building and resolve the inherent conflict of public administration buildings being closed to the public they serve.
- The access will be equitable.



The Sandstone Precinct

The Lands Building

The Lands Building

Overview

Design approach

The proposed works to the Lands Building seek to secure and safeguard its historic fabric for future generations, and open up this unique and precious building to the public for the first time.

Cutting edge in its use of technology, the original building embodies a sense of discovery and invention that we have embraced in the proposals as we facilitate a journey for the public through the history of the building and the people and the State it represents.

Process

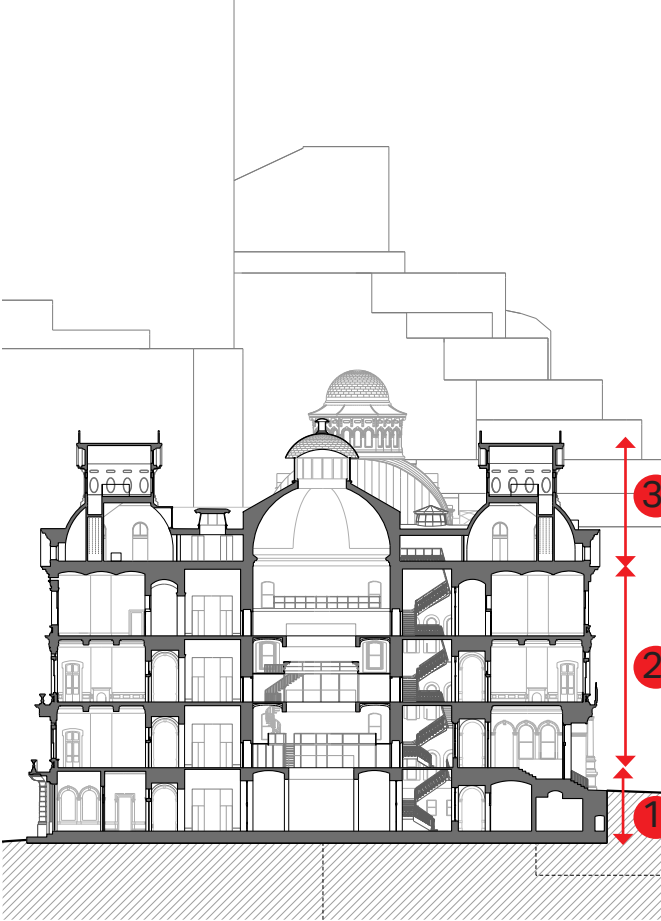
The architectural, heritage and wider consultant teams have worked to discover the story behind the building and understand the evolution that has been underway since and even during its construction.

These studies have been aided by wider public and statutory consultation that has deepened our understanding. This process has directly challenged and informed the design response.

Format of this chapter

This chapter focuses on the design proposals for the Lands Building and should be read in conjunction with supporting documents that form the submission.

First we summarise a series of design principles and responses, before leading into a more detailed evaluation and discussion of the proposals for each area rising through the building, beginning at the lowest Bridge Street level.



Arrangement of accommodation

Architectural hierarchy

- The disposition of use follows the original intent, with the ground level given over to public uses, while the upper level administrative suites become hotel rooms.
- The roof level is transformed, with access provided between the disparate domes and towers.

1. Bridge Street level

(Lower ground level)

- Public access will be available from Bridge Street through to Gresham Street.
- This level will include a series of curated retail, food and beverage and cultural concepts
- Back-of-house and kitchen spaces are to be provided.

2. Guest rooms

(Bent Street/ Ground level, first and second floors)

- The guest rooms will be located over Bent Street, first and second floor levels.
- These floors will be open to the public as part of scheduled guided tours.
- The principal guest arrival entrance will be from Bent Street.

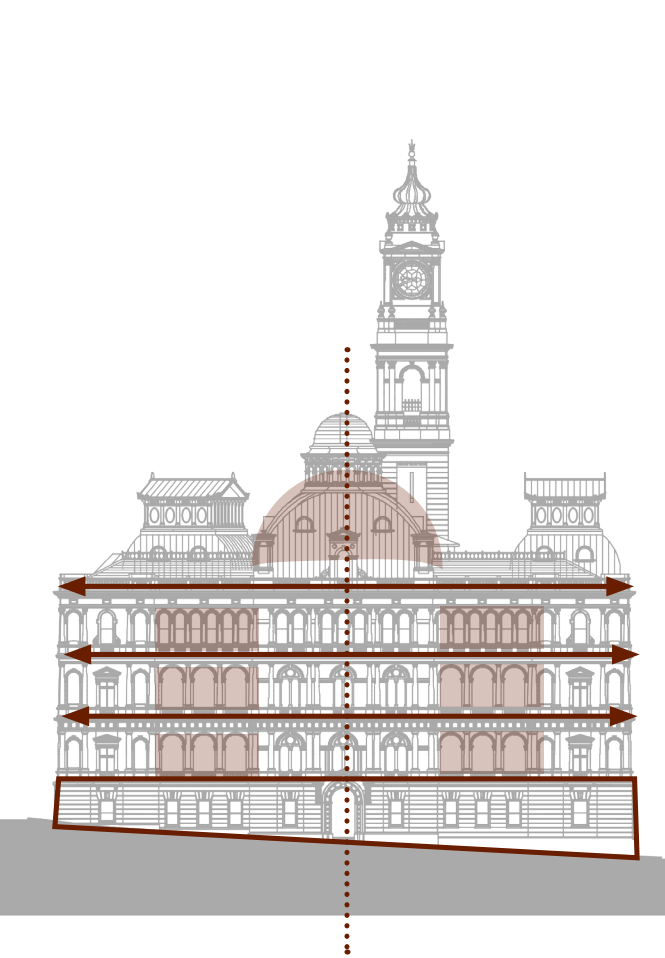
3. The roofscape

(Third floor and above)

- The roofscape and domes and towers will be connected, and occupied by a series of active functions associated with the principle hotel: reception, food and beverage offerings, meeting and function rooms, spa, and external terrace.
- There will be a publicly accessible terrace and viewing area.

Architectural form

Existing



Architectural character

- The building takes a difficult, uneven parallelogram site and effortlessly resolves the geometry so the viewer is unaware of any awkwardness.
- A strong horizontal proportioned base is offset by the taut and controlled rhythm of Venetian-inspired loggias and arches.
- A series of five Italianate towers and domes are set atop the base, arranged at first glance in a seemingly picturesque manner, but in reality each is ordered symmetrically to each facade. Thus the site's awkwardness is given positive expression on the roof.

View from the street

- The roofscape was designed to impress viewers rather than house the most important functions, as would be the case in a contemporary building.
- Each perimeter element carefully terminates local views and marks the four entrance points.
- At the heart of the site is the central Strong Room, which is the most significant space functionally and modest in form and expression.
- The original 19th-century street character is substantially intact, allowing a contemporary appreciation of the architectural intent.

Response



Secure street views

- The proposals seek to secure and enhance the existing street level views.
- Works to the stone base will be undertaken to maintain and repair the current condition and remove any later unsympathetic or poor-quality additions and infills.
- This will facilitate the appreciation of the five roof structures and their relation to the strong, arcaded sandstone base.



Spirit of original building

- The architectural detail demonstrates a unique soul and character in both design and construction.
- These themes form the basis of the proposals:
 1. **Discovery**
 2. **Exploration**
 3. **Invention**

Public engagement

Existing



A secure building

- The existing building is a heavily secured government administrative building.
- The public is allowed limited access to a small series of rooms at the Bridge Street level, but only for business purposes, to purchase plans and make enquiries.
- There is an inherent contradiction in a public building having such limited public access.



A shared history

- The building is a grand, beautiful and potent symbol of empire and nation-building, reflecting the social and government narrative at the time of its construction.
- Today, the shared history and identity of multi-cultural Australia and its Aboriginal people shape the contemporary landscape.

Response



Open, equitable access

- The proposals provide the opportunity to:
 1. Open up the building to the public for the first time.
 2. Provide equitable, clear and legible access for all.



Interpretation and query

- The proposals will provide interpretation and context for the existing heritage fabric and its history.
- They will create cultural and exchange spaces for art, information, debate, and reflection on its history and the future.
- The form of these spaces will be both fixed and changing to deliberately challenge and stimulate reflection and debate. This is not a proposal formed of static display cases.

Internal arrangement

Existing



Heritage and hierarchy

- The differing architectural treatment of each level directly reflects the hierarchy and importance of its occupants.
- At the lowest Bridge Street level, around the former carriage route, the first northern phase included the public rooms and thus exhibit rich detailing. In the second phase, the simpler treatment reflected a less formal occupation.
- On the upper levels, the senior officers' suites on the Bent Street level and first floor have the most embellishment and detail, while the upper second floor drafting halls contrast robust utilitarian detailing with rich cedar casements, all within grandly proportioned rooms.



Layout and use

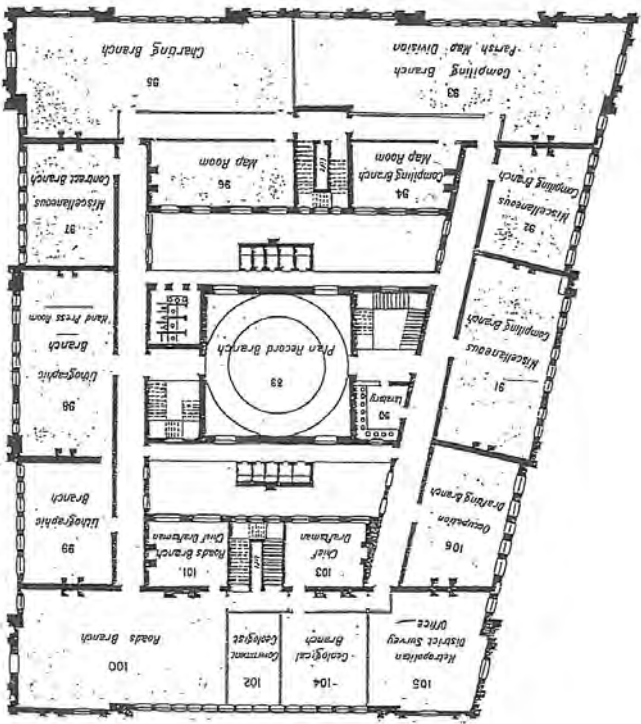
- Despite a series of interventions, the original layout and form are still largely recognisable.
- The formal series of senior officers' suites on the lower levels have remained intact, with amendments restricted to doors and openings.
- The large general office spaces were designed for flexibility and change, and have been continually reconfigured with partitions and walls to reflect changing uses and building codes.

Response



Evolution and preservation

- These proposals seek to understand our position in relation to the evolution of the building from construction to today, and recognise that this process will continue into the next generation.
- The works will secure the fabric, sustain the buildings' significance and be positioned within this ongoing evolution.
- There are differing solutions to each character area, and not one-size-fits-all.
- The design response is informed by the interventions of the past, both planned and unintended.

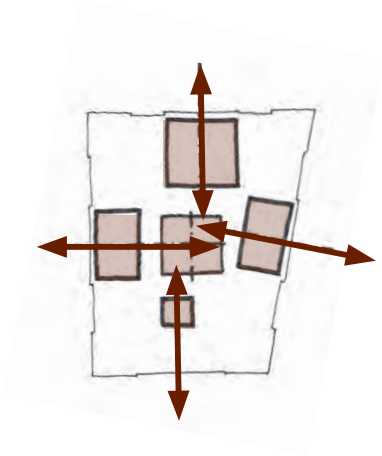


Reversible

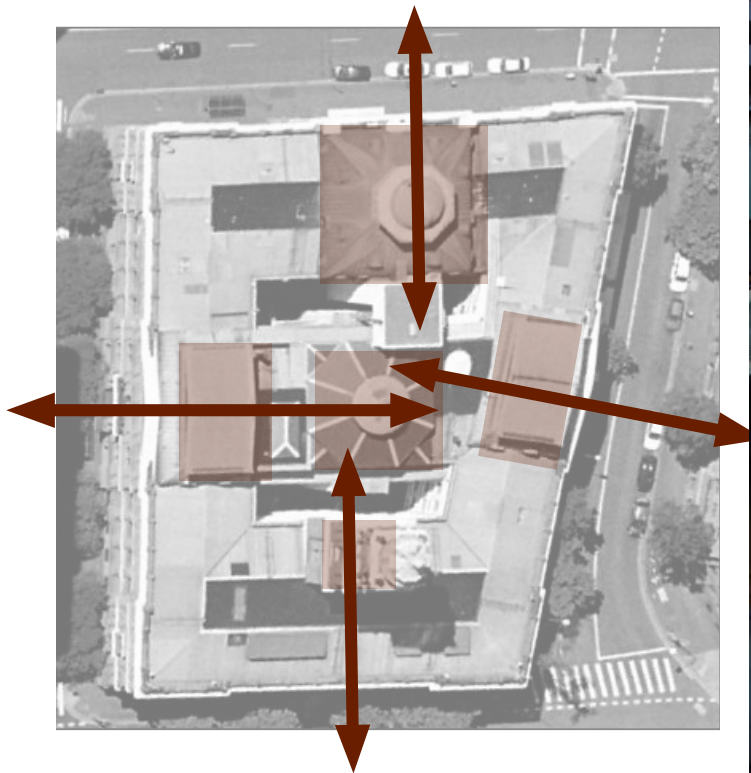
- In all cases, the locations of new partitions are drawn directly from the cues of the building fabric and previous configurations, be they beams or fenestration.
- All new partitions will be reversible, should one wish to revert a former stage of layout at a later stage.
- This is in the spirit of the original design, which needed to provide spaces that could evolve and respond to the changing demands of the department.

The roofscape

Existing



Response



Arrangement

- Each of the five principal elements – ‘the five graces’ – is positioned centrally to its respective elevation, marking a building entrance.
- The irregular site distorts this reading and creates a pleasingly picturesque arrangement,
- These structures were created to impress from the street.
- Contrary to their form, they do not house any grand function, nor are they easily accessed.

Roof structures

- The five grand roof structures provide spaces that delight with their imagination and unexpected vistas of building, city and harbour.
- Linking these five grand structures is a simple series of pitched roofs, constructed to weatherproof the fabric below.
- Originally in slate, they have been re clad in profiled metal sheet, and the chimneys replaced with a proliferation of service vents.

Enhanced setting

- The 21st-century elevated view of the building has brought the service roof’s deficiencies into sharp relief.
- The project presents the opportunity to address this degraded state and enhance the setting of towers and domes.

Access

- There is neither equitable nor ready access to the roof spaces.
- The project seeks to positively address this, to allow equitable access for the first time.