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Heritage Interpretation Plan

Sandstone Precinct

Addendum 2

Strong Room – MOD21

Prepared by Freeman Ryan Design

23 APRIL 2024

FRD

Proposed Addition to Heritage Interpretation

This addition to heritage interpretation has been prepared as part of the Modification 21 Submission of SSD 7484, to support the proposed works.

The proposed works defined in modification MOD21, is for the Strong Room Umbrella to remain in the closed (non-operable) position and the removal of all shelving units.

The original use & the innovations for fire rating of the 'Strong Room' of the Lands Department of NSW will be interpreted for visitors & patrons to the Sandstones Precinct by way of highly informative and detailed heritage interpretation panels positioned adjacent to all the fire rated Milner iron entry doors of the Strong room at Ground floor, Level 1 and Level 2.

Heritage Interpretation Implementation Schedule

LANDS BUILDING

Heritage Interpretation Scope

Lower Ground Floor:

- Lands Directory Board Sign (Documentation by others)
- Topographic Map of NSW Interpretation Artwork (by Megan Cope)
- Topographic Map of NSW Interpretation Panel
- Relief Map (Heritage Item) Relocation (review of drawings, drawings by others)
- Surveyors Baseline Zone + Interpretation Panel

Ground Floor:

- Interpretation Artwork (by Megan Cope)
- Interpretation Panels
- Ceilings and Cornices Interpretive Panels
- Strong Room Interpretive Panels (subject of MOD21)

Public Corridor Areas on Ground Floor:

- 4 x Carpet Runners

Level 1:

- Ceilings and Cornices Interpretive Panels
- Strong Room Interpretive Panels (subject of MOD21)

Level 2:

- Strong Room Interpretive Panels (subject of MOD21)

Level 3:

- Roof Trusses Interpretive Panels

	TARGET DATE	REVISED TARGET DATES
Concept Design *To commence in April 2021	July 2021	July 2021 (two weeks from submission)
Design Development (excluding Artworks)	September 2021	Complete
Design Development (for Artworks)	October 2021	Complete
First Nations Community Consultation	September 2021	Complete
Construction Documentation (excluding Artworks)	December 2021	August 2024 (two weeks from submission)
Progress update (for Artworks)	March 2022	Complete
Completion – Occupation Certificate	June 2023	December 2025 (two weeks from submission)
Tours Update to Written strategy and outline for guided tours (to include Lands building)	April 2023	December 2025 (two weeks from submission)
Website update (to include Lands Building)	April 2023	December 2025

Interpretation Design Concepts

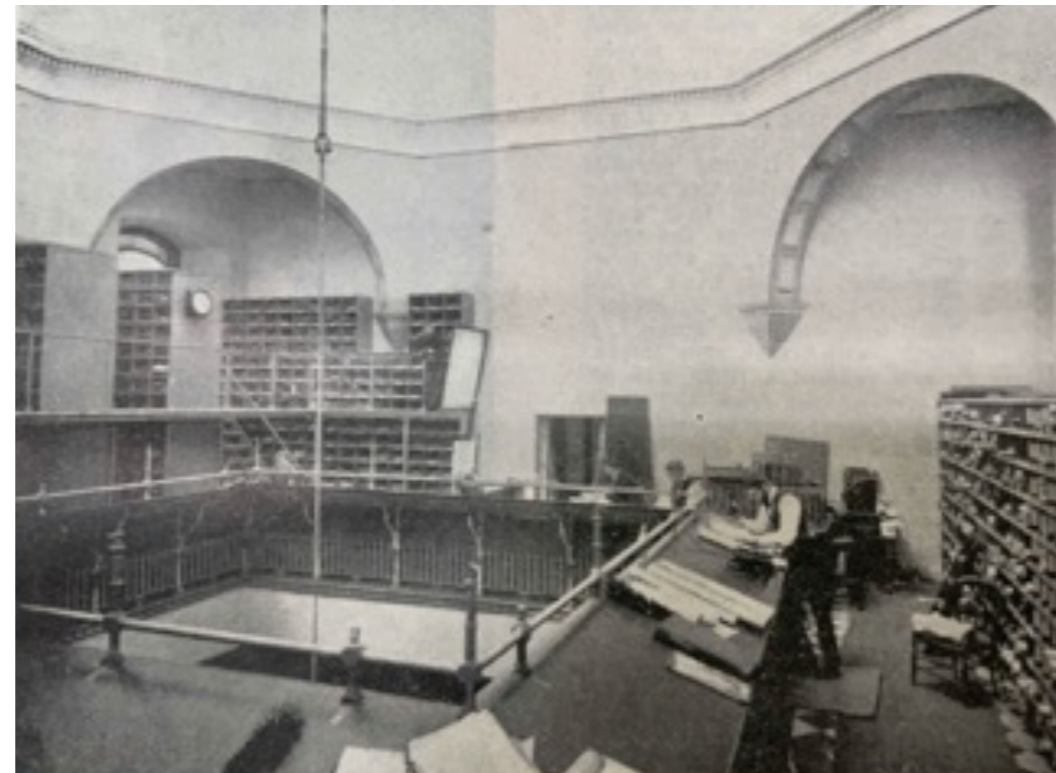
Ground Floor, Level 1 and Level 2

Strong Room

In support of MOD21, the interpretation of the Strong Room will be provided on multiple levels and through both physical and digital means, with the inclusion of a QR code on graphic panels leading visitors to the website.

The graphic panels will be located outside the entry to the Strong Room on the Ground Floor, Level 1 and Level 2, and will allow for the interior space to remain unencumbered with 'content', leaving the Strong Room more available for viewing and for further elaboration of key features as part of guided tours. As the graphic panels are in a circulation space, the content has been considered to attract the visitor's attention prior to entering the Strongroom. It will also direct them to the website for further information. Graphic panels will be located within legible viewing heights on available surfaces, taking into consideration the positions of operational and statutory wayfinding signage and buttons for door operation.

The interpretation will explain the roles of the Strong Room and the Lands Department in contrast with the understanding of First Nations (FN) peoples of Country. The draft titles of the panels may suggest this divergence with official terms contrasting with single, authoritative words for the FN component. Visitors will likely enter the space at different levels, and may not have access to every graphic panel, therefore the suggested text has allowed for sufficient context to be provided for those who may be viewing graphic panels in isolation.



Lands Department building, 3rd floor Strong Room, *Town and Country Journal*, January 1898.

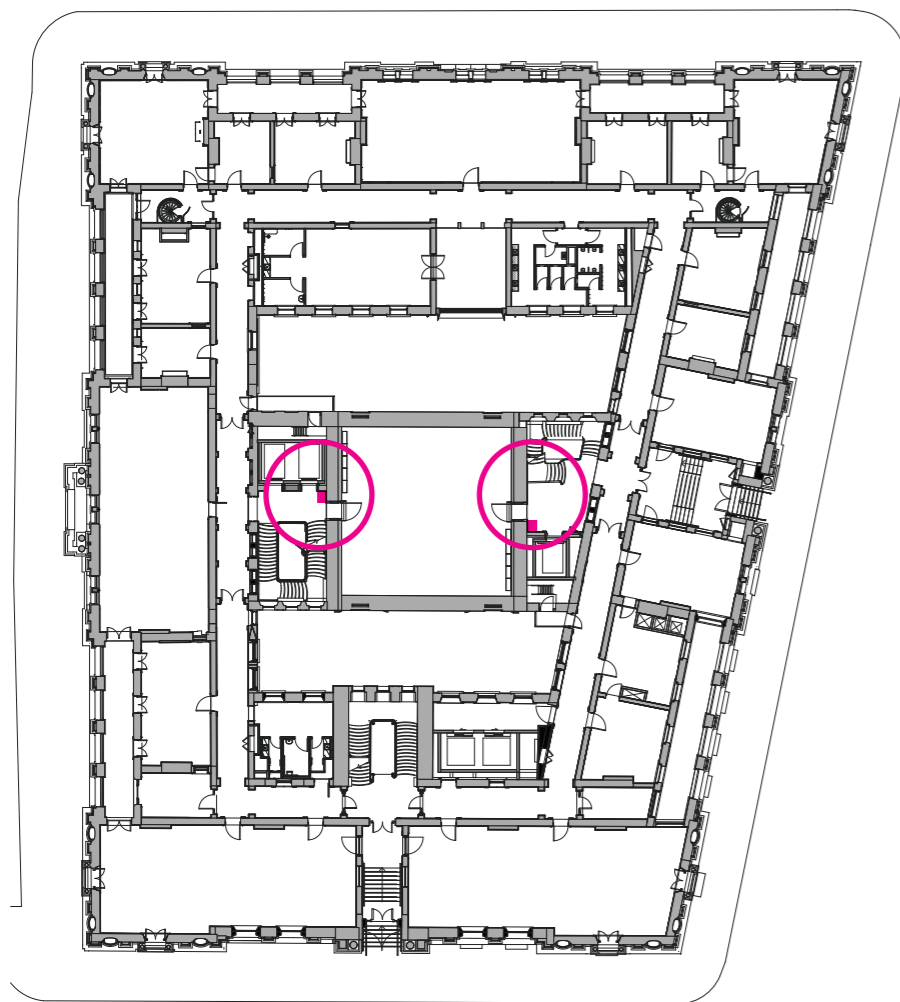
"This description of the Lands Department would not be complete without reference being made to the "strong rooms," of one of which we publish an illustration. Situated in the centre of the building and protected in every possible way from any risk of fire, these rooms, of which there is one on each of the three floors, are well worth inspection, and are found to be of the greatest utility for the storage of all official documents. They form in fact a distinct feature of the building."

Town and Country Journal, January 1898

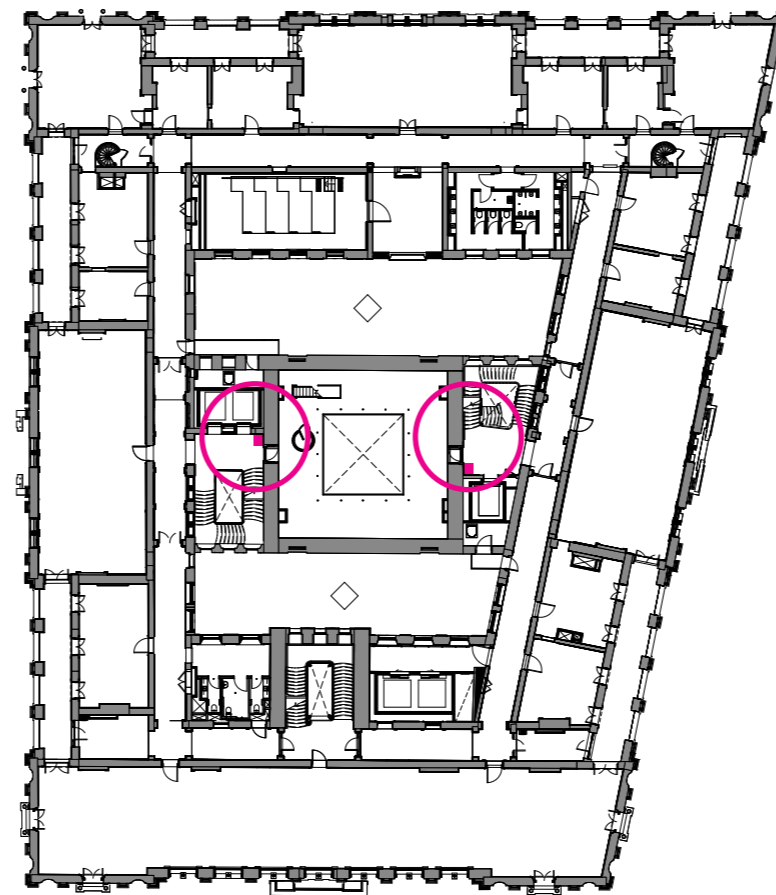


Lands Department building, Levels of the Strong Room with shelving, *Town and Country Journal*, January 1898.

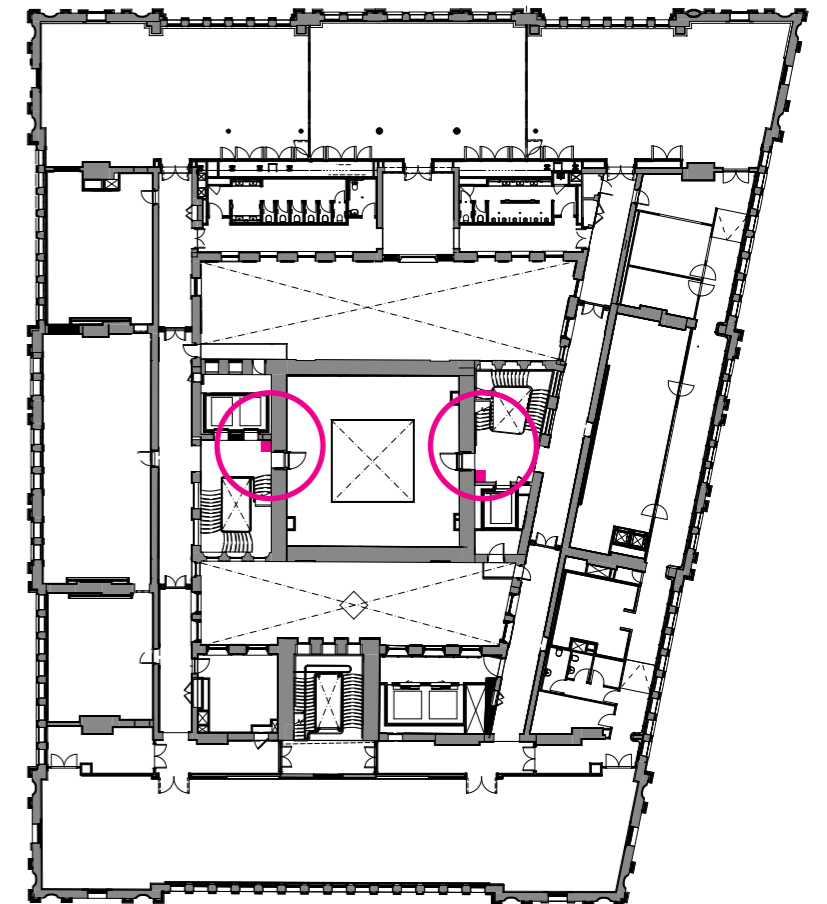
Heritage Interpretation Locations



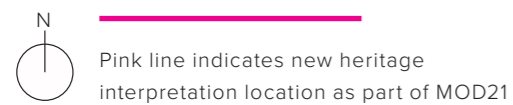
GROUND FLOOR



LEVEL 1



LEVEL 2



Interpretation Design Concepts

Ground Floor Panel 1.1 – The Strong Room

Wall and Website Interpretation

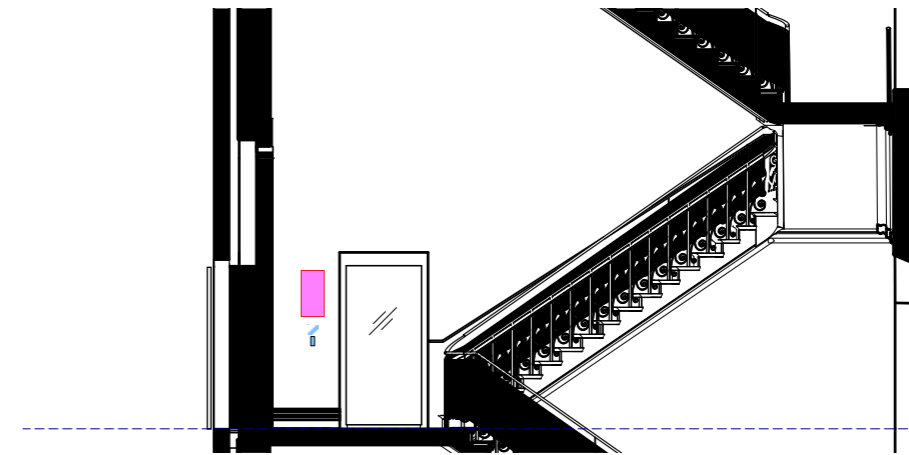
This building was designed by the Colonial Architect, James Barnet (1827-1904), for the head office of the Lands Department of New South Wales.

Known as the ‘Strong Room’, the adjacent areas were used for the storage of significant documents and maps relating to the administration of the Lands Department. It is a fire-proof, domed room spanning three floors at the centre of the building, specially designed for the safe-keeping of the documents in a fire isolated space. Originally, the dome’s covers could retract to allow daylight into the room, and be closed with steel covers, as seen now, to seal the room from fire. The room is isolated from the rest of the building by thick, Milner 212 ‘safe doors’ with a unique inner compound that emits moisture to protect the rooms contents, and by large steel-plated fire covers on the outside of the windows, poised to drop down over the windows at the first warning of fire. The metal shelving, now removed, dated from the mid 1890’s and was one of the first uses of this product, which as well as being spatially efficient, would have provided better fire rating than the traditional timber shelving.

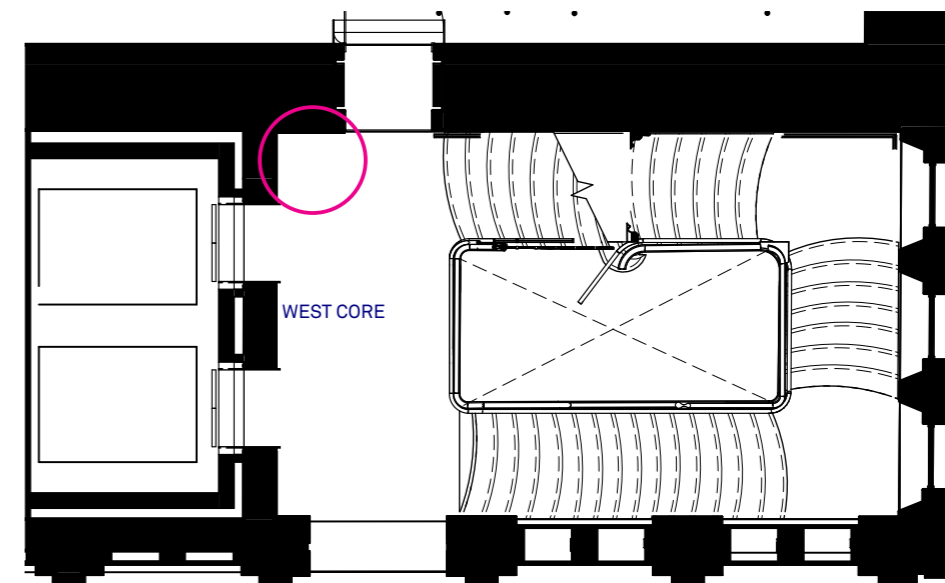
The building also used reinforced concrete slabs, and iron girders and iron-framed roofing for increased fire-resistance. Fire was particularly feared owing to the 1882 burning of the Garden Palace, also designed by James Barnet and constructed by John Young (1827-1907), in Sydney’s Royal Botanic Gardens.



INDICATIVE DESIGN



ELEVATION



PLAN

Interpretation Design Concepts

Ground Floor Panel 1.2 – Fire

Wall and Website Interpretation

Australia’s First Nations peoples have used fire in a variety of functional ways, as well as in cultural and spiritual practices. The colony’s first Governor, Arthur Phillip (1738-1814), observed in 1788, “they are seldom seen without fire, or a piece of wood on fire, which they carry with them from place to place, and in their canoes.”

Not only was fire used for warmth, cooking and the making of utensils, but also in hunting, land management and access for travel. Captain John Hunter (1737-1821) noted that, “when in considerable numbers, [they] set the country on fire for several miles extent; this, we have generally understood, is for the purpose of disturbing such animals as may be within reach of the conflagration; and thereby have an opportunity of killing many.

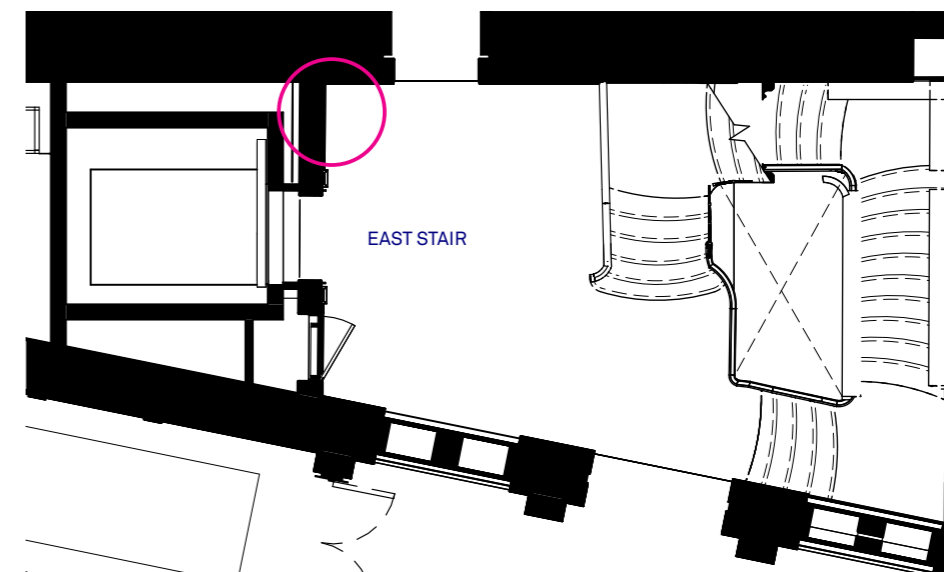
We have also had much reason to believe, that those fires were intended to clear that part of the country through which they have frequent occasion to travel; of the brush and underwood, from which they, being naked, suffer very great inconvenience. The fires, which we very frequently saw, particularly in the summer-time, account also for an appearance, which, when we arrived here, we were much perplexed to understand the cause of ...”



INDICATIVE DESIGN



ELEVATION



PLAN

Interpretation Design Concepts

Level 1 Panel 2.1 – The Lands Department of New South Wales

Wall and Website Interpretation

This building was designed by the Colonial Architect, James Barnet (1827-1904), for the head office of the Lands Department of New South Wales. It was constructed in two stages (1876-1881; 1888-1892), with Barnet's successor as Colonial Architect, Walter Liberty Vernon, directing its completion.

The Lands Department building incorporated areas for varied functions, including an information bureau for the public, administrative services, a lithographic branch and areas for the storage of records. The building also originally included the Department of Mines and Agriculture. Owing to its storage of significant maps and records, the building was equipped with fire-resistant technology, including the use of iron girders and iron framed roofing. The 'Strong Room', which occupied the adjacent area, was a fire-proof, domed room in the centre of the building, specially designed for the safe-keeping of the documents with steel used for the doors, shelving and window closings.

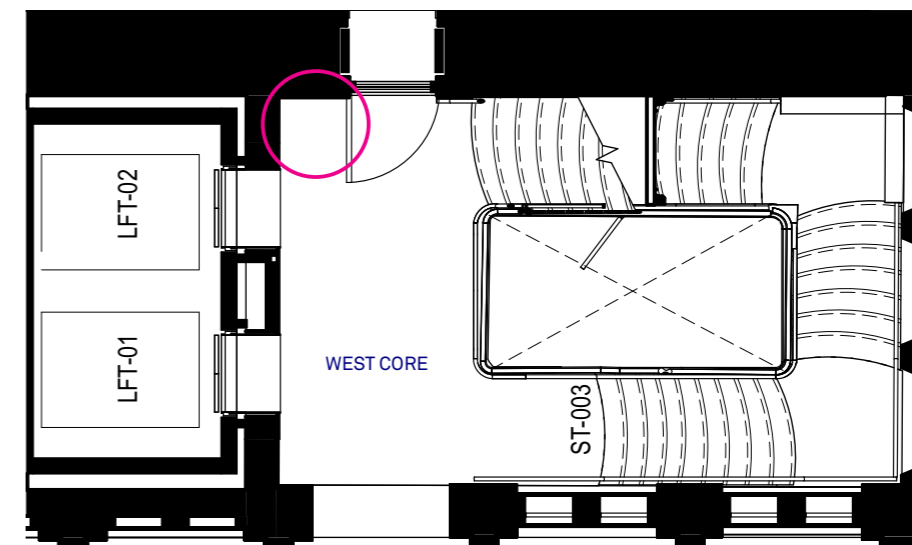
Although the building's design revives features of Renaissance architecture, it was one of the city's most advanced structures when it was completed and included inventive systems for heating, lighting, and ventilation as well as communication, which operated through a network of speaking tubes.



INDICATIVE DESIGN



ELEVATION



PLAN

Interpretation Design Concepts

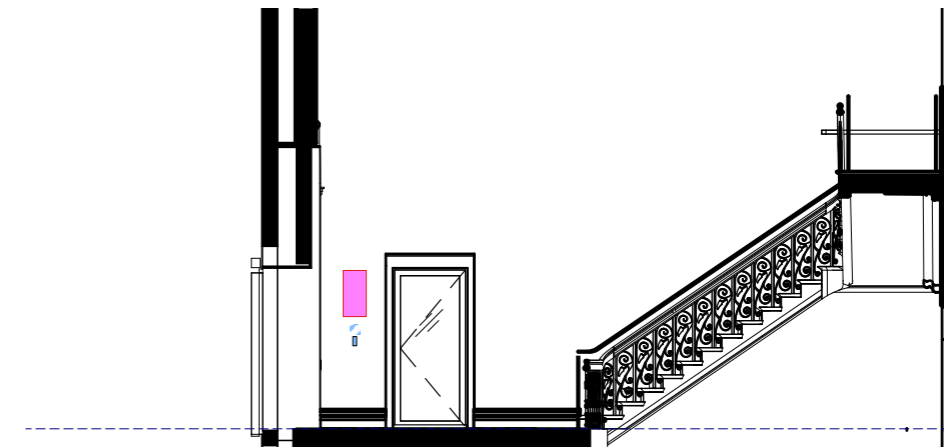
Level 1 Panel 2.2 – Country

Wall and Website Interpretation

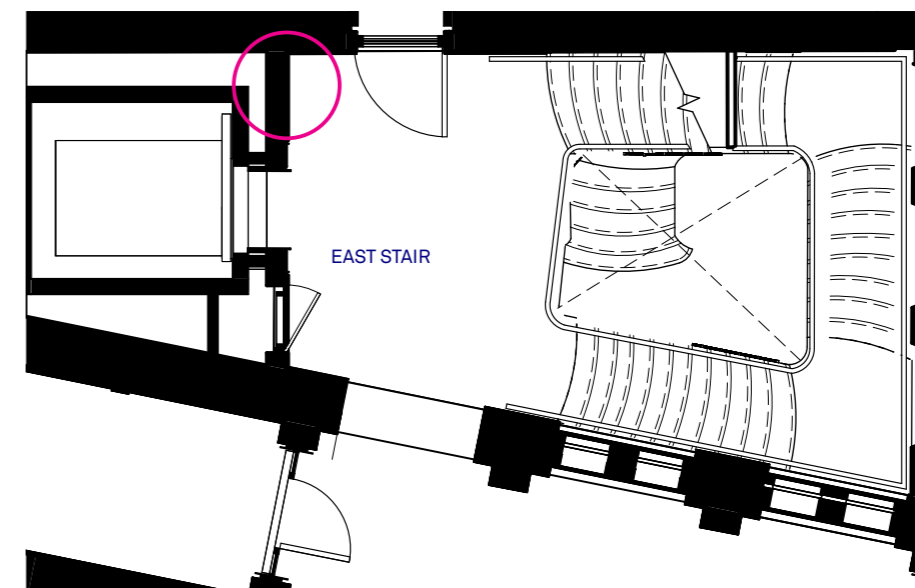
- The world’s oldest continuous culture, Australia’s First Nations peoples have inhabited the continent for more than 65,000 years.
- Integral to their culture is a deep understanding of the meaning of Country, including its water and sky countries. Intertwined with Country are the cultural and spiritual meanings of the different First Nations within Australia, who conserve and cultivate their lands. (The effectiveness of songlines and message sticks may possibly be referred to as a counterpoint to the reference to speaking tubes in the companion panel.)
- The colonisation of Australia was contested from the first landing of the British by Lieutenant James Cook of HMB Endeavour in 1770. He was met by Gweagal warriors at Kamay (Botany Bay), who disputed the landing.
- The importance of Land Rights has continued since the beginning of colonisation, including the Aboriginal Tent Embassy in 1972 outside Parliament House. In New South Wales, the Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1983, allows Aboriginal land councils to submit land claims.



INDICATIVE DESIGN



ELEVATION



PLAN

Interpretation Design Concepts

Level 2 Panel 3.1 – Title Deeds

Wall and Website Interpretation

This building was designed by the Colonial Architect, James Barnet (1827-1904), for the head office of the Lands Department of New South Wales. It was constructed in two stages (1876-1881; 1888-1892), with Barnet's successor as Colonial Architect, Walter Liberty Vernon, directing its completion.

The Robertson Land Acts (1861) had increased the need to survey New South Wales, expanding its administration. The acts sought to combat the spread of illegal squatting on land beyond the established districts of New South Wales, and to permit selectors to choose limited areas in return for their residence, improvements to the land and payment. One of its effects was also to dispossess further the State's First Nations peoples of their lands.

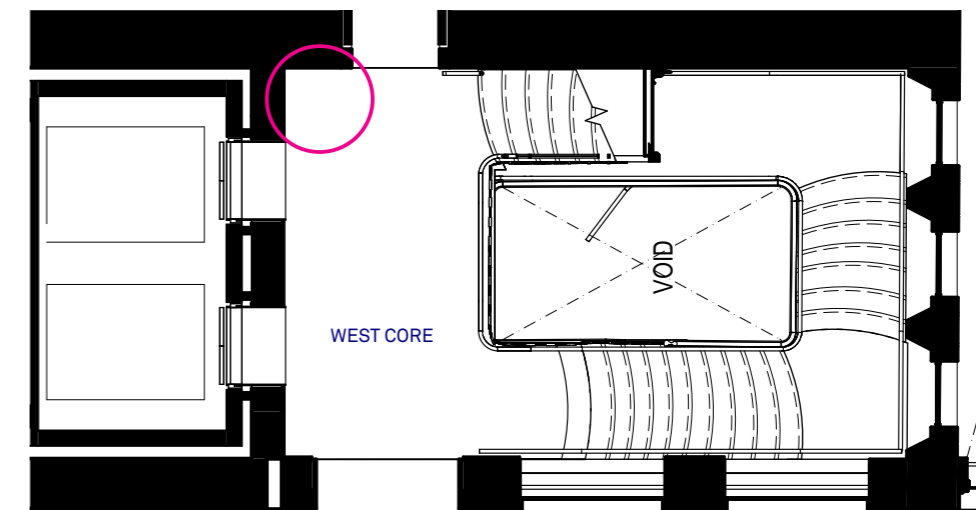
The legislation increased the work and significance of the Lands Department, leading to the need for larger premises, as realised in the scale and grandeur of this building, which included impressive offices for senior positions, such as the Chief Surveyor. The building's decorative features also reflected the Crown's authority in its role, with the Royal Coat of Arms for Her Majesty Queen Victoria being depicted above its main directory board, signifying the authority of the Crown in the legal administration of the land and its natural resources.



INDICATIVE DESIGN



ELEVATION



PLAN

Interpretation Design Concepts

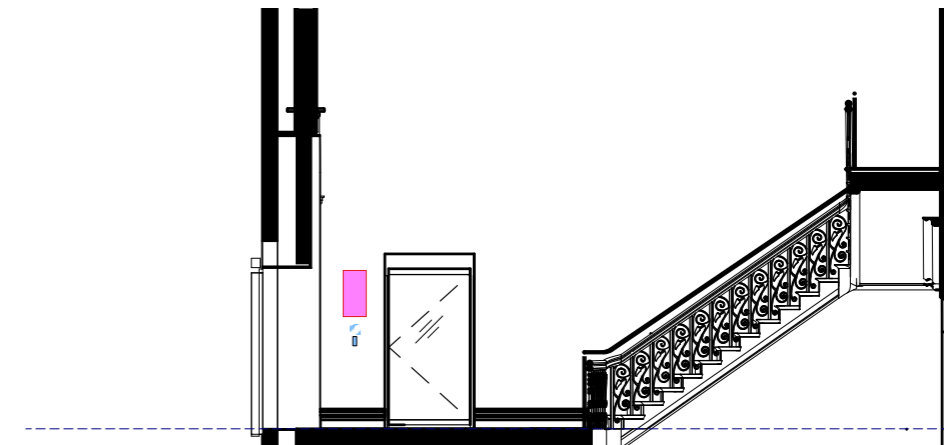
Level 2 Panel 3.2 – Belonging

Wall and Website Interpretation

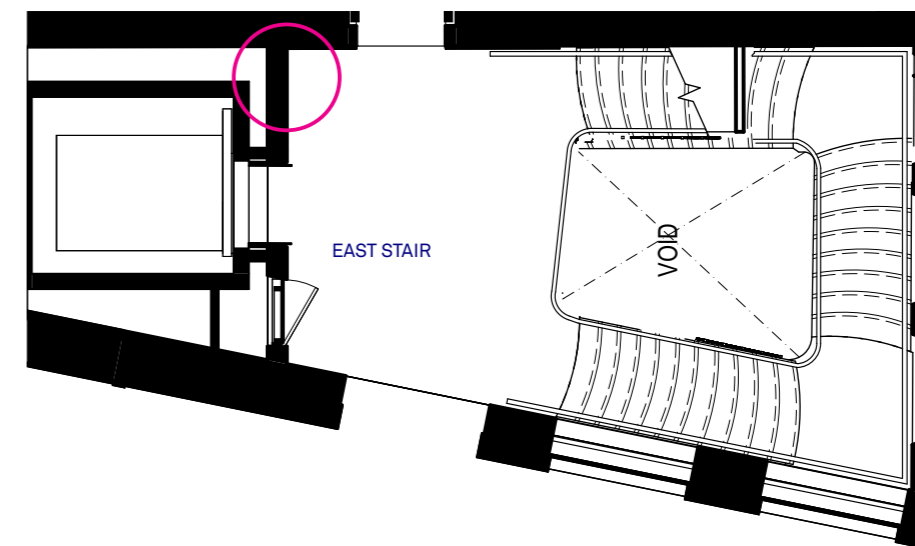
- Personal testimonials or interviews to be selected across the language clans of NSW developed by Yerrabingen into an appropriate form. These statements may reflect the personal connections between the FN individuals or clans and their Country, and an understanding of permanent belonging rather than a sense of temporary ownership. They may describe both the effects of dispossession and the individuals' resilience.
- A comparable example may be elements of the Sydney Elders exhibition (State Library of NSW, 2018-20), curated by Jonathan Jones. Instead of being depicted with documents, like the civic 'elders' depicted as statues across the façade of the Lands Department building, these Elders or identities might nominate or be portrayed with a significant feature of their clan – a language term, a plant, view, custom, design or totem, a contrast to the stone documents.



INDICATIVE DESIGN



ELEVATION

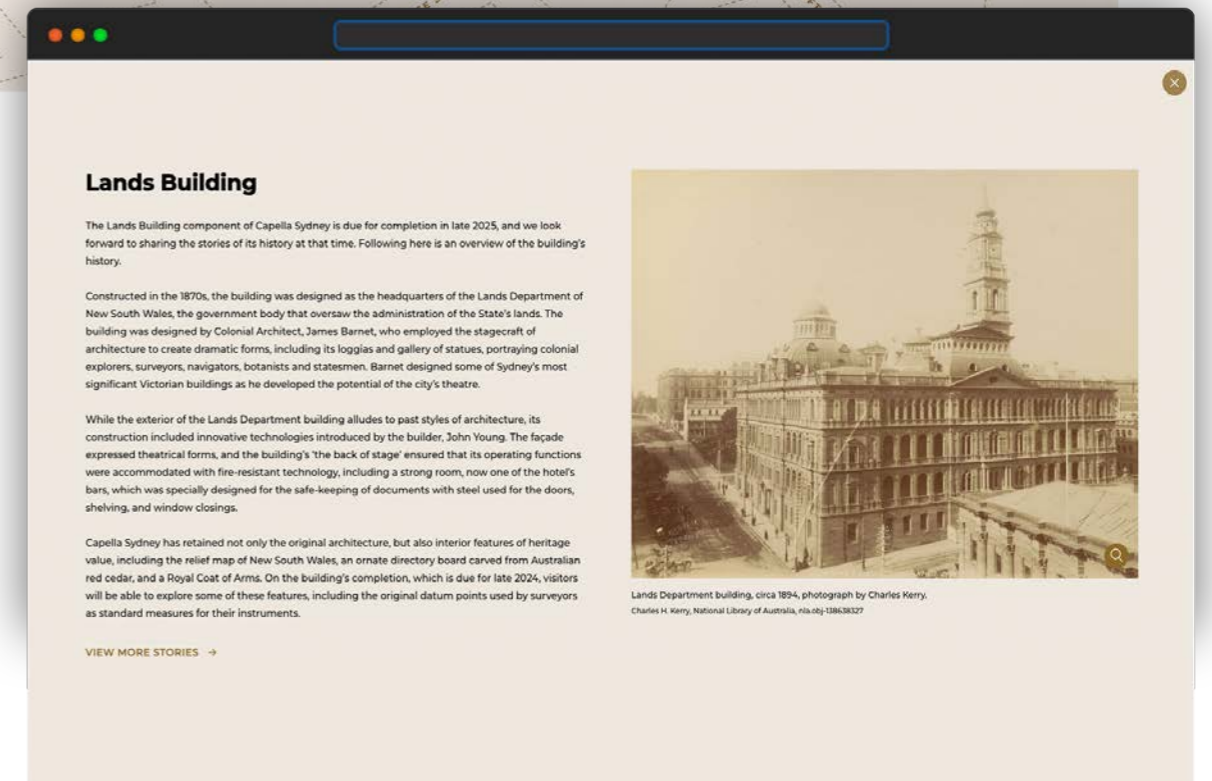


PLAN

Website

Further interpretation of Farrer Place and the Education and Lands buildings will be offered to members of the public through the hotel website which will:

- highlight the sites' heritage values and histories
 - provide a narrative overview to various components of the heritage interpretation including the vast collection of Moveable Heritage
 - identify individual locations of interest within the hotel such as the Lands Building statues, the roof trusses and roof crestings, innovative fire security designed to protect the documents and the storage shelving in the Strongroom, and the ceilings and cornices (and the hierarchy of the rooms reflecting the status of the occupants)
- facilitate a selection of content on subjects of particular interest
 - provide further imagery including archival photographs and drawings
 - as well as access to the website before and after a visit to the Lands Building, a series of QR codes located on specific panels will also lead visitors to the website from their on-site visit.

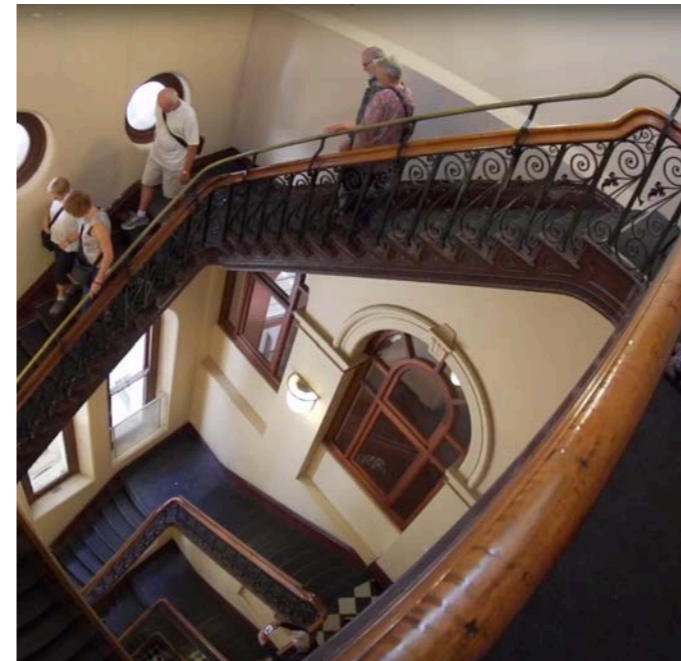


Guided Tours

Guided tours of the Education and Lands Buildings and Farrer Place will provide enhanced accessibility, expanding the heritage interpretation and enriching the visitors' unique experience. This is an opportunity to point out specific landscape, architectural and engineering features, such as the Lands Building roof trusses and roof crestings, the plaster ceilings and cornices and expand on the narratives of the people who occupied the rooms previously. The innovative fire security designed to protect the documents devised by the architect and the builder can also feature and will be emphasised in stories related to the Strongroom.

PLG have proposed to hold a minimum of two reservation-based, guided tours per year. The tours will be subject to agreement with occupants, and availability of spaces within the building.

Comparable public tours include the Sydney Free Walking Tour and Sydney Open tours organised by Sydney Living Museums. They have proven to be extremely popular, as have the heritage tours in hotels. They prove to be very effective marketing exercises, of minimal cost and a very 'light touch' on the buildings.





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Heritage Interpretation Plan

Sandstone Precinct

Addendum 3

Strong Room – F30

Prepared by Freeman Ryan Design

02 SEPTEMBER 2025

FRD

Proposed Addition to Heritage Interpretation

This addition to heritage interpretation has been prepared due to clause F30. The Heritage Interpretation Plan submitted in accordance with Condition B8A for the Lands Building must be updated by a suitably qualified and experienced heritage practitioner or historian to include interpretation relevant to Modification 21, including, but not limited to:

- a) The use of the Strong Room for secure, fire-proof record keeping
- b) The use of the mezzanine shelving on the ground floor of the Strong Room for storing State records
- c) The previous use of the Strong Room ‘umbrella’ and any details about the mechanism. The Updated Heritage Interpretation Plan must be informed by the outcomes of the archival required by Condition F29. The Updated Heritage Interpretation Plan must be submitted to and approved by the Planning Secretary prior to the issue of the first occupation certificate for the Lands Building.

In 2025, Traditional Stone Consulting P/L (TSC) were engaged by Built (NSW) to undertake an inspection of the current condition of visible remnant portions of the Strongroom Umbrella mechanism. Below is an excerpt of their findings:

Extensive research was undertaken in an effort to uncover documents that would either supply primary source information revealing the ‘Umbrella’ mechanisms’ purpose as well as how it functioned such as engineering design drawings, design specifications or other documents that would clearly identify the original purpose or description of how it functioned, resulted in little empirical data.

The theory that it might have functioned as a device that would, in the event of a fire within the Lands Department Building, be used to prevent the fire from entering the strong room thereby potentially destroying the land and property survey plans and documents stored there, is based on two separate publications.

An article found in an edition of ‘The Australian Town and Country Journal’, a publicly available weekly broadsheet newspaper published in Sydney NSW by Frank and Christopher Bennett between 1870 and 1919.

The edition published on January 29, 1898, contained an article within which the Lands Department Building strongroom is mentioned as a “fire-proof room” in several places.

Here the many thousands of plans of surveys carried out at the instance of the department are safely and securely stored in a fire-proof room. Where so many plans are passing outwards and

inwards everyday there must of necessity be some system of recording the receipt or dispatch of these valuable documents, and it is sufficient perhaps to say that the system is such that it enables the clerks engaged in the room either to produce any plan without loss of time, or to tell anyone inquiring where it may be obtained.

This description of the Lands Department would not be complete without reference being; made to the “strong rooms,” of one of which we publish an illustration. Situated in the centre of the building and protected in every possible way from any risk of fire, these rooms, of which there is one on each of the three floors, are well worth inspection, and are found to be of the greatest utility for the storage of all official documents. They form in fact a distinct feature of the building.”

An additional article within the Illustrated Sydney News and New South Wales Agriculturalist and Grazier, published prior to the construction of the Lands Department Building, boasted of the inclusion of a ‘fireproof record room’.

“And, in the centre of the building, running through the whole height, will be a fire-proof record room about 4 feet square, having iron galleries, frames for records, and available wall space of about ten thousand feet.”

Based on the above as well as observing the surviving parts of the mechanism that remain, it is not unreasonable to arrive at a couple of probable theories on the function and near certainty that the ‘Umbrella’ mechanism was a unique device designed to act as a form of fire protection.

The device was likely invented as a result of the consequences resultant of the fire that destroyed government records stored within the Garden Palace Building on September 22, 1882. The loss of these documents would have raised the awareness of the risk of fire and motivated the invention of a device or system that would protect flammable paper documents stored within public Government Buildings.

‘Umbrella’ Purpose Theory 1 – Smoke Ventilation System

This theory presumes that the government had investigated the manner in which the fire spread in the Garden Palace and determined that a centrally positioned smoke vent or chimney would contain, channel or at least limit the spread of a fire.

If the ‘Umbrella’ was intended to act as a smoke escape vent shaft, it is likely that under normal conditions, the copper internal lower copper dome would be left seated in the ‘Lowered Position’. In the event of a fire alarm being sounded, the dome would be activated and placed into the ‘Raised Position’. This would allow hot air and hot ember filled smoke to escape as it drawn via convection and rise out of the building.

‘Umbrella’ Purpose Theory 2 – Fire Proof Sealed Chamber

This theory is based on the ‘Umbrella’ being part of an overall system used to seal off the Strongroom from exposure to fire and relays on the presumption that a fire capable of destroying the entire Lands Department Building, as had previously occurred to the Garden Palace Building in 1882, would not

Proposed Addition to Heritage Interpretation

be able to destroy the 4 floors contained within the Strongroom tower nor would it damage or destroy its contents. This theory also presumes the masonry walls and floors of the tower would withstand the probable collapse of structural floors and walls of the rest of the building. It is acknowledged that the use of hot rolled and riveted steel framing and masonry walls would assist in preventing these types of collapses.

The additional parts of the overall system being suggested here, comprise steel shutters within the internal light wells as steel safe doors at the entrances to the Strong Room. These would, in addition to the 'Umbrella', form part of an integrated fire proofing system which would effectively seal the Strong Room tower off from any exposure to the fire and would have to activate simultaneously in order to be effective.

The difficulty with the theory is how each of these three elements would be activated simultaneously in an integrated system without being able to see physical evidence of source of power used and any signs of the labyrinth of cabling, channels, pulleys and or drive shafts required to open and close these heavy items after a fire alarm has sounded.

Conclusion on the Purpose

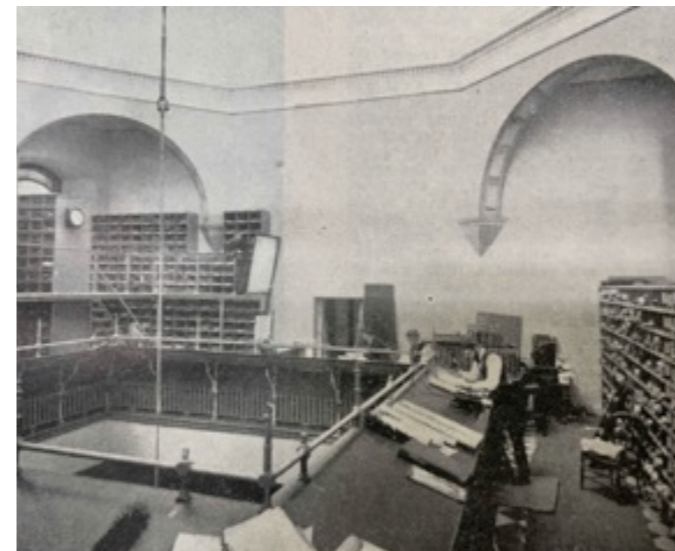
Both theories on the possible purposes of the 'Umbrella' mechanism have merit but require more empirical evidence before a conclusion can be reasonably determined.

Traditional Stone Consulting P/L, The Department of Lands
Building Record of the Strongroom Umbrella Mechanism, 29
August 2025

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Lands Department building, 3rd floor Strong Room, *Town and Country Journal*, January 1898.

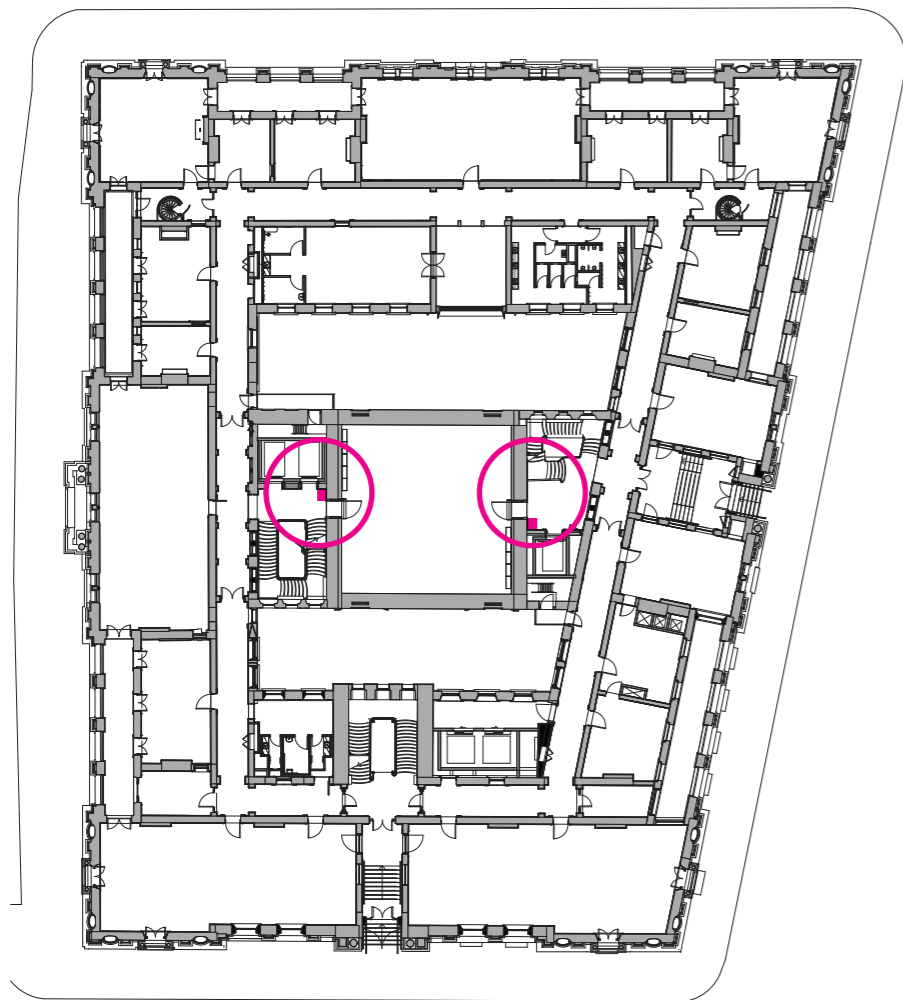
"This description of the Lands Department would not be complete without reference being made to the "strong rooms," of one of which we publish an illustration. Situated in the centre of the building and protected in every possible way from any risk of fire, these rooms, of which there is one on each of the three floors, are well worth inspection, and are found to be of the greatest utility for the storage of all official documents. They form in fact a distinct feature of the building."

Town and Country Journal, January 1898

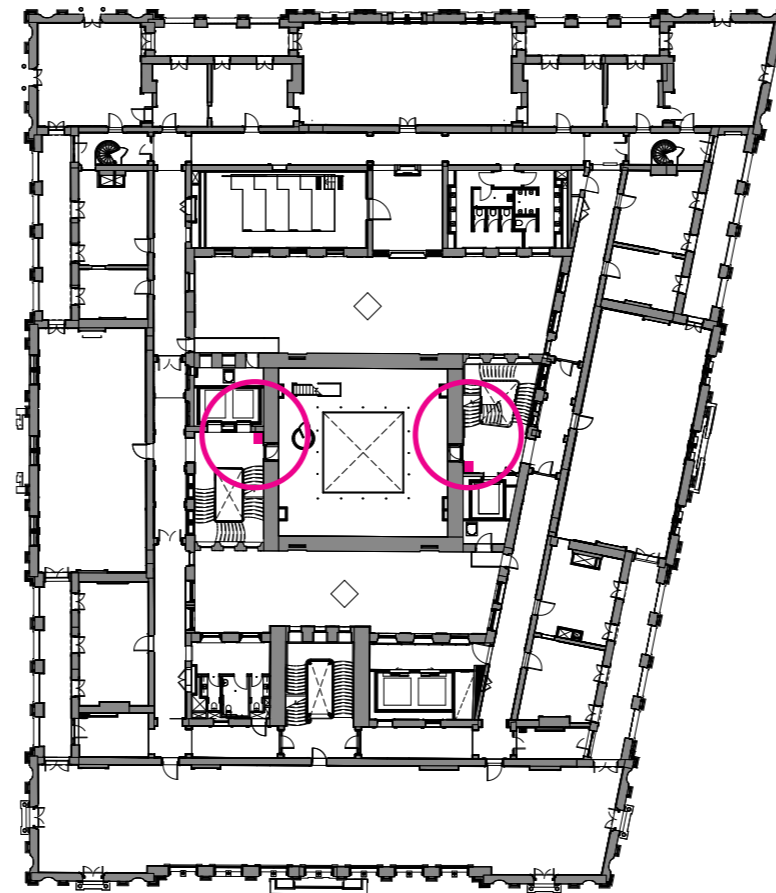


Lands Department building, Levels of the Strong Room with shelving, *Town and Country Journal*, January 1898.

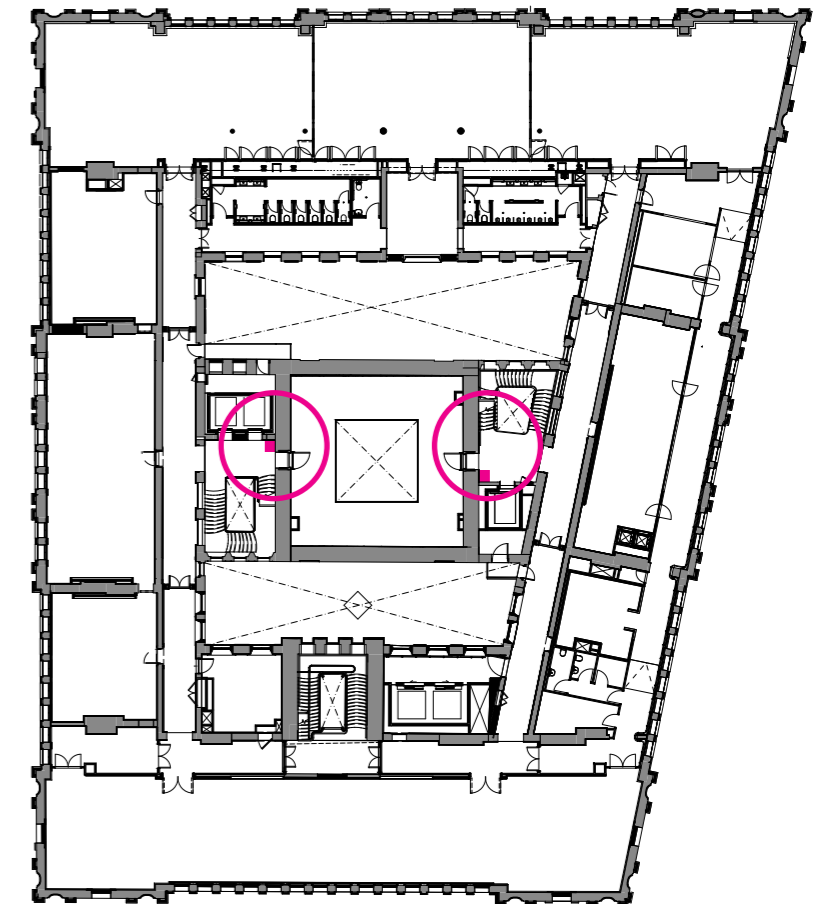
Heritage Interpretation Locations



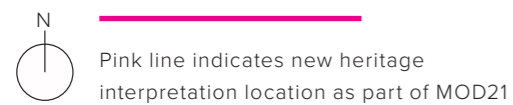
GROUND FLOOR



LEVEL 1



LEVEL 2

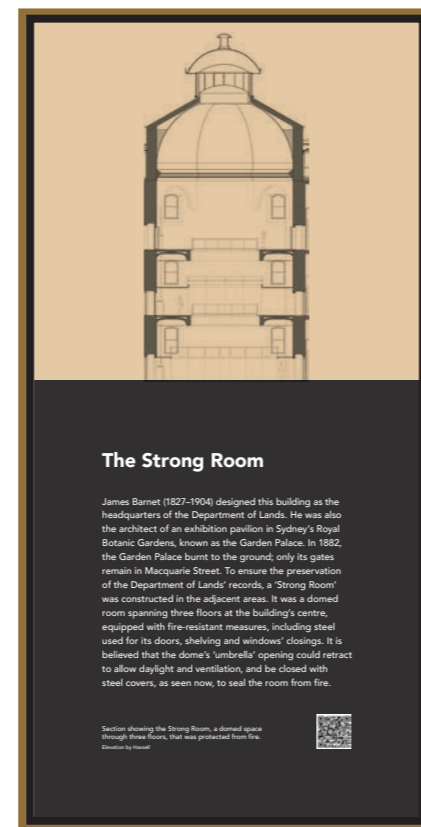


Interpretation Design Concepts

Ground Floor Panel 1.1 – The Strong Room

Wall and Website Interpretation

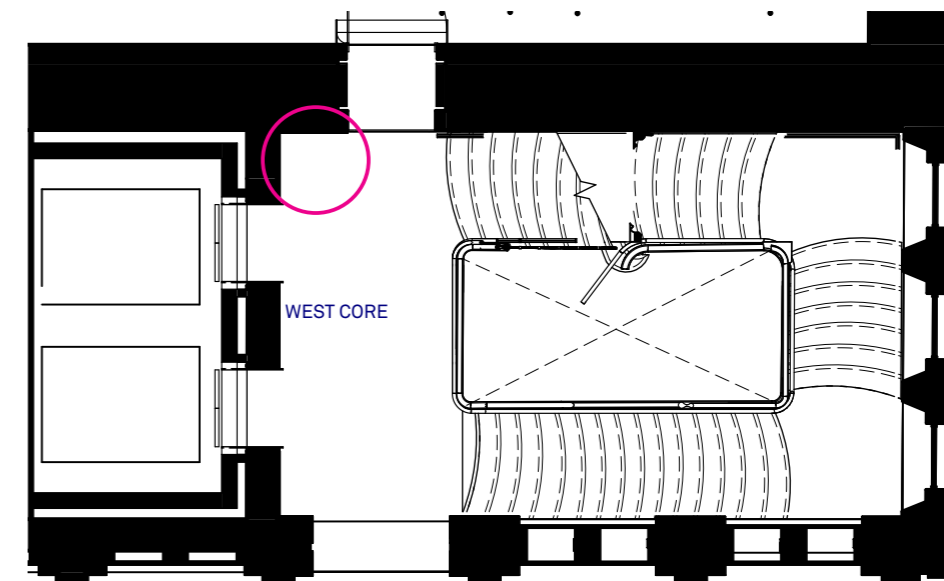
James Barnet (1827–1904) designed this building as the headquarters of the Department of Lands. He was also the architect of an exhibition pavilion in Sydney’s Royal Botanic Gardens, known as the Garden Palace. In 1882, the Garden Palace burnt to the ground; only its gates remain in Macquarie Street. To ensure the preservation of the Department of Lands’ records, a ‘Strong Room’ was constructed in the adjacent areas. It was a domed room spanning three floors at the building’s centre, equipped with fire-resistant measures, including steel used for its doors, shelving and windows’ closings. It is believed that the dome’s ‘umbrella’ opening could retract to allow daylight and ventilation, and be closed with steel covers, as seen now, to seal the room from fire.



DESIGN



ELEVATION



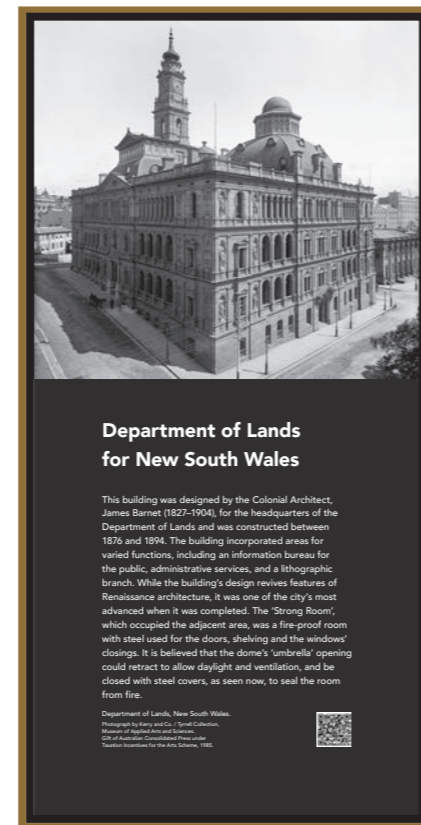
PLAN

Interpretation Design Concepts

Ground Floor Panel 1.2 – Department of Lands for New South Wales

Wall and Website Interpretation

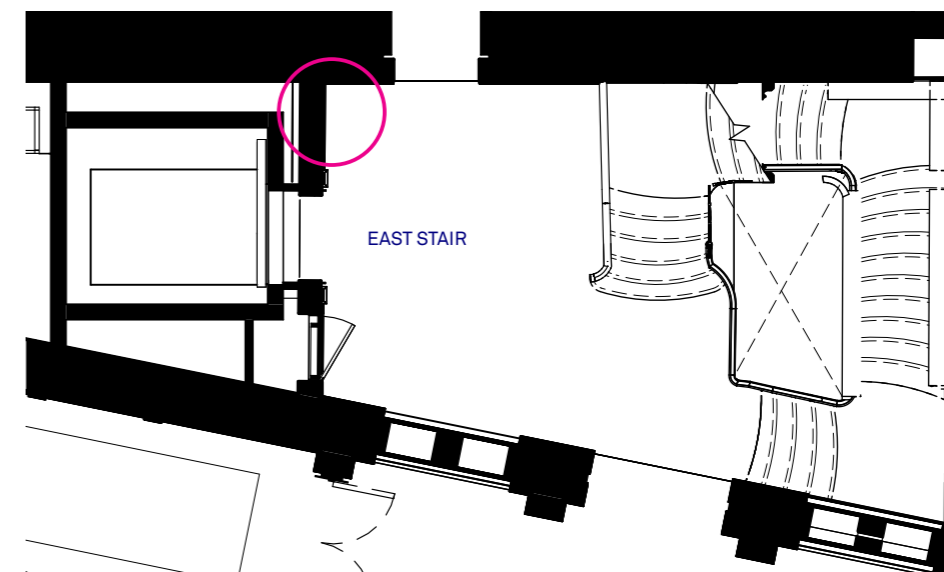
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DESIGN



ELEVATION



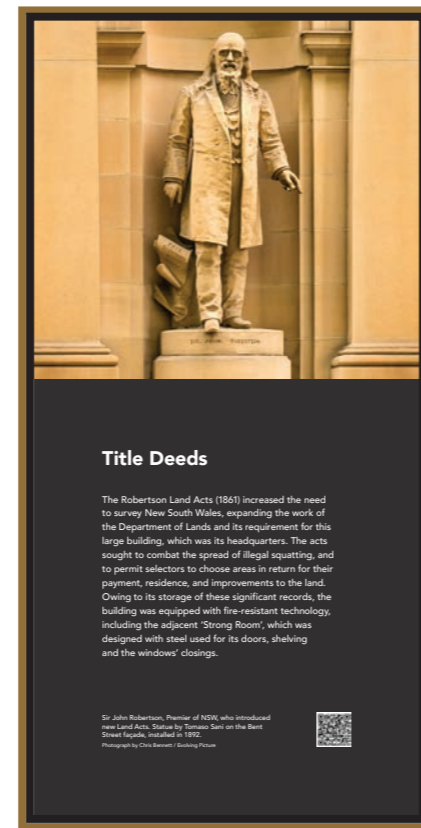
PLAN

Interpretation Design Concepts

Level 1 Panel 2.1 – Title Deeds

Wall and Website Interpretation

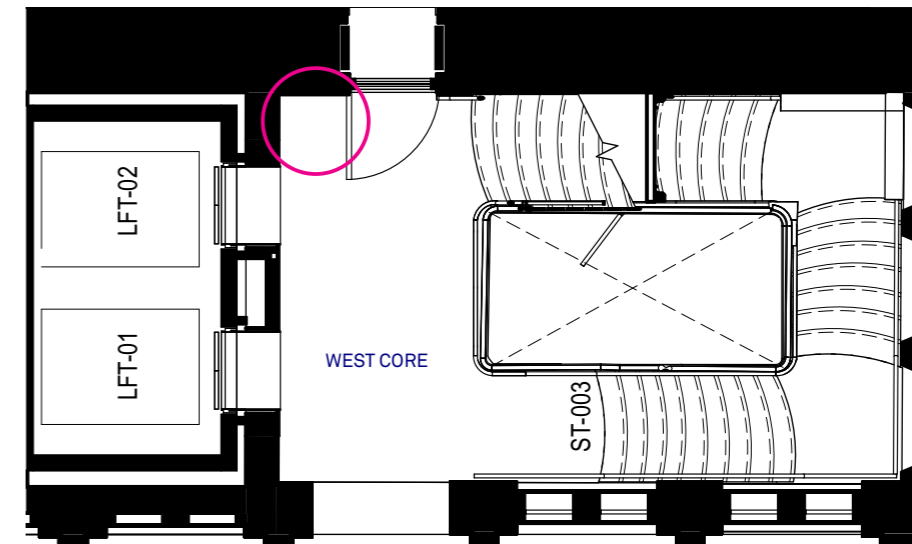
The Robertson Land Acts (1861) increased the need to survey New South Wales, expanding the work of the Department of Lands and its requirement for this large building, which was its headquarters. The acts sought to combat the spread of illegal squatting, and to permit selectors to choose areas in return for their payment, residence, and improvements to the land. Owing to its storage of these significant records, the building was equipped with fire-resistant technology, including the adjacent ‘Strong Room’, which was designed with steel used for its doors, shelving and the windows’ closings.



DESIGN



ELEVATION



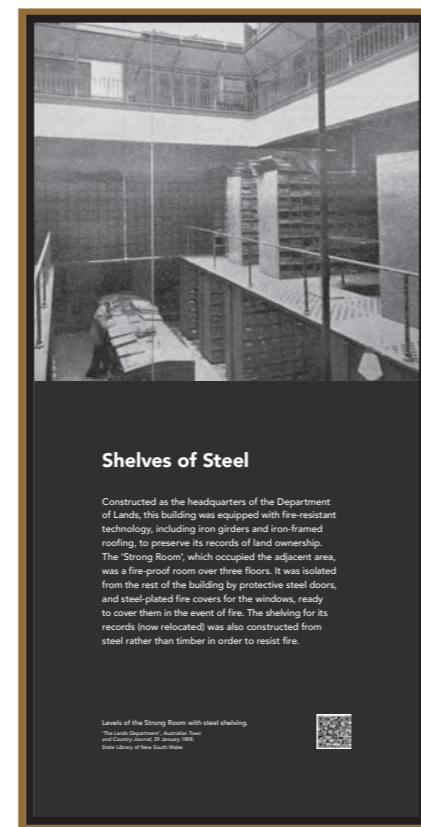
PLAN

Interpretation Design Concepts

Level 1 Panel 2.2 – Shelves of Steel

Wall and Website Interpretation

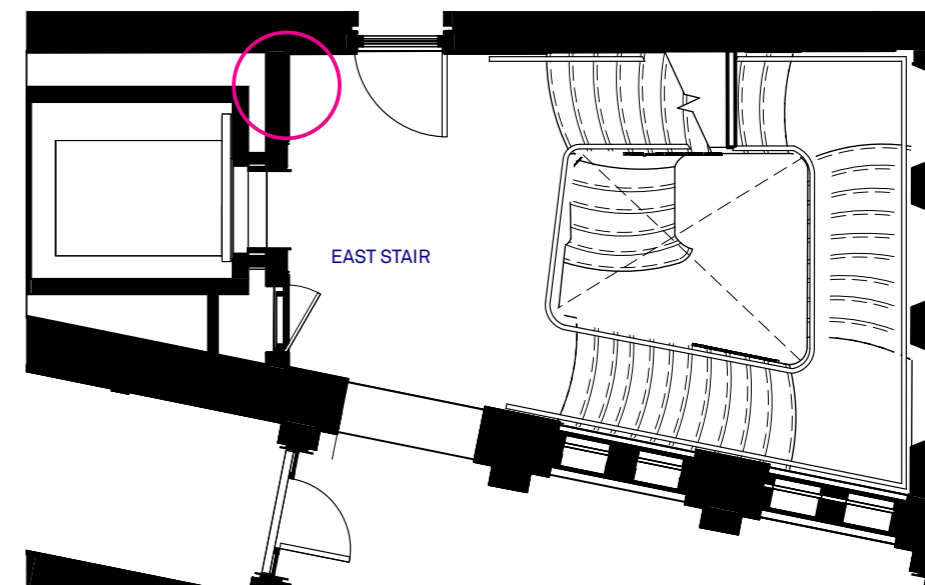
Constructed as the headquarters of the Department of Lands, this building was equipped with fire-resistant technology, including iron girders and iron-framed roofing, to preserve its records of land ownership. The ‘Strong Room’, which occupied the adjacent area, was a fire-proof room over three floors. It was isolated from the rest of the building by protective steel doors, and steel-plated fire covers for the windows, ready to cover them in the event of fire. The shelving for its records (now relocated) was also constructed from steel rather than timber in order to resist fire.



DESIGN



ELEVATION



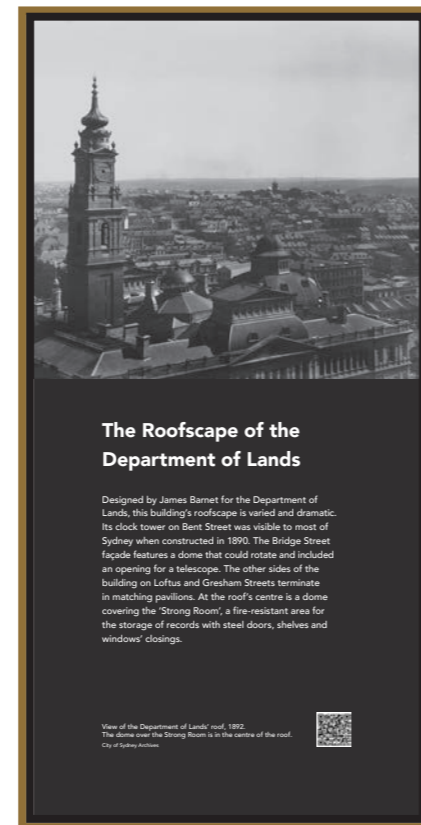
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Interpretation Design Concepts

Level 2 Panel 3.1 – The Roofscape of the Department of Lands

Wall and Website Interpretation

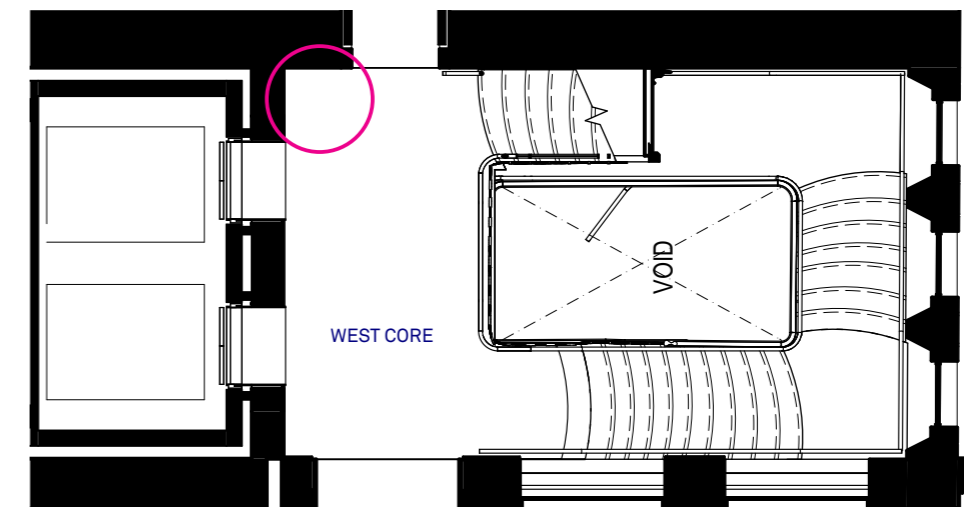
Designed by James Barnet for the Department of Lands, this building's roovescape is varied and dramatic. Its clock tower on Bent Street was visible to most of Sydney when constructed in 1890. The Bridge Street façade features a dome that could rotate and included an opening for a telescope. The other sides of the building on Loftus and Gresham Streets terminate in matching pavilions. At the roof's centre is a dome covering the 'Strong Room', a fire-resistant area for the storage of records with steel doors, shelves and windows' closings.



DESIGN



ELEVATION

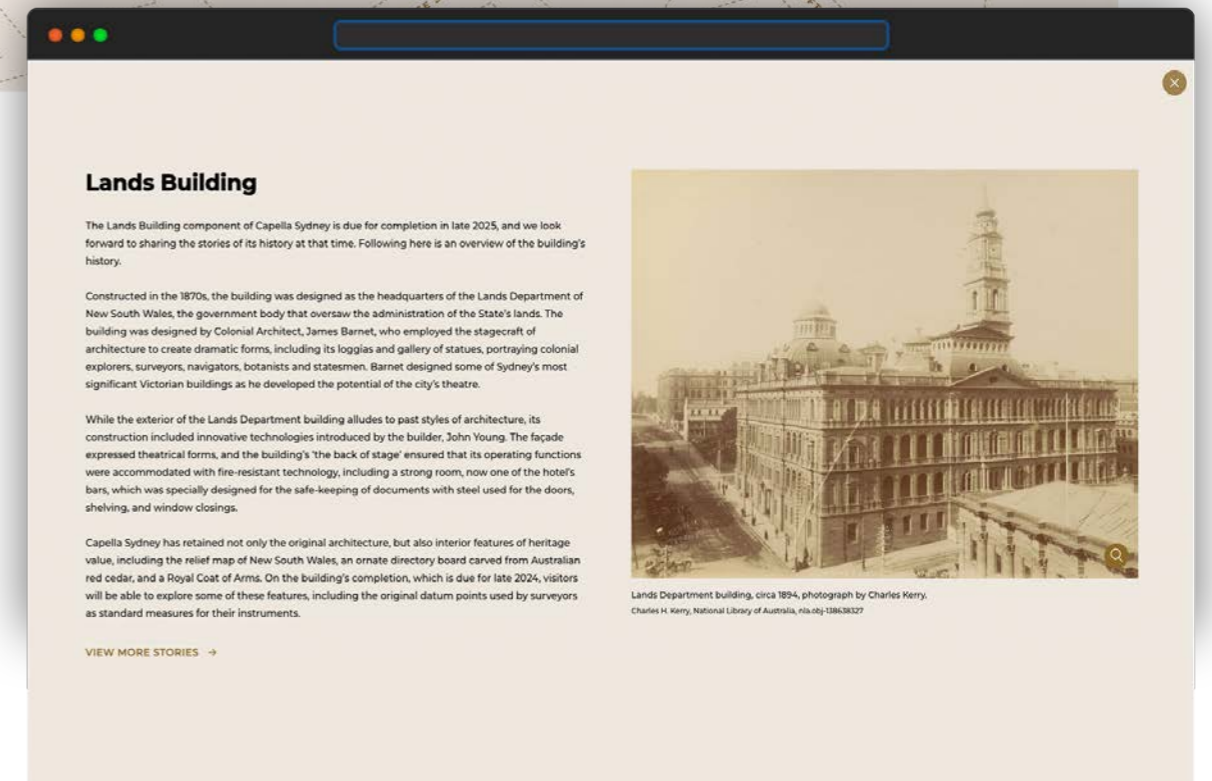
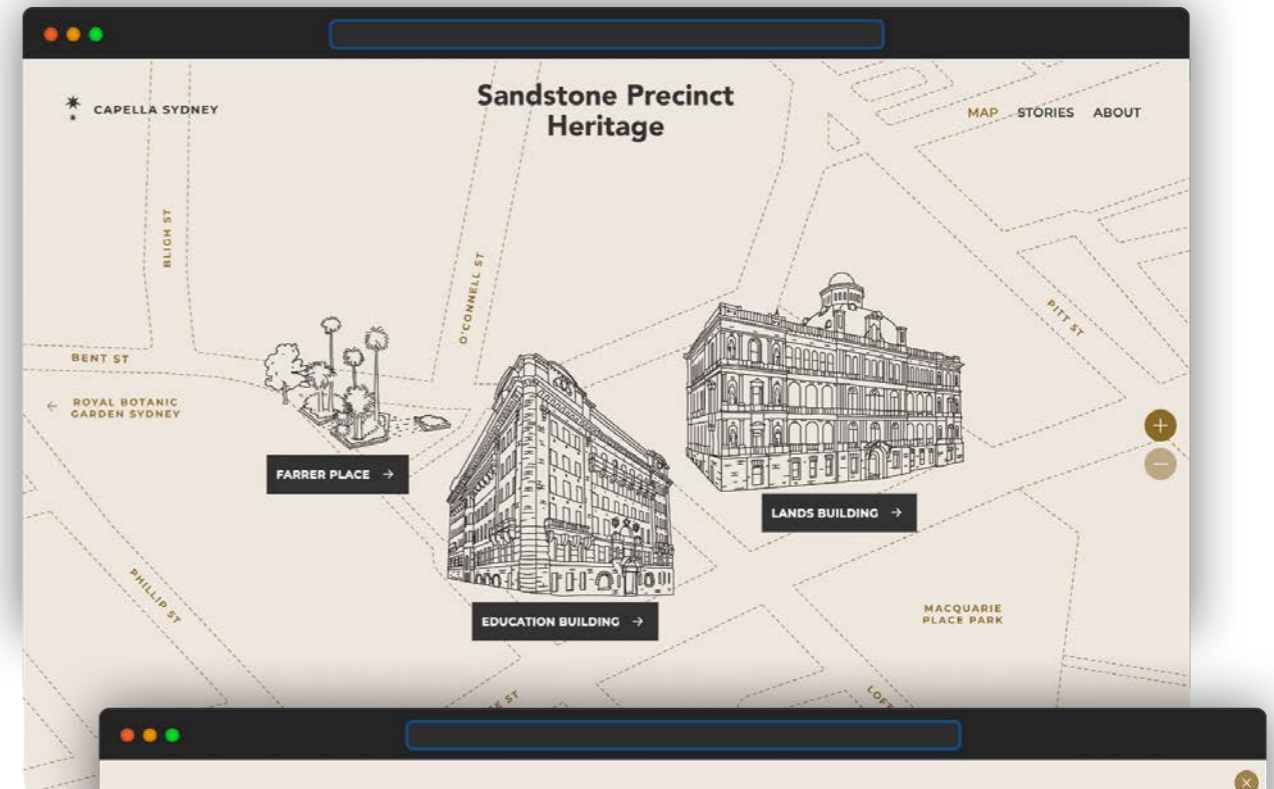


PLAN

Website

Further interpretation of Farrer Place and the Education and Lands buildings will be offered to members of the public through the hotel website which will:

- highlight the sites' heritage values and histories
 - provide a narrative overview to various components of the heritage interpretation including the vast collection of Moveable Heritage
 - identify individual locations of interest within the hotel such as the Lands Building statues, the roof trusses and roof crestings, innovative fire security designed to protect the documents and the storage shelving in the Strong Room, and the ceilings and cornices (and the hierarchy of the rooms reflecting the status of the occupants)
- facilitate a selection of content on subjects of particular interest
 - provide further imagery including archival photographs and drawings
 - as well as access to the website before and after a visit to the Lands Building, a series of QR codes located on specific panels will also lead visitors to the website from their on-site visit.

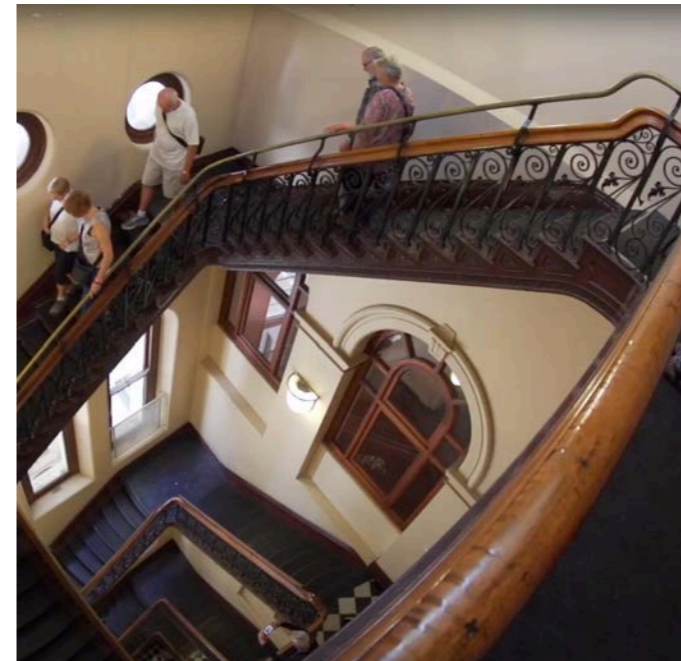


Guided Tours

Guided tours of the Education and Lands Buildings and Farrer Place will provide enhanced accessibility, expanding the heritage interpretation and enriching the visitors' unique experience. This is an opportunity to point out specific landscape, architectural and engineering features, such as the Lands Building roof trusses and roof crestings, the plaster ceilings and cornices and expand on the narratives of the people who occupied the rooms previously. The innovative fire security designed to protect the documents devised by the architect and the builder can also feature and will be emphasised in stories related to the Strong Room.

PLG have proposed to hold a minimum of two reservation-based, guided tours per year. The tours will be subject to agreement with occupants, and availability of spaces within the building.

Comparable public tours include the Sydney Free Walking Tour and Sydney Open tours organised by Sydney Living Museums. They have proven to be extremely popular, as have the heritage tours in hotels. They prove to be very effective marketing exercises, of minimal cost and a very 'light touch' on the buildings.





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