

# Stephenson & Turner

20 July 2004

The Committee Manager  
Standing Committee on Public Works  
Parliament House  
Macquarie Street  
SYDNEY, NSW 2000

Attention: Carolynne James

Dear Madam,

**RE: INQUIRY INTO THE JOINT USE AND CO-LOCATION OF PUBLIC BUILDINGS**

We would like to contribute to this inquiry as we have had considerable experience with the retrofitting and adaptive reuse of existing state and local government public uses, redeveloping existing buildings for joint uses and the design of new buildings for joint uses.

**1. Adaptive Reuse Projects Involving Joint Uses**

**Narrandera One Stop Community Services Shop (OSCSS)**

The building that now houses Narrandera's Home Care, Home Maintenance, Community Transport and Meals-on-wheels service providers began its life as the town's street lighting electricity generating plant in 1912 operating as a commercial entity until the Municipality took it over in the 1920s. In 1948 it passed into the NSW Government's ownership with the formation of the County Councils. A number of additions over the years trebled its floor area. Its most recent owner was Country Energy who used it as their Narrandera Maintenance Depot.

The four community service providers were housed in sub-standard accommodation in scattered rented premises. Narrandera Shire Council commissioned us to establish a brief for the facility and to undertake a feasibility study examining the suitability of three buildings that might accommodate the brief. The feasibility study determined that the Country Energy Depot best lent itself to adaptive reuse at the lowest cost and best accommodated the User's needs.

Narrandera Shire Council purchased the Country Energy complex in 2003 having previously obtained a grant to redevelop it. We were commissioned to undertake detailed architectural and interior design and tender documentation. The tender was won by a local Contractor and the work was completed in May 2004.

The Users are delighted with their new premises. All share common toilets, a large lunch room, interview rooms and meeting rooms accommodating 12 and 30 persons.

**Tumbarumba Rural Transactions Centre**

The building that houses the Tumbarumba Rural Transactions Centre was constructed as Tattersall's Hotel during the 1880s. It had been added to in the 1980s to create a child care centre for the town. During the mid-1990s a new child care centre was constructed on another site leaving two thirds of the building vacant. The balance of the space was used by various community groups and service providers.

Architects

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Like many other rural communities, Tumbarumba had gradually lost banking and other services to larger centres. We were commissioned to do a feasibility study to assess whether the building could be economically adapted for the proposed new uses. Our feasibility study found that it could and formed part of Tumbarumba Shire Council's successful application for Federal Government funding.

We were then commissioned to undertake detailed architectural and interior design and tender documentation. The tender was won by a local Contractor and the work was completed in 2002. The Tumbarumba Rural Transactions Centre houses a Visitors Information Centre, Tourist Officer, a shop selling local crafts, a small local history museum (the last two being run by volunteers), a medical practice and offices for visiting State and Federal Government service providers. All share common toilets, tea room and meeting room.

### **Narrandera Emergency Control Centre**

Narrandera Shire Council owned an early 20<sup>th</sup> Century School of Arts Building that had become redundant when the new library we designed was commissioned. A former child care centre was also located on this large site in the centre of the town next to the NSW Fire Brigade and Telstra's exchange.

We were commissioned to undertake a feasibility study to redevelop the former School of Arts as a permanent home for the Rural Fire Service and the State Emergency Service as well as to provide a control centre with amenities for serious emergencies that would involve the NSW Police Service, Ambulance Service, Red Cross, Salvation Army and other emergency services providers.

We also examined the former child care centre for possible use as a district emergency services training facility as part of our study. Both buildings were perfect fits for the respective briefs. We developed concept plans for their conversion and both the RFS and the SES have now occupied their spaces and the fit-out of the control centre and the training centre will proceed as funding becomes available.

### **Cowra Library and Art Gallery**

Cowra was a classic doughnut LGA with Cowra Municipal and Waugoola Shire Councils. There were amalgamated in the mid 1990s. The Cowra Municipal Council Administration Centre was redeveloped to house all Council's functions displacing Cowra Library in the process. The redevelopment was to house the library, a large multi-function community meeting room, the local history centre and the art gallery all of which operated independently of one another.

The size of the existing library was significantly below that required under the State Library of New South Wales' guidelines and Waugoola House, a very fine example of 1960s architecture was surplus to the merged Council's requirements.

Cowra Shire Council engaged us to undertake a feasibility study for the redevelopment of Waugoola House as a new Cowra Library and Art Gallery. It was not a simple exercise as the building contained seven different levels and came nowhere near to complying with the requirements of the Building Code of Australia with respect to disabled access and toilet provision for a public building.

The solution was to open up a rabbit warren of offices to provide clear span library spaces, reduce the number of levels from seven to four by filling some of them in with new flooring and to link these with complying ramps. A number of ad hoc additions were demolished and new public toilets, a local history centre and the art gallery were added. The redevelopment was planned so that the library, a large multi-function community meeting room, the local history centre and the art gallery had separate entrances, shared the public toilets and could operate independently of one another.

The project was completed on time and within budget and is a highly valued community asset.

## 2. **New Joint Use Facilities**

### **Glen Severn Learning Centre**

The development of the Glen Severn Learning Centre is a joint venture between Glen Innes Municipal Council, Severn Shire Council, the New England College of TAFE and the University of New England (UNE). The two Councils and the UNE are making financial contributions to the project while the New England College of TAFE has contributed the land immediately adjacent to the Glen Innes campus of TAFE at the southern end of the CBD.

A non-profit organization called Glen Innes Community Innovations Inc. was established to develop, manage and own the facility. The Glen Severn Learning Centre will provide a joint-use public/TAFE library, an access centre for the UNE, a large multi-function community meeting facility and an exhibition space for the local arts community.

The UNE's Access Centre is connected to the Armidale campus via broadband. Students can attend lectures and interact with lecturers, tutors, etc. without leaving Glen Innes.

We are providing architectural and interior design services for this very exciting project.

## 3. **Adaptive Reuse of Existing State and Local Government Public Buildings**

### **Cairns City Library**

The building was originally constructed as the Cairns City Council's Administration Centre. It is set in a very beautiful park in the city's CBD and is a lovely classical revival heritage listed building. The building had been added to in ad hoc fashion over the years and our task was to expand and open it up to the lovely views into the park.

In the planning and design process, we respected the building's architecture while transforming it into a state-of-the-art library and information centre. Author Bryce Courtney has called the result, "the most beautiful library in Australia".

### **State Library of New South Wales, State Reference Library Reorganisation**

The new Macquarie Street extension to the State Library of New South Wales was opened in 1988 as the State Reference Library. By the mid 1990s a number of new services had been developed by the Library. These included a legal information access centre, health information access centre, family history service, telephone enquiry service while photocopying and other document delivery services had vastly expanded.

These services and the staff required to run them had seriously encroached on public space. The Library could not find seats for all its Users during peak periods. We were engaged to undertake reorganization feasibility studies that canvassed a number of options. New construction was not possible on the Library's Macquarie Street site.

The most favoured option we developed involved the adaptive reuse of the underutilized Dixon Stack to provide the staff office accommodation that would free up considerable public space. We undertook a cost benefit analysis that secured funding for the project, a heritage conservation plan to justify the change of use for this heritage listed item and wrote the brief for the project. We were subsequently engaged to prepare tender documentation and quality control inspection services for the project.

Basically, we converted the old four level steel and glass stack into two levels of modern office accommodation without affected the building's exterior appearance. In the process we devised a way to connect the new space to the Mitchell Wing's staff toilets (also refurbished under the project) that facilitated staff from the two wings mixing in order to mitigate an "us and them" culture that had arisen over time. During the design and documentation process we developed an elaborate staging and decanting exercise that allowed the Library to maintain service delivery throughout the construction period.

### **Adaptive Reuse of Waterloo Town Hall as South Sydney Central Library**

We converted the 1880s heritage listed former Waterloo Town Hall into South Sydney Council's new Central Library.

### **University of Technology Sydney, Redevelopment of the George Muir Library**

We more than doubled the floor area of the University's Ku-ring-gai Campus library by converting valuable space occupied by a staff parking garage into library space, filling in architectural voids created in the original design and constructing sympathetic new library staff work areas on the roof of this Sulman Prize winning building.

Not only did we provide the required space, but we cured a persistent leaking roof problem in the process. Our solution saved the University \$900,000.00 that they were able to reallocate to other projects.

## **4. Co-location of Local Government Buildings With Private Buildings**

### **Earlville Branch Library in Stocklands Shopping Mall, Cairns, North Queensland**

Cairns City Council and a former Shire Council were amalgamated a few years ago but the library service remained split between the city and country. A serious change in operating philosophy was required and unfortunately, as things developed, the library staff could not provide it. Council finally was able to recruit a former senior manager of one of New South Wales' major banks as its "Library Change Manager". This lady had left Sydney and moved to Cairns for lifestyle reasons. It was through her initiative and business training that this project was accomplished.

There had been a very large increase in residential development over the past four years in this area, the fastest growing in Cairns. The local population is young and has a very high aboriginal component. Cairns City Council had operated a branch library in the area for many years. This branch library, located in a community centre, was very small and badly run down.

Among a number of other significant moves, the Library Change Manager was able to negotiate a 10 year lease on 800 sq m of long vacant retail space (originally part of a David Jones store and latterly a Harris Scarfe outlet) in Stocklands Earlville Shopping Mall for no rent and a substantial incentive payment to Council for a new branch library and a customer service centre. The high profile space is located at the main entrance to the mall and close to the food court. It was a win/win situation for Council and Stockland.

We were selected to fit out this library on the basis of past performance with Cairns Central Library. It was quite a challenge as the only window in the space was the shop front to the mall. The result is a resounding success with a library membership increase of over 300% and a significant increase in the mall's turnover.

### **Leichhardt Library at the Italian Forum**

Leichhardt Council negotiated the provision of a 1,500 sq m of library within the Italian Forum development in Norton Street in exchange for land. There was considerable controversy over this deal. The Council failed to specify its requirements in any sort of detail and did not engage specialist consultants to develop their requirements into a brief and design prior to entering into the deal with the Developer.

The Developer reneged on their part of the agreement. The matter was finally settled after several years of litigation with the developer providing a shell space and a financial contribution the library's fit-out. The library was finally opened in August 2003 four years after the Italian Forum was completed.

## **Input of Professional Expertise into Joint Projects Being Negotiated with Developers**

There are a number of other developments where libraries and other local government facilities have been or are being procured as part of a larger project. The more recent of these include libraries at Hurstville, Kogarah, Five Dock, Castle Hill, Waringah Mall, Erina Fair and the projected libraries in new Woolworths developments for Woollahra and Lane Cove Councils.

It has been our experience that the elected members and management of many Councils are neither trained for nor experienced with complex property transactions involving procurement of public facilities. Often local government does not engage specialist consultants to test the suitability of what the Developer is offering or to assist them with the negotiations until the deal has been done. We believe that successful outcomes result when expertise is brought into such discussions at the very earliest stages and the parameters of the facilities to be procured are defined in considerable detail before an agreement is reached.

Both Woollahra and Lane Cove Councils engaged us to prepare concept layouts to test whether the space being offered was of good quality for a library and whether it could accommodate their briefs. Both Councils engaged us to prepare layouts and very detailed performance specifications for the space to be provided, including building services, and sought our comments on the proposed architectural and engineering designs

### **Project Inception**

In many cases the projects described above represent visions on the part of one or more of the elected members and/or officers of local government bodies and tertiary education providers. In many others we have studied our clients' needs and the facilities available to satisfy them; arriving at solutions that were not visible to them without professional expertise.

The common thread that runs through the projects listed above is the ability to think laterally and to inspire/lead others to want to achieve the optimal outcome in terms of time, cost and quality.

Please do not hesitate to contact us should you require any further information.

Yours faithfully,

STEPHENSON & TURNER INTERNATIONAL PTY LIMITED



DONALD BERGOMI, FRAIA  
MANAGING DIRECTOR