

Application Referral Cultural Heritage - Response

From:	Brendan Lennard
Recommendation:	Proposal is unacceptable.
Date Completed:	
Address:	34 DAVEY STREET, HOBART
Proposal:	Partial Demolition, Alterations and Extension to Previously Approved Development
Application No:	PLN-18-798
Assessment Officer:	Ben Ikin,

Referral Officer comments:

Proposal

The proposal involves construction of an additional level (Level 03) behind the existing façade of the building known as 12 Murray Street. The additional level connects with Level 03 (Presidential Suite) of the previously approved new building which replaces the former 10 Murray Street State Office building. The new work will be set back approximately 2 metres from the building façade.

The existing building

The existing structure is the remnant two-storey, Inter-War Gothic Revival sandstone façade of a former office building. It is well-detailed and solidly constructed, featuring a parapet, pilasters which divide the façade into three bays, and a pediment surmounting the pronounced arched entrance.

12 Murray Street was constructed as the head office of the former Hydro-Electric Department (later Commission). The building was constructed in 1921 and 1922, with the offices first occupied in July 1922. The architectural design of the building has an interesting background. It was originally intended to locate this building in Davey Street, and its Tudoresque Gothic design bore a deliberate relationship with the two other government buildings in Davey Street – the former 1847-48 St Mary's Hospital / Lands and Survey Department offices (Alexander Dawson and William Porden Kay) and the 1884 Government Printing Office / Public Works Department building (William Waters Eldridge) – both representing similar architectural vocabulary. It was envisaged that the Hydro-Electric Department offices would complement the suite of Davey Street government buildings. Issues related to site and foundation conditions forced relocation of the Hydro-Electric Department offices to its Murray Street site. The Gothic design was retained – probably appearing somewhat 'old-fashioned' by 1922.

The Hydro-Electric Department building was constructed during an important phase in the expansion of electricity generation and distribution throughout Tasmania, and was the first time the department had its own building (it had previously leased office space). The rear of the building was utilitarian, in contrast to the relatively ornate façade.

The building is recognised as a Place of Cultural Significance in Table 1 of Schedule 1 of the *Sullivans Cove Planning Scheme 1997*. It is also on the Tasmanian Heritage Register.

The Planning Scheme

Schedule 1 of the *Sullivans Cove Planning Scheme 1997* includes the following submission requirements:

22.4.3 Submission Requirements

All applications for 'building or works' must satisfy the relevant submission requirements of clause 9.2 of the Scheme. In addition, pursuant to s.54 of the *Land Use Planning and Approvals Act 1993*, the following information may be required:

- A Conservation Plan as defined in Clause 22.3.
- Street elevations or 'true perspectives' to show the scale and impact of 'building or works' on places of cultural significance.

In this instance, a separate conservation plan was not requested or submitted, as one had been previously submitted (*Parliament Square, Hobart – Conservation Management Plan, January 2009.*)

The Conservation Plan recognises the significance of 12 Murray Street and its relationship with the two other Gothic-styled sandstone government buildings. It also notes its historical importance in terms of the Hydro-Electric Department (later Commission). The Conservation Plan states that the 'style, scale and materials [of 12 Murray Street] reflect a desire to create a harmonious governmental precinct.'

The Conservation Plan states that the façade must be retained with a high degree of external integrity and conservation. (7.3.2)

The exterior appearance of the site, which is a result of the existing form, external surfaces, materials and finishes of significant facades, should be preserved. ... No new work should compromise the original significant facades. (7.4.1)

Where it is necessary to modify a façade, changes to the façade should reinforce the composition of the original façade. (7.4.2)

Despite the favourable assessment of the Heritage Impact Statement prepared by Design 5 – Architects Pty Ltd and submitted in support of the proposal, the proposal is not considered to be in compliance with the policies espoused in the Conservation Plan.

Relevant Scheme Provisions

22.4.5 'Discretionary' 'Building or Works'

'Building or works' on places of cultural significance which cannot satisfy the 'deemed to comply' provisions of Clause 22.4.4 may be approved at the discretion of the Planning Authority.

The following criteria must be taken into consideration in the assessment of all proposals to undertake 'building or works' on places of cultural significance:

- 'Building or works' must complement and contribute to the cultural significance, character and appearance of the place and its setting;
- 'Building or works' must be in compliance with the conservation strategy of an approved Conservation Plan, where required and/or provided;

- The location, bulk and appearance of 'building or works' must not adversely affect the heritage values of any place of cultural significance;
- 'Building or works' must not reduce the apparent authenticity of places of cultural significance by mimicking historic forms;
- 'Building or works' may be recognisable as new but must not be individually prominent;
- The painting of previously unpainted surfaces is discouraged.

Assessment

The proposed works do not complement and contribute to the cultural significance, character and appearance of the place. The proposed work is an incompatible contemporary addition, destroying the architectural expression of the existing building and its historical relationship with other former government buildings. The historic façade will appear nothing more than just a façade – a 'postage stamp' on the overall envelope of new development.

The proposal does not comply with the conservation strategy of the submitted Conservation Plan.

The location, bulk and appearance of the proposed work will adversely affect the heritage values of the existing façade, altering the relationship of the parapet with the space beyond, and providing an incongruent element which will inevitably be more closely associated visually with the adjacent new development, reducing the appearance of the façade to that of an ill-fitting mask.

The proposal fails to meet key conservation provisions, and warrants refusal.

Tasmanian Heritage Council

The Tasmanian Heritage Council has granted conditionally consent to the proposed works. The conditions relate to:

1. Archaeology
2. Protection of façade
3. Relationship of new floors to existing façade
4. 2m setback and façade design issues

Section 39 (9) of the *Historic Cultural Heritage Act 1995* sets out requirements of the planning authority if the Heritage Council consents to the discretionary permit being granted subject to the conditions specified in the notification (as in this case):

(9) If subsection (6)(b) applies and the relevant planning authority grants the discretionary permit –

(a) it must do so subject to (at least) the conditions required by the Heritage Council; and

(b) it must not make the discretionary permit subject to a condition that conflicts with any condition required by the Heritage Council.

Notwithstanding the consent of the THC, the planning authority is not bound to approve the proposed works. The planning authority may still refuse to grant the discretionary permit, and ultimately, this is considered to be the appropriate course.

Reasons for refusal:

The proposal fails to comply with the requirements of clause 2.4.5 'Discretionary' 'Building or Works' of the *Sullivans Cove Planning Scheme 1997* as:

(a) It does not complement and contribute to the cultural significance, character and appearance of the place.

(b) It does not comply with the conservation strategy of the submitted Conservation Plan.

(c) The location, bulk and appearance of the proposed work will adversely affect the heritage values of the existing façade.