



International High- Performance Built Environment Conference – A Sustainable Built Environment Conference 2016 Series (SBE16), iHBE 2016

## Adding more by using Less: Adaptive reuse of woolstores

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### Abstract

Having acknowledged the value and importance of heritage, it is not always possible however, to preserve heritage buildings without some form of adaptive reuse. This paper will examine the values attached to heritage buildings, the importance of and the challenges associated with various forms of adaptive reuse. It will argue that adaptive reuse can add value to such buildings and places. This paper will focus on three case studies to illustrate the importance of adaptive reuse.

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Peer-review under responsibility of the organizing committee iHBE 2016

*Keywords:* Adaptive reuse; preservation of heritage buildings; woolstores; value of heritage buildings; challenges; case studies

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### 1. Introduction

Heritage buildings and places have variously been described using terms such as ‘unique’ and ‘invaluable’[1]. Heritage is considered as structures, buildings, places and areas that have architectural, cultural, environmental or aesthetic importance [2]. With this in mind the long lasting protection of such heritage is important to society, and so, national and international authorities have tried to develop regulations, guidelines, methodologies, standards and measures to define and conserve historic buildings and their settings [3]. It has been noted that the conservation of such heritage has a broad spectrum of benefits ranging from purely commercial advantages such as tourism, through intangible benefits such as religious or educational values, to a better appreciation of history [4]. Conservation in this context is the process that reduces the depreciation of heritage, thus decreasing the need for fundamental interventions [5].

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In Australia it would appear that there is both political and public acceptance that heritage building conservation has some value, be it economic, cultural or social, or combination of these aspects. It is also apparent that people have a greater feeling of connection to their local environment via heritage buildings compared to the construction of new buildings [6]. In addition a heritage building may not only provide a sense of connection, but may also make people curious to know more about their history, the people and culture that produced them [7].

Adding additional value to conserving heritage buildings and places is the 'reuse' principle implicit in the idea of sustainability. Reusing such properties may help a city to achieve its density aims or energy efficiency and may be more affordable than a new build option.

"Cities need old buildings so badly it is probably impossible for vigorous streets and districts to grow without them....for really new ideas of any kind – no matter how ultimately profitable or otherwise successful some of them might prove to be – there is no leeway for such chancy trail, error and experimentation in the high-overhead economy of new construction. Old ideas can sometimes use new buildings. New ideas must use old buildings".[8]

Heritage buildings and places are important, because not only do they show differences within societies, but also they tell us who we are, and how the past has helped shape our lives and our surroundings. Heritage building conservation therefore, not only preserves valuable places and buildings and contributes to sustainability; it preserves the uniqueness and history of societies including the character of community where people live, work, and re-construct.

## 2. Heritage buildings

The term 'conservation' covers the whole gambit from basic maintenance to preservation, all the way through to adaptive reuse. This paper focuses on adaptive reuse. Adaptive reuse means changing a building and/or its use in order to satisfy the needs of new or even existing owner [9]. Adaptive reuse is thus a form of preserving heritage in that, although it may change a building's use, it also acknowledges its importance and implicit in that it also acknowledges its value [10]. One additional value acknowledged in heritage building adaptive reuse is the skills and efforts of the previous builders [6]. Furthermore reuse preserves the historical, cultural, and architectural values of heritage buildings [11].

The heritage and cultural value of a building has a significant effect on the decision related to whether the building will be reused and changed. In making such a decision, the architectural heritage and historical values (including emotional, experience, architectonic, cultural-historical and visual) are evaluated versus the financial as well as possible use values [12]. The visual or aesthetic value is part of architectural value [3]. Having said this, the functional and economic life cycle of a building is also important for decision making in relation to new use or demolition. Adaptive reuse usually happens when there is some potential in the quality of a building or its environment and is made possible and practical when stakeholders have an idea related to the future potential of the building. Bullen and Love [13] expresses a successful adaptive reuse project on the following way:

"Respect and retain a building's heritage significance as well as add a contemporary layer that provides value for the future."

Having outlined some of the values placed on heritage buildings, it must be recognized that there are many challenges relating to their conservation. It should be noted that adaptive reuse of architectural heritage can have a detrimental effect on the social, cultural and historic values of historic buildings, particularly where a change of the original function of a building is concerned [14].

There are two main types of adaptive reuse of buildings; 'within-use' and 'across-use'. When a building has been adapted based on its primary use it is within-use adaption, while across-use changes the initial use of building to another use [15]. Across use adaptation of three woolstores is investigated in this research, namely; Queensland Primary producers No, 4 Woolstore in Teneriffe, Brisbane; Dalgetys Woolstores in Geelong City, Victoria; and, The Old Woolstore Apartments and Hotel, Tasmania.

## 3. Woolstores

Woolstores are considered important in terms of the historical, architectural and regional development of Australia [16] and as such many have attained heritage status. They tell the story of the resilience and success of

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