



Conservation

This chapter proposes what should be done to protect the cultural heritage significance of the Old Museum, based on the information in the earlier chapters. It recommends general policies and specific tasks.

Like the rest of this report, this chapter uses some words with the particular meanings that have been standardised in Australian conservation practice – see the *glossary of conservation terms* on page 75.

Conservation approach

This conservation plan recommends that the best professional practice in conservation be employed in using and caring for the Old Museum Building. The need for this is well summarised in the *Burra charter*:

Places of cultural significance enrich people's lives, often providing a deep and inspirational sense of connection to community and landscape, to the past and to lived experiences. They are historical records, that are important as tangible expressions of Australian identity and experience. Places of cultural significance reflect the diversity of our communities, telling us about who we are and the past that has formed us and the Australian landscape. They are irreplaceable and precious.

*These places of cultural significance must be conserved for present and future generations.*¹³⁹

Conservation practice

The *Burra Charter* sets out the principles of a sound approach to conserving places like the Old Museum, and is the accepted standard.

Policy 1 The Old Museum Building and its grounds should be conserved in accordance with the Burra Charter.

Advice

The *Burra Charter* points out the importance of using all the knowledge, skills and disciplines that can contribute to the study and care of places like the Old Museum. Relevant professional skills are available from these people:

- Architects in the Built Environment Research Unit, Department of Public Works



- Architects in the Cultural Heritage Branch, Environmental Protection Agency
- Private consultants in various conservation disciplines.

Policy 2 People skilled and experienced in conserving historic buildings and gardens should plan and design future works at the Old Museum.

Adoption of this plan

Unless it has formal acceptance by the building's owner, this document will not have the standing it needs.

Policy 3 This conservation plan should be adopted by the Queensland Government, and a copy should be submitted to the Queensland Heritage Council as a record of the government's conservation policy for the building.

Review of this plan

This conservation plan takes account of current circumstances and is meant to guide the future care of the building. But circumstances may change, and the recommendations in the plan will need to be reviewed from time to time.

Policy 4 This plan should be reviewed within five years of its adoption, revised if necessary, and adopted for a further period.

Use

The purpose the building is used for is relevant to its conservation because any change of use implies alteration of the fabric to accommodate it, and because the building's significance is bound up with aspects of use.

Compatibility of present uses

Present use of the building by the Queensland Youth Orchestra, Queensland Municipal Choir, and Queensland Youth Choir for rehearsal and performance continue the historical pattern of use for cultural purposes. This kind of use, as practised in the recent past, is compatible with the retention of cultural significance provided no further detrimental alterations are made to the fabric. Use of parts of the building by the Queensland Police Pipe Band, the Bachelor Knights, the Rock 'n' Roll Circus and the Queensland Academy of Rhythmic Gymnastics, also appears to be generally benign.

Policy 5 Present uses of the building may continue as long as the benefits outweigh any detrimental impacts.



46

The western end of the exhibition hall in 1999 being used by members of Rock 'n' Roll Circus. This end of the hall has not been changed much since 1900. Here we see Addison's great 1891 exhibition hall, overlaid by the changes made during the museum conversion – the upper windows on the right, the ripple-iron ceiling, and the mezzanine floor. The present uses by the circus allows these attributes to survive, although they are not available to the public.



Continued public access

Maintaining public access to the Old Museum is important for the continuity of its significance as a place of resort.

Policy 6 Uses that foster continued use by the public should be favoured over uses that do not.

Public use of the gardens

Maintaining public use and enjoyment of the gardens throughout the seasons is necessary for the continuity of their importance as public gardens. The gardens were designed as public gardens, and continuously used in that way since they were constructed.

Policy 7 The gardens should remain open to the public throughout the year.



Future use

The history of the site demonstrates that the building is adaptable to a range of uses without necessarily losing significance. The whole site is an important relic of various episodes in Brisbane's cultural past, and is a resource that needs to be protected at the same time as it is used.

Policy 8 No new use should begin until its compatibility with the retention of cultural significance has been established.

The recent subdivision of the exhibition hall space – to create the sound-isolated music studio – has diminished the significance of the exhibition hall.

Policy 9 Uses that will support the restoration of the open spaces of the exhibition hall should be favoured over uses that do not.

Management

The protection of the building's significance should not be put aside to meet other more pragmatic concerns.

Policy 10 The people responsible for managing the Old Museum, and the systems of administration they use, should be informed of the significance of the site and the conservation policies adopted. Conservation of the place should be an explicit objective of the building's managers.

Conservation in general

The building is, in many respects, in poor condition because proper maintenance has been put off for so long. Past neglect has run up a bill that should now be paid.

The building in its urban setting

The building is a prominent element in the townscape, but its run-down condition masks the quality of its architecture.

Policy 11 The deteriorated fabric of the building exterior should be repaired, and a program of ongoing maintenance and monitoring established.

Continuing care of the gardens

Since the museum moved out, the gardens have had only basic maintenance, and their condition has deteriorated.

Policy 12 The gardens should be stabilised and maintained under an appropriate program to protect their cultural value and ensure no further decline in content and condition until more extensive works are undertaken in accordance with policies 17 to 21.



Interpretation

The story of how the building was built, used and changed is complex, but potentially of interest to many people.

Policy 13 The history of the building should be revealed by small displays on site, collections of relevant objects, the treatment of the building fabric, or by pamphlets or a guide book.

Work of this kind should qualify as meeting the requirement to spend 2% of building project cost on works of art, under the *art built in* scheme.

Interior finishes

Reconstruction of original or early interior colour schemes can help people to appreciate and interpret the history and character of the building.

Policy 14 Original or early colour schemes should be reconstructed in the interior, as a means of interpreting the history of the building.

Adapting the building

Adaptation will continue to be required, to keep the building in use and available to the public. The impact of change needs to be kept to a minimum.

Adaptation principles

Recent changes have, to a fair degree, followed sound principles. These guiding principles can be summarised as:

Necessity—only changes that are critically necessary for the ongoing use of the building should be made.

Visibility—the change should be clearly visible, and not disguised as original work.

Reversibility—it should be possible to restore the fabric to its original form without damage.

Policy 15 The principles of necessity, visibility and reversibility should continue to be applied when changes are made to the fabric.

Conserving the parts of the building

Conservation work done at the Old Museum in recent years has not included some of the basic necessities proposed in the 1990 *Old Museum Building conservation project* reports, since money has not been allocated by the government for this purpose.



Policy 16 A comprehensive program of conservation works should be undertaken, to protect the significant attributes of the building from further deterioration, and to reveal hidden attributes.

The grounds and outbuildings

The *Old Museum Gardens conservation study* thoroughly examined the conservation of the grounds and outbuildings. Policies 17 to 21 below are the summary recommendations from that study. The zones are shown in illustration 43.

*Policy 17 **Zone A** should be conserved by preserving the c1900 fence, gates and garden beds where they survive, and by restoring or reconstructing the fountain and gravel paths. The remains of the Mephisto shelter should be removed and the garden beds reconstructed. No new fencing or entry to the grounds should be introduced.*

*Policy 18 **Zone B** should be conserved by preserving the existing rockery gardens and reconstructing paths and garden beds in their 1897-1900 form, with the fish pond and plantings. The dinosaur and steam engine mountings should be removed and garden beds and arbour reconstructed. The gardeners' work area behind the hedge should be conserved. No new fencing or entry to the grounds should be introduced.*

*Policy 19 **Zone C** should be conserved by retaining the early paths and plantings, and retaining or reconstructing the earlier character of a strolling garden with its trees, palms, shrubs, gravel paths and the gardeners' work area. The modular transportable unit should be removed. The colorbond shed may be removed or replaced, but visual screening along the railway line should be retained. The other outbuildings should be conserved. No additional structures should be built except for possible reconstruction of the missing fernery. If entry from the RNA grounds to the gardens is required, it should only be a small scale pedestrian entry south of the air raid shelter.*

*Policy 20 **Zone D** should be conserved by maintaining the existing driveway, paths, fence and planting. The visual demarcation of the caretaker's cottage yard should be maintained. The outbuildings may be removed. The stone and iron fence and gates should be preserved and (where necessary) reconstructed. If a security fence is required on this boundary in the absence of a feasible and prudent alternative, the old fence should be kept, and a visually unobtrusive taller fence erected, set directly behind the old fence without damage to the hedge and palms. No new entry to the old museum grounds should be introduced.*

*Policy 21 **Zone E** should be conserved by preserving the arrangement of driveway, paths, garden beds and planting. Plantings of native shrubs and trees should be replaced with earlier appropriate plants. The stone and iron fence should be preserved and (where necessary)*



reconstructed. No new fencing or entry to the grounds should be introduced in this area.

The exterior of the building

Gradual deterioration of the fabric, and lack of thorough maintenance and repair over a long period, makes a thorough overhaul necessary.

The roof is a visually dominant part of the building, and its weatherproof performance is critical to the survival of the whole building.

Policy 22 The roof sheeting, gutters and rainwater goods should be reconstructed in their 1900 form, including the dormer vents.

The 1930 dormer windows, while they have some small historic value for their evidence of the art gallery use, diminish the architectural quality of the building.

Policy 23 The dormer windows in the concert hall wing roof should be removed when the roof sheeting is replaced, and the roof reconstructed in its original form.

The brickwork has suffered general deterioration through weathering and mechanical damage.

Policy 24 The brickwork should be repaired and repointed.

The stucco features, which are important elements in the architectural composition, have generally deteriorated and some are missing.

Policy 25 The exterior stucco should be repaired, and missing elements reconstructed.

Terracotta balustrades, originally important architectural elements, have been removed from the tops of walls and parapets.

Policy 26 The terracotta balustrades, removed from the tops of the brick walls and parapets, should be reconstructed.

There has been general deterioration of exterior joinery.

Policy 27 The windows, doors and other exterior joinery should be repaired, and damaged or missing elements reconstructed.

The upper balustrade of the porte-cochère of the concert hall wing has been rebuilt, with the loss of the original terracotta balusters and stucco details.

Policy 28 Missing and unsound parts of the concert hall porte-cochère should be reconstructed.



The concert hall

The recent adaptation of the concert hall has made that space useable again as a public venue for music and drama performance. In the face of technical and budget limitations, the scheme has not revealed the scale and volume of the hall in its original form. This impact is potentially reversible.

Policy 29 When the opportunity arises, the original volume of the concert hall should be restored by removing the recently installed inner walls, by reconstructing the galleries, and by removing the control room.

47
A performance in the concert hall. Refurbishment of the hall has made it once more a cultural resource for Brisbane, and continued the building's role as a site for public assembly and cultural expression.



The exhibition hall

The recent adaptation work has diminished the significance of the exhibition hall by hiding the grand scale of the space. This impact is potentially reversible.

Policy 30 When the opportunity arises, the open spaces of the exhibition hall should be restored by removing the recently installed walls and roof enclosing the central music studio.

Exhibition hall basement

The basement rooms reflect the long occupation of the building by museum staff. Their layout, and the visible evidence of alterations to them, reveal the behind-the-scenes operations of research, collection and display preparation.

Policy 31 The layout of partition walls, doors and rooms in the basement should generally be kept intact and in place. Alterations, if any, should be limited in scope and should accord with Policy 15.

The museum library at the western end has special significance because of its evidence and evocation of the museum's research library.



Policy 32 At least a representative portion (and ideally all the surviving parts) of the museum library shelving should be kept intact and in place. If shelving is removed, it should be catalogued and stored for later reinstallation in the room.

48

The eastern end of the exhibition hall in 1999, which can be compared with illustration 28. The intrusion of the music studio in the middle of the space has diminished its architectural quality and obscured the openness that is a characteristic of nineteenth century exhibition halls. Policy 30 recommends removal of the studio.



Contents

At the time the Queensland Museum moved to the Queensland Cultural Centre, almost all of the specialised furniture used for storing and displaying the museum collection was taken away from the Old Museum Building. Some pieces were retained by the Museum, but many of the display cases, which had been purpose-made for the building, were given to local community museums around Queensland.

Some representative display cases, on public display at the Old Museum, would help interpret the history of the building and the institution.

Policy 33 The Queensland Museum should be asked for help in returning a representative group of museum furniture to the building.

Various notices, remnants of displays, and pieces of furniture left from the use of the building as a museum (see illustrations 32 and 39), have potential to interpret this important past use of the building.

Policy 34 Signs and other objects in and about the building, that are associated with or illustrate its use as a museum, should be found, recorded and (where possible) preserved.

Policy 35 A display, using objects including the ones mentioned in policies 33 and 34, should be established in the building to interpret the history of the site.



OLD MUSEUM BUILDING	THE CONCERT HALL - THE OLD MUSEUM BUILDING CNR GREGORY TERRACE & BOWEN BRIDGE ROAD	OLD MUSEUM BUILDING
The Necks	The Necks	The Necks
\$15+B/F	<i>Live in Concert</i>	\$15+B/F
Mon 10/01/00 8:30pm Start No. 0350	Monday 10 January 2000 - 8:30 pm Start Unreserved No. 0350	Mon 10/01/00 8:30pm Start No. 0350

Notes

- 139 Australia ICOMOS Inc., *The Burra Charter (Australia ICOMOS charter for places of cultural significance)* (Canberra: Australia ICOMOS, 1999), quoted from *Why conserve?*, in the Preamble