



Att: Tristan Widdowson

Planning Department
Hobart City Council
Hobart TAS 7000

Date: 26.08.2020

By email to: widdowsont@hobartcity.com.au

Re: PLN-19-706

**Demolition and New Building for 45 Multiple Dwellings, Food Services
5 - 7 SANDY BAY ROAD HOBART TAS 7000**

Dear Tristan,

We write to make a representation relating to the above Development Application. While we appreciate that the formal advertisement period closed last week, we hope this submission provides useful information to your assessment and is considered alongside other representations.

Our concern is with the demolition of the former ABC and University of Tasmania (UTAS) Conservatorium building, notably the block/façade above the mural fronting Sandy Bay Road. We appreciate that the George Davis 1960 glass mural is State-Heritage-listed and is to be retained in the proposals. We support the retention of this important work of Tasmanian art.

We also appreciate that the building above the mural is not listed as of either State or Local significance.

Nevertheless, we have grave concerns about its demolition, and of the retention of the mural 'as a token gesture' without its context or history. We are also unsupportive of the demolition of an entirely useful building which could be readily adapted into apartments with nominal interventions.

Some information/notes about the mural and the building are enclosed:

History

The building was designed by architect Dr. Oscar AT Gimesy and the Commission (the ABC) decided that the tiled frontage should be the place for a mural. The mural design by George Davis was selected from a limited competition. The design was based on the mathematical infinity sign within which fifteen stylised classical figures comprising the nine Muses and three Graces of Greek Mythology. The design relates to the pattern of radio waves and:

'...the capacity of wireless and television to embrace all the arts as a cultural medium and suggest the infinite possibilities of radio. The general pattern is static and architectural, yet embodies movement through time, and the infinity sign with classical figures links the past with the present, and the future.'

The mural is composed of 150,000 Italian glass mosaic tiles prefabricated off site and at the time was the largest mural in Tasmania.

Statement of Significance of the mural

The ABC glass mural is an important art work that is intimately related to its place on the ABC building. It was the largest mural in Tasmania at the time of its construction and its design may have influenced the ABC infinity logo used today.

The use of artwork on modern buildings was recognised internationally following a period of austere design in the post war period. The ABC mural is a good example of this collaboration between art and architecture.

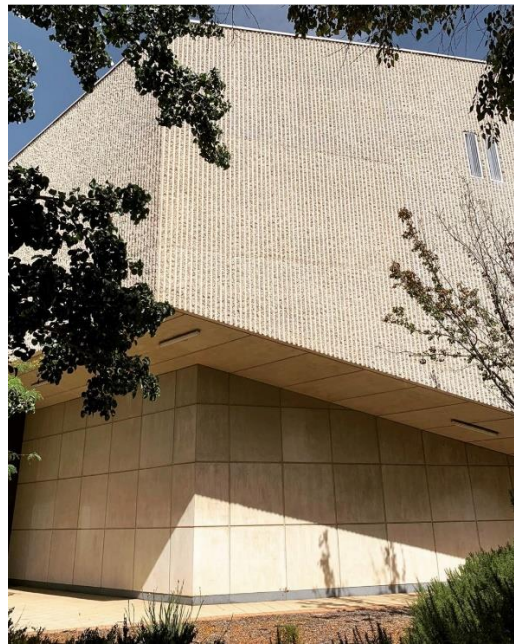
George Davis is an important Tasmanian artist having studied at the Hobart Technical School Art School where he later became a teacher and the Royal Academy in London. The mural is a major technical achievement given the complexity and size of the work that required prefabrication and innovative techniques in its construction. The mural and the building are culturally significant in the following 5 significance categories:

1. Important heritage value in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a particular class or period of design.
2. Important heritage value in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics
3. Important heritage value in establishing a high degree of creative achievement
4. Important monumental and symbolic heritage value to the development of architecture and the history of architecture.
5. Having an association with the life or works of an architect of significant importance in our history

The architect of the building

The architect of the ABC/Conservatorium building at 5-7 Sandy Bay Rd was Dr. Oscar AT Gimesy, a Hungarian émigré who arrived in Melbourne in 1949. He worked for the Victorian

Dept. of Works and Melbourne Harbour Trust before registering in 1956 and establishing his own practice in 1957. He recognised the importance of the architectural and engineering ramifications of radio and commercial television, and in 1958 completed a Masters of Architecture through University of Melbourne on 'The Design of Television Stations'. The same year he was appointed as Senior Consulting Architect to the ABC, and he held this role until 1971, when he reverted to private practice. In his time at the ABC, he was responsible for all Victorian, Tasmanian, South Australian and Western Australian ABC buildings. His ABC building at 85 North East Rd in Collinswood in Adelaide remains a much-loved/treasured ABC building with state heritage listing (image below), and his ABC building in Glen Eira (the 'Dream Factory' or Ripponlea Studios) at 8 Gordon St Elsternwick has both state and council heritage protection (image below).



ABC Building, Collinswood Adelaide (photo credit Pam Saunders)



ABC Building, Ripponlea Melbourne (photo credit unknown)

The conversion of the Hobart ABC building to the Conservatorium

This change was proposed by the University to the State Government in 1991 and work started in 1992. It was opened by Premier Ray Groom in 1993. The alterations to the ABC building included a new lecture hall, teaching studios, workshop spaces, practice rooms, electronic music suites, library, offices and a recital hall for 150 people. A number of adjacent heritage-listed houses in Wilmot and Heatherwick Streets were appropriated as offices and accommodation for artists-in-residence and students. This renewal was an extremely successful adaptation of the ABC building and gave the Conservatorium a closer relationship with the Salamanca Arts precinct, and the Hunter St School of Arts.

Importantly, it has demonstrated the ability and potential for this building to be adapted for new uses.

In summary

We feel that the remaining component of the ABC building (above the mural fronting Sandy Bay Road) has a history and significance that is sufficient that efforts should be made for the building's adaptation and re-use (again). The building has social significance in both its uses (30+ years as the ABC building, and nearly 30 years as the Conservatorium) and remains an important part of the memory of many generations of Tasmanians.

The building was designed as a celebration of new technologies, and the commissioned mural tells of a time when modern art was an important part of all civic buildings. The existing building forms a significant backdrop, and gives purpose, to the State-Heritage-

listed glass mural. The contribution of migrant architects to the cultural heritage of Australia is only recently being understood and appreciated. In Hobart, we have an important example of such architectural influence.

The International-style glazed façade and building frame could easily be adapted to form apartments (with inbuilt balconies if necessary).

Please encourage the applicants to integrate the building into their proposals – it forms an important part of the 20th C built and social history of Hobart

Kind regards,



Shamus Mulcahy
President, Tasmanian Chapter
Australian Institute of Architects



Jennifer Nichols
Executive Director, Tasmanian Chapter
Australian Institute of Architects