



**Australian
Institute of
Architects**

ABN 72 000 023 012
The Royal Australian Institute of Architects
trading as Australian Institute of Architects

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15 February 2021

Hon John Cowdell AM
Chair
Heritage Council of Western Australia
Locked Bag 2506
PERTH WA 6001

Dear Chair,

POST APPROVAL VARIANCES

The Australian Institute of Architects (Institute) is the peak body for the architectural profession in Australia. It is an independent, national member organisation representing over 12,500 members across Australia and overseas. More than 1,100 of these are based in Western Australia and are supported by the WA Chapter.

The Institute strongly supports enhancing the environment and cultural identity through the appropriate protection and preservation of heritage places.

The Heritage Council plays a key role in the management of heritage values of heritage places through its referral role in the planning system. Support for proposal with conditions is reasonably effective in ensuring a good heritage outcome.

It has come to the Institute's attention that there is a break in continuity and an often-realised risk of dilution of the heritage outcome when the engagement of the heritage architect is not continued through the construction phase. This is a particular feature of design and construct contracts where a whole new team of consultants might be appointed, and it is in the contractor's hands as to who might be engaged. Heritage advice in construction can be one of the casualties.

Traditionally constructed buildings are different in many ways from modern buildings and therefore the skills required to conserve them are not the same as those required on most modern building sites. Decisions about the conservation of heritage buildings demands the application of expertise, experience and judgment guided by good conservation practice.

The contract documentation, which includes the drawings and specifications, can provide a precise statement of work methods. They therefore have an important role in ensuring that the desired outcomes are achieved. However, even the best documentation cannot accommodate all possible eventualities and details, particularly those which only surface as the works proceed. Consequently, there will be times when the specified techniques need to be adapted to suit specific circumstances as they arise.



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These revisions should be undertaken by the consultants who prepared the contract documents. It is our concern that without this continuity the decisions taken could lead to working practices being adopted that will, in the long term, be detrimental to the conservation of heritage buildings

Sacrificing this expertise risks poor conservation being made and often destructive ones. As the Heritage Council does not take a role during construction, unless invited, there is a potential for unauthorised departures from approved and appropriate works.

As it is open to the council to apply conditions to its support for a development, it would be wise to condition the engagement of the heritage architect to see the project through to completion. In more important project, it would seem to the institute that a condition relating to continuity of heritage advice to completion.

I would be happy to discuss this important aspect of conservation with the Council. Please do not hesitate to contact me directly or indirectly for any assistance we can offer.

Yours sincerely,

Peter Hobbs FRAIA

STATE PRESIDENT WESTERN AUSTRALIA