



50 YEARS

COUNCIL HOUSE

1963 -2013



CITY of PERTH





50 Years: Council House 1963 – 2013
Published by the City of Perth
Project Curator/Writer: Jo Darbyshire
Artists Commemorative Project Curator: Isobel Wise
Book design and typography: Brown Cow Design
ISBN no 978-0-9808513-5-9

The City of Perth aims to make the history of the city of Perth a living history and show the role of the Council in contributing to the cultural life of the city.

Thank you to the staff of Arts and Cultural Development, Community Services Unit, the City of Perth History Centre, Parks and Landscape Services, International Relations and CEO's Unit at the City of Perth. Thank you also to former Art Curator Belinda Cobby for initial development, former Project Manager Abe Ashbil, the staff of the National Trust (WA) and Christine Lewis, Manager Heritage South, Department of Indigenous Affairs, for advice.

Thank you to Geoffrey London and Robert Bell for their essays commissioned for this publication and the artists involved in the Artists Commemorative Project: Maggie Baxter, Sandra Black, Helena Bogucki, Andrew Nicholls and Denise Pepper. We also thank FINK & CO for the design and production of the contemporary Council House trays.

The City of Perth is grateful to the State Library of Western Australia for the assistance in sourcing photographs for this publication with permission from the Library Board of Western Australia. Thank you also to the West Australian newspaper, Australia Post, Richard and Lyn Woldendorp, Ivan King from the Performing Arts Museum, His Majesty's Theatre, and Sarah Toohey from the Old Law Court Museum. Thank you to Don Bailey and the many architects who have also supplied information for this publication.

This publication is available in alternative formats on request by telephoning 9461 3145.

Cover: Council House at Night,
Photo: Sophie Hirth, 2010

Council House 2012

Photo: Juha Tolonen

Council House as seen from the top floor of the Law Chambers building which was also designed by Howlett and Bailey. Built in 1969, the Law Chambers building was demolished in 2013.

City of Perth Photographic Commission, 2012
City of Perth Art Collection



FOREWORD

During 2013 the City of Perth celebrates the 50th anniversary of its iconic Council House building in the centre of Perth.

As part of the celebrations, the City of Perth has produced this publication *50 Years: Council House 1963 -2013* commemorating and documenting the building's origins and social history.

The Artists Commemorative Project also celebrates this State's creative talent and highlights the City's commitment to supporting arts and culture through targeted programs. The City of Perth has commissioned five renowned Western Australian artists to create a limited edition series of artworks interpreting aspects of Council House and its five decade history. One of each of the artworks will be accessioned into the City of Perth Art Collection and the remaining artworks will become unique corporate gifts throughout the anniversary year.

In addition, a commemorative souvenir tray has been produced. The tray features a contemporary design and references a souvenir tray first produced in the 1960s held in the City's Memorabilia Collection.

I do hope you will enjoy this publication and share with me the immense pride the Councillors and Staff of the City of Perth have in our beautiful Council House. A golden anniversary is truly a significant celebration.

The Right Honourable the Lord Mayor Lisa-M. Scaffidi, City of Perth, 2013.

PREFACE

This publication explores the history of Council House, the home of the City of Perth since 1963. From its beginning, arising from a competition held in 1959, the building has engendered controversy and acclaim, becoming in its subsequent 50 year history an iconic building for Perth.

Despite providing an excellent example of Modernist office design; in the mid 1990s the State Government pushed to demolish the building, saying it did not fit within a proposed 'heritage' plan for the area. A spirited campaign by architects spearheaded a public debate about what was considered heritage. This inspired within the community a desire to save the building. The campaign was successful and Council staff returned to the refurbished building in 1999. Council House now occupies a special place in the heart of many West Australians and was entered on the State Heritage Register in 2006.

To complement the modernist aesthetic of the building, architects Howard and Bailey commissioned local designers and manufacturers to create the interior design and furnishings in 1963. To commemorate the 50 year anniversary of Council House the City of Perth commissioned five contemporary local artists to create unique artworks, based on the history of Council House, to be given as corporate gifts during 2013.



Geoffrey Allen
Coat of Arms
Photo courtesy City of Perth 2013

CONTENTS

- 9 Chapter 1: Indigenous History and Site History pre 1962.
Jo Darbyshire
- 16 Chapter 2: The Building and its Controversies: An essay
examining Council House and its siting, the Design
Competition and a Demolition Proposal.
Geoffrey London
- 30 Chapter 3: A second life: How Council House was saved.
Jo Darbyshire
- 43 Chapter 4: Interior Design and Commissioned work
for Council House.
Robert Bell
- 52 Chapter 5: The Artists Commission Project: Five Western
Australian artists make new work inspired by Council House
and the City of Perth Memorabilia Collection.
Isobel Wise



Indigenous History and Site History pre 1962

Noongar is the collective contemporary name given to the Aboriginal people who have lived in the south-west region of Western Australia for more than 35,000 years.¹

Noongar are the traditional owners of the Perth region and the Swan Coastal Plain in particular. At the time of colonisation in 1829, Perth Noongar people were composed of four principal groups, loosely determined by the Derbal Yerrigan (the Swan River); these were the Mooro, who lived north of the Swan River and were guided by Yellagonga; the Beeliar to the south of the Swan River and west of the Canning River lead by Midgeooroo, Yellagonga's brother-in-law. The Beeloo lived in the region from the Canning to the Helena Rivers and were led by Munday. The east was settled by the Weeip.²

The river is a sacred place for Noongar people and they preserved many stories of the Wagyl, a water-serpent understood to be responsible for the creation and maintenance of the river and most of the water features around Perth.

Mooro country stretched from the Swan River beyond the northern limits of metropolitan Perth and east to the hills. The main sources of food were the sea, the river and an extensive system of freshwater lakes.

Yellagonga's people moved with the seasons, travelling inland in winter, then returning in late spring and setting fire to the bushland to capture game such as wallabies, kangaroos and possums. Their main camp was at Kaarta gar-up, now known as Kings Park.

The Noongar people had contact with various seafaring visitors including the Dutch and the French before the arrival of the English in 1829, who under Governor James Stirling, stayed to colonise the region. Governor Stirling's commission from the British Government gave him control over a large geographic area - the western third of Australia. Governor Stirling sailed up the Swan River to establish a new British settlement called Perth. A foundation stone was laid on 12 August 1829, north of the present intersection of St Georges Terrace and Barrack Street.

Despite initially wanting to foster friendly relations, Governor Stirling took the land without the consent of the Indigenous people and against their resistance.³

Artist: Deborah Bonar
Maali 2012
Acrylic on canvas 150 x 85 cm
City of Perth Art Collection

Deborah Bonar's painting *Maali* (the black swan) depicts Derbal Yerrigan (the Swan River) and tells a story of the river over time. The circular motifs in the work represent traditional Noongar campsites and gathering places in close proximity to the river and wetlands.



In November 1830, King William IV approved of the setting up of a Legislative Council to assist the Lieutenant Governor in ruling the colony.⁴ The nominal protection that Stirling proclaimed under British law when things were relatively peaceful was soon put to the test. While Stirling was in England (from August 1832-July 1834), the colony was placed in the hands of acting Governor FC Irwin. It was during this time that inter-racial violence escalated.⁵

During the early days of the Swan River colony, which later became the city of Perth, both Noongar people and settlers lived close by, but were still very cautious of each other...Problems soon arose with British colonisation and the expansion of settlement disrupted Noongar life, culture and customs. For Noongar people this was the beginning of two hundred years of oppression and marginalisation. The settlers had taken up all the best land and water sources. Their imported stock ate or destroyed local fauna and Noongar food sources quickly became depleted. The Europeans introduced a number of diseases, which decimated Noongar families. The settlers killed many of the local small animals, particularly kangaroos, for meat and skins. These were not only part of the Noongar Culture, but also formed a significant part of their diet. When the Noongar people started to take the settlers stock for food they were often sentenced to harsh jail terms for what was considered a criminal offence.⁶

1833 was a pivotal year. Noongar people knew very little about British law but they were soon to feel the brunt of it. Yagan, a nephew of Yellagonga, and son of Midgegooroo

tried to bridge both worlds. He spoke English fluently and when in Perth, made his headquarters at John Mayo's Perth Hotel.⁷

In March 1833, Yagan obtained permission to hold a corroboree in Perth. Noongar men met at dusk, chalked their bodies, and performed a number of dances including a kangaroo hunt dance. Yagan was described as a "master of ceremonies and acquitted himself with infinite grace and dignity."⁸

Only 2 months later Yagan would be called an outlaw.

Midgegooroo, Yagan and Munday were alleged to have been involved in the killing of two farm workers near Bull Creek. These prominent and well known Aboriginal leaders were declared 'outlaws' and rewards offered for their capture, 'dead or alive'.⁹

Midgegooroo was captured and deprived of the right to trial. On 22 May 1833 his death warrant was read outside the Perth Jail.¹⁰ The Jail was opposite what is now the Council House site, on the north-west corner of St Georges Terrace and Pier Street, where Midgegooroo was then immediately executed by firing squad.¹¹

Midgegooroo's death is significant in that it signalled a change in Government policies towards Aboriginal people of the Swan and Canning regions and underlined the subsequent dispossession of land for Aboriginal people.

'By targeting these men the colonial government was attacking the leadership and authority structures of the Aboriginal societies, and at the same time sending out a warning to other groups in the region.'¹²



Swan River (Bivouac of Captain Stirling, View of the Swan River 50 Miles Up), c.1828-9
After William John Huggins, engraved by Edward Duncan
Hand coloured aquatint etching
Photo: Robert Frith/Acorn
City of Perth Art Collection

Aboriginal dance group
Wadumbah performing a Welcome to Country for a delegation of Chinese executives, Council House, August 2012.
Photo: Paul Anastas

Charles Dirk Wittenoom
Sketch of the Town of Perth, Western Australia, 1839
hand-coloured line lithograph
City of Perth Art Collection
Photo: Robert Frith/Acorn

The lithograph shows a view looking east down St Georges Terrace near the corner of Barrack Street. The Soldiers' Barracks are shown in the centre left on the North side of the Terrace where the Old Treasury Building now stands. To the right a large Marri tree grows on the corner where the Citibank building now stands and beyond a green area; what is now Stirling Gardens.

Following Midgegooroo's execution and Yagan's death by shooting in July 1833, Munday and Miago, representing Yellagonga, requested a meeting with Irwin in September 1833 to discuss conciliation and to protest the killing of their people. To curb 'robbery of settlers property' the Government offered wheat as rations. The rations stopped in early 1834 and led to a series of fatal events. Irwin also set aside Gooninup, at the base of Mount Eliza as a place for Noongar families to camp in peace. This was on a major trade route used by the Noongar people travelling to trade for wilgi (red ochre).¹³ However, this quickly became a contested site.¹⁴

Displaced, Yellagonga and his people retreated to Lake Monger and then to Lake Joondalup where Yellagonga died in June 1843.¹⁵ The generation that followed him retreated to other permanent waterholes on the outskirts of Perth town precincts.

What followed were unremitting policies and laws, enacted by the Colonial and subsequent Western Australian State Governments, to force Aboriginal people to accept the loss of their land and comply with government directions.¹⁶

In December 2009 the State Government signed a framework agreement with the representative body, the South West Aboriginal Land and Sea Council aimed at resolving, through negotiation, the six Noongar native title claims over Perth and the south-west of Western Australia. These negotiations were ongoing at time of publication.¹⁷

History of the Council House Site

1829

Council House sits on a site that from the very beginning of European contact was used to plan for, and govern the colony.

In 1832 the first meeting of the Legislative Council in Western Australia was held in a temporary Governor's Residence in the new settlement of Perth.

Construction for the first Government House and its gardens began in 1834 and a Court House, now known as the Old Law Court, was built in 1836 near the river's edge.



To the north of the Old Law Court and bounded by St Georges Terrace (Perth's first street), was the location that became the site now occupied by Council House.¹⁸

To the east, the site was bounded by a ravine and a stream, which were located where the present Government House Ballroom now stands. To the west was a square of land designated as public gardens.

In 1836 Public offices were designed by Acting Civil Engineer Henry Reveley to occupy the site. Construction was completed by 1846.

1846 – 1870 Legislative Council and Public Offices.

These Public Offices, also known as the Old Government Offices became home to the Colony's governing Legislative Council.

1845 Stirling Gardens

The Council House site has always been linked to the square of land beside it. From 1829 until 1832 Governor Stirling and his family lived on this land, firstly in a tent and subsequently in a timber building.¹⁹ Later, to the west of the square, a dwelling of lathe and plaster was made for Captain FC Irwin and to the east of the square (where the giant bamboo now stands) was supposed to have been a very temporary 'Pig and Whistle' Public House.²⁰

One of the gardens earliest roles was to trial exotic plants brought by settlers from Europe and the Cape of Africa. The State's first vines, olives and roses were grown here.

This square of land was reclaimed for public use in 1840 and a number of Aboriginal men were employed to clear it

as well as the land behind the Government Offices.²¹ The square was first established as a 'Horticultural Garden' with some part of the gardens leased to Henry Laroche Cole for a ten year period in 1846.²² Later formal gardens were created as public open space. The name 'Stirling Gardens' was officially adopted by Council in 1979.²³

The Gardens have been classified by the National Trust and are listed on the State Register of Historic Places and Commonwealth Register of the National Estate as one of the most significant gardens in WA.

1858 Perth City Council

The Perth Town Trust had been set up in 1838 to collect tolls or rates in order to provide funds for roads and footpaths. In 1856 Perth became a city and in 1858 the Town Trust became the Perth City Council, comprising seven Councillors who elected a Chairman. Its major aim was to raise loans on rates rather than tolls. In 1883 the position of Chairman was elevated to Mayor and in 1929, on the centenary of settlement, to Lord Mayor.²⁴

1870

Perth Town Hall was completed with the help of convict labour and the Legislative Council moved to a chamber within the Town Hall.

1870 – 1874 Post Office

The Public Offices were used briefly as a Post Office.

In 1898, along the east side of the Public Offices, Government House was extended by the building of a ballroom. In 1902 a new Supreme Court building



was begun south of Stirling Gardens. Between 1904 and 1906 the foreshore was reclaimed, extending the open land around Government House and the Courts.

1890 Legislative Council

The Legislative Council returned to the old Public Offices building in 1890 after the newly formed Legislative Assembly took over the Town Hall chamber.²⁵ Additions to the building in the 1930s created a second storey, which contained a Legislative Council room and offices for senior public servants.²⁶

1898 Department of Agriculture

In 1894, Premier John Forrest, established the Bureau of Agriculture under the chairmanship of Charles Harper. In 1898 the Bureau became the Agricultural Advisory Board and the Public Offices became the headquarters of the newly gazetted Department of Agriculture.

1916 Soldiers' Institute Building

"In September, 1915, the Mayor of Perth (Mr John Nicholson) urged that a special home should be found for returned soldiers on a site central, yet free from the turmoil of the city. Without delay, the executive set to work and finally applied to the late Government for a corner of the Government Gardens just at the back of the Forrest statue."²⁷

The suggestion to form the Soldiers' Institute had come from Mrs Edith Cowan. Although opposed to war she was concerned for those involved and became Chairman of the Soldiers' Welcoming Committee from its inception and also of the Soldiers' Institute Committee. The Institute, which was well patronised, offered servicemen meals and a place to meet, read and write. Edith Cowan was awarded an OBE for her work at the end of WWI.²⁸

Plans for the new Soldiers' Institute Building were prepared by honorary architects Messrs Oldham and Cox. The Red Cross Society provided £ 2,000 from the funds collected on 'WA' Day to help build and furnish the Institute. On 20 October 1916 the Soldiers' Institute Building was opened as the headquarters of the Soldiers' Welcoming Committee, a voluntary group of 25 women and 3 ex-servicemen.²⁹

Old Public or Government Offices,
Perth c 1861,

Photo: Alfred Hawes Stone, SLWA
013014D

First Soldiers' Welcoming
Committee, 1915

1st row l-r: Mrs Richardson, Mrs
Beadle, Mrs Edith Cowan (MLA West
Perth 1921-1924), Misses Taylor and
Marmion, Mrs Camper, Miss Stead,
Mayor, City of Perth JP Rea;

2nd row: Mrs Hubbard, Mrs
Franklin, Mrs McDonald, Mrs Hill,
Mrs TG Molloy, Mrs Eddy;

3rd row: Mrs Daghish, Mr Clarke,
Mr Blake; 4th row: Miss Costello,
Mr Eben Allen (MLA West Perth
1911-1917 and PCC Councillor
1904-1918), Mr James; 5th row: Mr
Ruston, Mrs Vila, Mrs Cameron,
Misses Marmion, Watkins and
Atkinson.

Photo: Illustrations Ltd.,
History Centre

It was at this time that the statue of Alexander Forrest (created by Pietro Porcelli) was moved from its original position in the gardens to the more prominent position on the corner of St Georges Terrace and Barrack Street, where it stands today.³⁰

1937 - ABC 6WF radio studio

The Soldiers' Institute building became the base for the 6WF radio studios operated by the Australian Broadcasting Corporation in 1937.³¹

Eighty-year-old Perth actor Ric Header recalls working in the ABC Studios in an interview with Ivan King, Curator of the Performing Arts Museum, August 2012:

There were seven studios. Egg cartons lined the ceiling and walls, controlling the acoustics in Studio 4, the Drama Studio, where plays were recorded for broadcast. When they performed before the microphones to live audiences in the larger Studio 7, actors were required to be formally attired, in long dresses and black tie. There was also a tree growing through the roof of the building.

A rabbit warren of recording studios operated until 1960 when the ABC moved to its Adelaide Terrace premises, before moving to Royal Street, East Perth in 2005.

1958 - Perth City Council

The two-acre site, occupied by the Department of Agriculture and the ABC, was chosen in 1952 as the site for a 'new Town Hall', by a special committee set up by the State Government and the Council.

In 1954 the State arranged for Stirling Gardens to be vested in perpetuity to the Council, under conditions it was to be used as gardens and the Crown Grant was signed over to the Council by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, on her first visit to Perth.

The Perth City Council had been based from 1871 in the Perth Town Hall.

In 1925 the Council moved to offices in Murray Street opposite Forrest Place.

Finally in 1958, as the Murray Street offices were considered inadequate for the growing city, a decision was made to build the new Town Hall in time for the 1962 Commonwealth Games, which were to be held in Perth.³²



Endnotes

- 1 Norman Tindale, *Aboriginal Tribal Boundaries*, Museum of South Australia, 1930
- 2 Daisy Bates, *The Passing of the Aborigines*, Albermerle Street, London, 1938
- 3 Neville Green, *Broken Spears: Aboriginals and Europeans in the southwest of Australia*, Focus, Perth, 1984
- 4 The first members were Captain James Stirling, Lieutenant-Governor Captain FC Irwin, Commander of the Forces; Peter Broun, Colonial Secretary; JS Roe, Surveyor-general; and WH Mackie, chairman of the quarter sessions. The first sitting was held in February 1832.
- 5 Ann Hunter, A Different Kind of 'Subject', *Colonial Law in Aboriginal-European Relations in Nineteenth Century Western Australia 1829-61*, page xxi Introduction.
- 6 <http://www.noongar.org.au/noongar-people-history.php> (10.8.2012)
- 7 *Western Mail*, 16 July 1915, p. 40.
- 8 *Perth Gazette*, 16 March 1833.
- 9 *The Execution and Burial of Midgegooroo: A Report to Palassis Architects* by Allbrook Jebb and Associated P/L 12.11.2010, p. 7.
- 10 The jail was demolished in 1855 when the land was given to the Anglican Church for the site of the Anglican Deanery in 1859. Allbrook Jebb Report, p. 5.
- 11 Hanging was the preferred method of execution in the 19th Century and this unusual occurrence may have been the only time firing squad was used in Australia. Allbrook Jebb Report, p. 8.
- 12 Allbrook Jebb Report, p. 7
- 13 Hunter, p. 39
- 14 The Swan Brewery was later built over Gooninup. Collard, Harben & Van den Berg, *Nidja Beelieer Boodjar Noonookurt Nyinyiny, A Nyungar Interpretive History of the use of Boodjar (Country) in the vicinity of Murdoch University*, Murdoch University, 2004
- 15 Brittain R.K, *Yellagonga Regional Park – Ethnology Position Paper*, Kidd and Povey Pty Ltd, Yokine, prepared for the Department of Planning and Urban Development, Perth, Western Australia, 1990
- 16 Neville Green 'Aboriginals and Europeans in the southwest of Western Australia', in *Yellagonga Regional Park Management Plan, 2003-2013*, 1984
- 17 Allbrook Jebb Report, p. 8
- 18 <http://www.noongar.org.au> The South West Aboriginal Land and Sea Council (SWALSC), accessed 15.8.2012
- 19 George Seddon, David Ravine, *A city and its setting: images of Perth, Western Australia 1986*, Fremantle Arts Centre Press, p. 96
- 20 Government House website (<http://www.govhouse.wa.gov.au/the-house/history.html>) accessed 26.9.2012
- 21 E Stirling, *The Inquirer*, 5 December 1883, p. 5
- 22 *Perth Gazette*, 18 April 1840, p. 2d
- 23 Lise Summers, *From wasteland to parkland: a history of designed public open space in the City of Perth, Western Australia, 1829-1965*. PhD thesis, Arts, School of Social and Environmental Enquiry, The University of Melbourne, 2007
- 24 Considine and Griffiths, *Stirling Gardens, Perth: Conservation Plan*, December 1997, pp. 6-17
- 25 Philip Griffiths, Eddie Marcus, *Conservation Plan, Council House*, April 2011, p. 15
- 26 David Black, *The House on the Hill: A History of Parliament in Western Australia, 1832-1990*, Parliament of Western Australia, 1991, p. 66
- 27 *Ibid Stirling Gardens, Perth: Conservation Plan*, pp. 109-14
- 28 *West Australian*, Wednesday 18 October 1916, 'Soldiers' Institute Opening and description of the Building'. The Soldiers' Welcome Committee of WA was formed in September 1915.
- 29 Peter Cowan, *A Unique Position, A Biography of Edith Dircksey Cowan 1861-1932*, UWA Press 1978, pp. 146-147
- 30 JP Rea, Mayor's Report, *Annual Report City of Perth*, November 1916
- 31 The original statue had been erected in 1902. *Annual Report City of Perth*, November 1916
- 32 Melissa Kent, 'Aunty ABC turns 80 with grace', *West Australian*, 5.6.2004, p. 17
- 33 *Annual Report City of Perth*, Report of the Town Clerk, 1958

Department of Agriculture,
St Georges Terrace, Perth c. 1947,
SLWA 007954D

ABC Radio, National Studios
c. 1939
Courtesy of the Performing Arts
Museum, His Majesty's Theatre

Perth City Council at Murray St
Building: internal photograph of
the Council Chamber in 1925 and
external photograph of decorations
for the visit of the Duke and
Duchess of York in 1927.
History Centre

The Building and its Controversies

Geoffrey London

Council House has been justifiably celebrated as the best example of modern architecture built in the city of Perth. The history of Council House, however, has been marked by two periods of controversy that threatened the building, the first starting well before it was designed and then, during the mid-1990s, when the building was seriously threatened with demolition.

The Site

The decision to conduct an architectural competition for the design of Perth's New Town Hall, as the project was initially known, came while arguments were erupting about the site nominated for the building. The site selection controversy had bubbled along since the mayoral elections of 1901, but became more urgent and more rancorous once the project became real.¹

The Crown Grant for the Council House site on St Georges Terrace was handed over on July 21 1954 and the announcement of an Australia-wide competition for the 'planning and design of the new Perth Town Hall' was made public on the same date. At this time the aim was to call for submissions within 12 months and it was originally planned to be a two-stage competition.

In the years leading up to the competition there was a campaign fought with tenacity and conviction to promote the selection of an alternative site on the river's edge. In particular, the Western Australian Chapter of the Royal Australian Institute of Architects asserted that the new Town Hall should be located on Perth's riverfront, taking advantage of the best setting that could be offered for this long-anticipated new piece of civic architecture. Before the competition was announced the campaign gathered momentum and was given sustained exposure

in the press, indicating the level of public importance with which this new Town Hall was regarded.

In the face of spirited opposition and four and a half years after the first announcement about the competition, the Perth City Council issued a press release dated 15 December 1958 in which they launched the Australia-wide competition for the '...new Town Hall and municipal offices to be built at a cost not exceeding one million six hundred thousand pounds' on the St Georges Terrace site.

An editorial in the local newspaper, the *West Australian*, followed the press release, applauding the concept of architectural competitions for important buildings:

All big buildings - particularly those which will become landmarks - should make a distinctive contribution to the city's appearance. The only sure way of achieving this and guarding against dullness and mediocrity is to enlist the ideas of the best architects in all the schools of their profession. The imaginative conception of Sydney's proposed opera house, which was inspired by the waters of Port Jackson, is the result of an international competition.

But regret was noted:

The architects entering for the town hall competition will be restricted by the setting for the new buildings. Even at this stage the council would do well to reconsider the proposed site of the civic group in favour of one on reclaimed land fronting the Esplanade. The building would then be uninhibited in style and would occupy a more dominant and pleasing position as a focal point of the proposed sweep of botanic features on the foreshores of Perth Water.²

Elizabeth R.

Plan herein referred to:
The area and measurements on the Plan hereunder are made in feet and a peg has been placed at each corner of the lot.



Scale: 4 Chains to one inch
Surveyed by J. E. Wickham
Dist. 489/50, O.D. 5030
Sub. 115, 122, 123, 124

W. Byr
Surveyor General

Patented on Record this 27th day of April, 1954.

H. Pearce
for Minister for Lands

Certificate of Title
under the Transfer of Land Act, 1933-1950.
The within named Grants are the registered proprietor of an estate in fee simple, subject to the assessments and encumbrances notified hereunder in all the land described hereunder, dated the 27th day of April, 1954.

J. A. Platt
Acting Registrar of Titles

Registered in Volume 1179 Folio 882.



SUPERSEDED BY
DIGITAL REGISTER

Elizabeth the Second, by the Grace of God, of the United Kingdom, Australia, and Her other Realms and Territories, Queen, Head of the Commonwealth, Defender of the Faith, To all to whom these Presents shall come, **Greeting**; Know Ye that We, of Our special Grace, certain knowledge, and mere motion, have given and granted, and We do by these Presents, for Us, Our heirs and successors in pursuance of and subject to the provisions of the Perth Town Hall Act, 1950, and in consideration of and to the intent that the land hereinafter described be used and held solely for the purpose of a site for a Town Hall, Give and Grant unto the **City of Perth** whose office is situate at Murray Street, Perth, in Our said State (hereinafter called the Grantee), the **That Piece or Parcel of land** situate and being in the City of Perth, in Our said State, containing one acre three roods thirty-four and eight tenths perches more or less, and marked and distinguished in the Maps and books of the Department of Lands and Survey of Our said State as **Perth Lot 760** and as the same is delineated and colored upon the plan drawn in the margin hereof; Together with all profits, commodities, hereditaments and appurtenances whatsoever thereto belonging or in anywise appertaining; **To Have and to Hold** the said Piece or Parcel of land to the depth aforesaid, and all and singular the Premises hereby granted with their appurtenances, unto the said Grantee in fee simple; **Yielding and Paying** for the same to Us, Our heirs and successors one penny per acre, of yearly rental on the twenty-fifth day of March in each year, or so soon thereafter as the same shall be lawfully demanded; and We do hereby save and reserve to Us, Our heirs and successors, all Mines of Gold, Silver, Copper, Tin or other Metals, Ore and Minerals and other substances containing Metals and all Mines or Precious Stones and Coal or Mineral Oil and all Phosphoric Substances in or under the said Piece or Parcel of land hereby granted, with full liberty of all times to search and dig for and carry away the same; and for that purpose to enter upon the said Piece or Parcel of land or any part thereof.

In Witness whereof We have hereunto set Our Sign, Manual and caused to be affixed the Great Seal of the said State.
Given and Sealed at Perth in Our said State this twenty-seventh day of March one thousand nine hundred and fifty-four.

By Her Majesty's Command
G. L. Hoar
Minister for Lands

Town Clerk Green, a past president of the WA Chapter of the Royal Australian Institute of Architects, was resolute in his defence of the selected Town Hall site and equally resolute in arguing that there was no need to respond to the recommendation of the Institute. He believed that sufficient information was already available to show that the Institute's preferred riverfront site would prove very expensive because of the depth of silt, the requirement of a further reclamation of 15 acres from the Swan River, the difficult piling conditions and, in his view, the necessity for a retaining wall on the riverfront. He argued that there were difficulties of access to the river site and advantages arising from a more central city location.³ The Town Clerk's clear firmness of conviction later contributed very positively to the successful building of Council House.

The influential English planner Sir William Holford, during a visit to Perth that coincided with the site debate, viewed the options and recommended that the Council remain with the site chosen. In his subsequent letter to the Institute, the Town Clerk wrote that the Council had been 'fortified' by the opinion of Sir William Holford. The Daily News then reported in large headlines, 'TOWN HALL, FILE CLOSED'.⁴

The Competition

The Council's expressed desire to have the building completed for the 1962 Empire games to be held in Perth, coupled with the time spent battling over the site, contributed to the decision to reduce the competition to a single stage. The appointed assessors, in addition to the Chair, Professor Brian Lewis from the University of Melbourne, were all prominent architects, Harry Seidler, Leslie Perrot, and A E (Paddy) Clare. The decision to accept the role of assessor had provided a problematic choice for Harry Seidler who wrote in a letter to Town Clerk Green:

Duplicate Crown Grant; This document conferred the land grant of Perth Lot 760 for the site of Council House and has a hand coloured diagram of the land parcel (Volume 1179, Folio 882). The Original is stored at Landgate. Photo: Robert Frith/Acorn, Memorabilia Collection



Your recent visit to my office placed me in quite a dilemma. The forthcoming competition promises to be a most interesting project in which I would have very much liked to participate as a competitor.⁵

The competition called for an office block and a public suite which was to contain a main hall for 2500 people, a lesser hall for 1,000 and a banquet hall for 1200. The Conditions of Competition were bald, descriptive, and quantitative. There was no attempt to solicit a particular architectural approach or to urge any kind of representational or qualitative response. The conditions did, however, advise that the earth foundations would support a building of about 18 storeys and that the plot ratio was 5.

The competition was open to all architects who were corporate members of the Royal Australian Institute of Architects and was described as a competition for the selection of an architect rather than the final design of a Town Hall. The first prize on offer was £5,000 and 61 entries were received.

Professor Brian Lewis, Chairman of Assessors for the Competition, was triumphant in his description of the winning entry:

For Perth citizens, this is a milestone. It will be a magnificent building, giving something of grandeur to Perth and making it an even finer city. It will be the best building of its type in Australia. I congratulate Perth on this very fortunate design.⁶

Sections of the assessors' report were printed in the *West Australian*, reinforcing the public importance of the outcome:

...the awards made were unanimous and unqualified and...the authors of the winning entry should be appointed as architects for the new town hall...The design No 19, premiated first, was immediately recognised as a direct and satisfactory solution. Detailed examination established it as being capable of development into a most dignified and efficient Town Hall.⁷

Design No 19 was by Jeffrey Howlett and Don Bailey, two young architects who worked together at Bates Smart and McCutcheon in Melbourne and

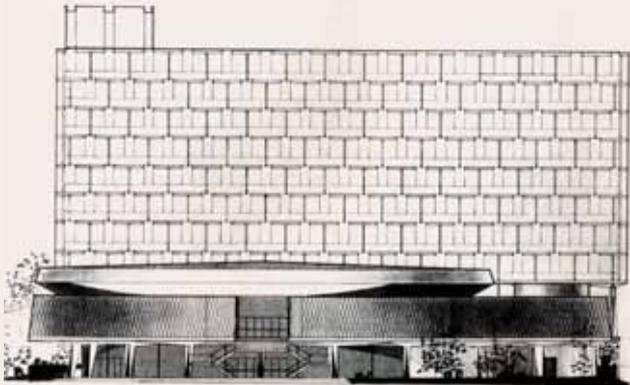
Two of the winning designs submitted to the competition by Howlett and Bailey in 1960. History Centre

Lord Mayor Sir Harry Howard and Perth City Councillors signing the building contract for Council House, 5 October 1961.

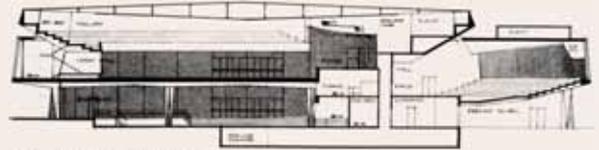
From left in front row: Deputy Lord Mayor AC Curlewis, Councillor A Spencer, RD Hawkins, Jeffrey Howlett, Town Clerk WA Mc I Green, Lord Mayor Sir Harry Howard, JB Hawkins, Don Bailey, Councillors CM Harris and WL Fletcher.

From left middle row: Councillors WJ Lucas, W Hayes, LRH Lilleyman, B Beecroft, JJ Higgins, HE Hawthorne, WR Read, JH Glowrey, FE Hummerston, HO Howling, KJ Frame, City Engineer CS Paterson.

From left back row: City Treasurer PJ McKeown, EC Halse, CJB Veryard, SE O'Brien, OGS Norman, L Pethick, RF Banks, SFJ Cheek, VR Harrold, FO Book. History Centre



00474



1040 SECTION - Public side



entered the competition independently from that distinguished Modernist firm. Howlett had previously worked in Perth for a number of years after travelling there from England following the completion of his diploma at the Architectural Association. The firm of Cameron Chisholm and Nicol of Perth was awarded the second prize with the partnership of Anthony Brand, Gus Ferguson and Bill Weedon, also of Perth, awarded the third prize.

Howlett and Bailey moved to Perth from Melbourne to set up a new office and take on the appointment as architects for the new building. The third architect joining Howlett and Bailey in Perth from the Bates Smart and McCutcheon office was Lindsay Waller who described himself as the 'nuts and bolts man.'⁸ During 1956 and 1957, Waller had been the project architect in Perth for Bates, Smart and McCutcheon for the construction of the MLC building.

The winning design went through a number of changes and refinements before building began. The rather squat proposed building of 9-storeys increased in height to 11 and then to 12 storeys to allow for future expansion. Floors 8 to 10 were designed to take advantage of the views and house the reception areas for Council, including a staff cafeteria and councillors banqueting room on level 10.

The competition design had the columns going straight down to the ground, continuing the upper structural frame, but the design was changed at a late point to allow the opening up of the ground floor. Howlett had recognised the possibility of visually linking the St Georges Terrace entrance with the proposed Public Suite to the rear of the site. Lindsay Waller recalled how Town Clerk Green acted as the client and was prepared to make decisions on behalf of the Council. This streamlined the process considerably and, according to Waller, he made a significant contribution to the project through his receptiveness and decisiveness. In the instance of the changes to the ground floor, it was a case of Green enthusiastically agreeing with Howlett.⁹

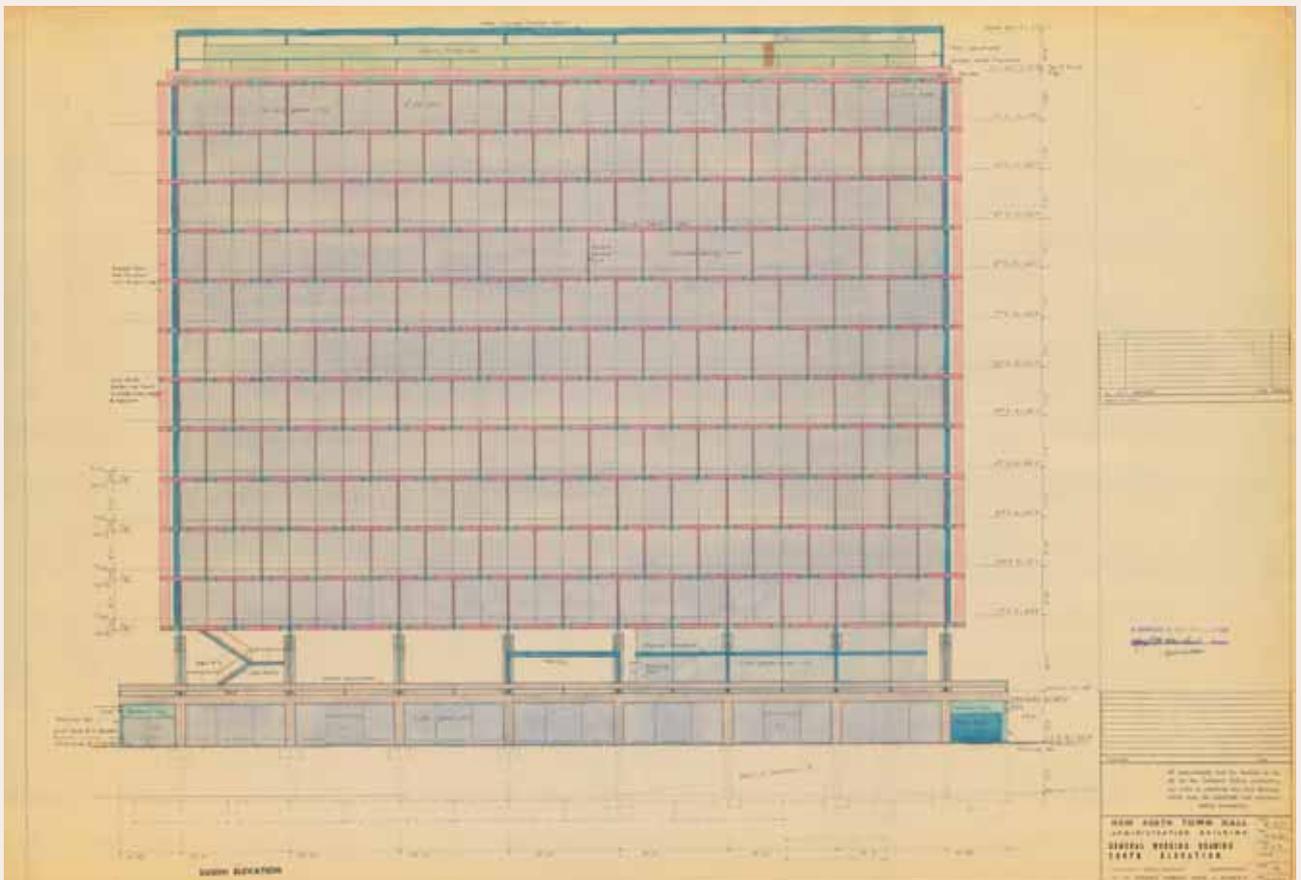
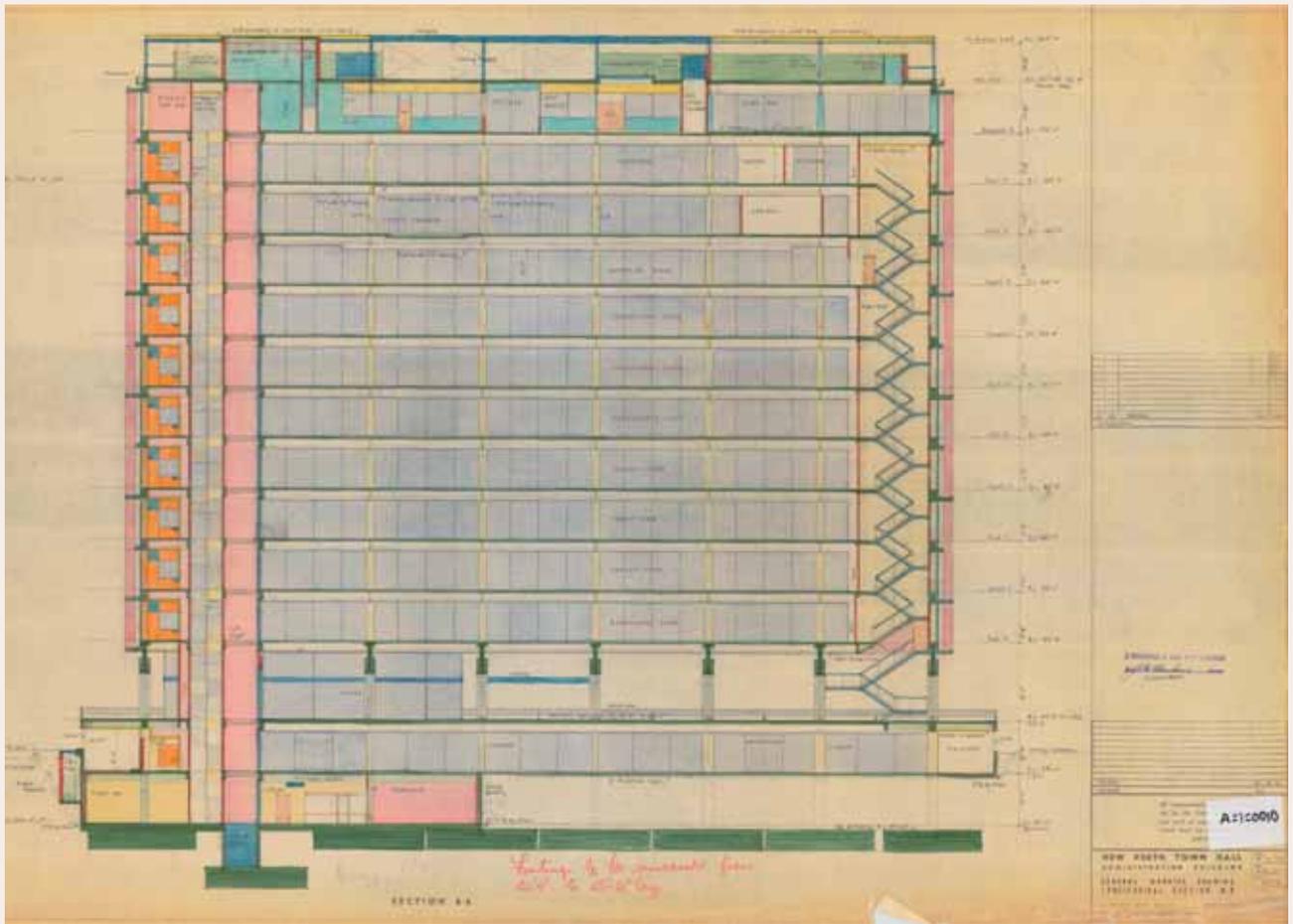
Although the winning competition entry was designed as a reinforced concrete flat plate structure, the building was converted to steel-framed, chosen as the most economical and speedy form of construction. It is unlikely that the building would have been ready for its part in the 1962 Empire Games if pre-ordered steel had not been used.

Construction began on the administrative block in 1961 at a contracted cost of £1,230,000. The first pour of concrete took place under floodlights on November 10 1961. The Public Suite, the halls at the rear, were costed at £640,000 and it was decided not to proceed immediately with their construction. After some heated debate about the acoustic qualities of circular halls this deferral of the Public Suite eventually became abandonment, leaving Council House as an incomplete version of the competition proposal. The Public Suite, however, was pursued in another form and, in 1968, Howlett and Bailey was commissioned by the City to design a new concert hall on a site to the east of Government House, the former Chevron-Hilton hotel site.

After a popular and well-publicised ceremony at the almost completed Council House during the Empire Games at which the Duke of Edinburgh officiated, Her Majesty the Queen opened the completed building on 25th March 1963.

Council House architectural plan drawing longitudinal section North elevation.
Memorabilia Collection

Council House architectural plan drawing longitudinal section South elevation.
Memorabilia Collection





The Building

Council House is a slab block with eleven storeys hoisted off the ground by massive marble-clad beams and columns. The ground floor originally had a glazed foyer to the eastern side with the western side open, offering a clear vista through to the gardens behind and a visual link to what was to have been the Public Suite. The western side was glazed in 1978 to provide a display space for the Council.

The slab block plan provides a vast open office area with the service cores at the narrow eastern and western ends of the building. To the east, the core contains the four high speed gearless lifts, the toilets, tea room, and main staircase. The escape stairs, risers, and air conditioning ducts are at the western end. The open space offers spectacular views to the north across the city, to the south across the Swan River, and to the west up to Kings Park. Council departments, together with some commercial tenants, occupied the first seven floors with the Council reception and Mayoral suites on the eighth floor and the Council suite on the ninth. The Council Chamber on the ninth floor is in the form of a 13 metre diameter glass cylinder with a white marble floor.

The window walls comprise floor to ceiling double glazed sealed units in aluminium frames. An innovative form of testing, a 'typhoon test', was developed for the double-glazed windows planned for Council House. At the Perth

airport firemen hosed water into the slipstream of an aeroplane engine mounted on a truck to simulate a storm with torrential rain in wind gusts of 90 miles per hour. It was the first time such windows had been used in Perth and Lindsay Waller stood behind the prototype during the testing as a sign of faith in the design.¹⁰

Howlett and Bailey required all their consultants to be established in Perth so that nothing about the building was handled through remote control. The committed team effort allowed for a high degree of coordination of structure, with services, with fabric, with finishes.

Furniture was designed by the architects for the building and made in Western Australia. Specially designed door handles, taps, and smokers' stands, all made by local artisans, were incorporated into the building. Carpet, repeating the T-motif of the external window shadings, was designed by the architects.

One of the most distinctive elements of the building is the pattern of T-shaped sunshades placed uniformly against the four glazed walls of the building. According to Lindsay Waller there was only one possible dimension that would allow the Ts to go around the corner and repeat themselves. This dimension was arrived at empirically and was set out by Waller after numerous geometric experiments.¹¹ The result is an apparently floating cage of Ts creating a continuous mat of a



Original model of Council House made by Robert Le Man in 1960. Memorabilia Collection

Council House under construction 1962: structural steel frames and concrete slab work and windows. History Centre

Queen Elizabeth opening Council House, 25 March 1963, accompanied by Lord Mayor Harry Howard, Lady Howard and the Duke of Edinburgh. History Centre

Jeffrey and Kath Howlett and Jan and Don Bailey at the opening of Council House, March 1963. Photo: *West Australian*



John Calegari worked as the Foreman for JB Hawkins & Son, and oversaw the construction of Council House, from the first day of surveying until the last day of final maintenance in 1964:

‘Perhaps the most exacting job I had was attaching about 460 ‘T’s to the building. The Ts had been made in the Monier factory and were then covered in small mosaic tiles. A big crane put each T in place. Jim Taylor and I spent 7 months balancing on a plank, chocking each T in place while the labourers cemented them in. It was my job to make sure each one was lined up perfectly. Each day I had to check this using a piano wire attached to an outrigger on top of the building, with a hundred kilo lead weight in a 44-gallon drum of water, at the base of the building.

At this time all workmen on site were on the builders payroll, no one was a sub-contractor. The 50-strong team were a tough lot but the site was a happy one with no strikes or workplace accidents. All workers were members of the Builders Labourers Federation (BLF) and had their own union representatives on site. Building work was tight at the time but the pay was good and JB Hawkins & Sons was considered a good firm to work for. The architects came on site every day and were considered very professional and the site was well managed by the construction manager Major Thompson. There was no safety gear apart from hard-hats.¹²



sunscreen which folds seamlessly around the corners of the building. They perform an additional role as fire isolating spandrels between the floors.

As sunshades, the shallow Ts cannot be regarded as highly effective. However, as a modern filigree, a crisp carapace of sparkling abstract figures, the Ts bestow on the building a civic and celebratory demeanour that emphatically lifts the building from the banality of many contemporaneous office buildings.

As the building progressed, Caliban, the wry and astute critic writing in the local chapter journal of the Royal Australian Institute of Architects, called Council House ‘...very sharp, very sharp indeed. If it had feet it would undoubtedly wear Italian pointedes.’¹³

At the time of its completion there was a wide-spread almost natural assumption that the new would triumph over the old, that the modern city would take precedence over the colonial city. This view held such currency as to allow open discussion in the architectural press about the relocation of the adjacent Government House to Kings Park, or at least the demolition of the Government House ballroom which was thought to be perilously close to the base of Council House.¹⁴

The *West Australian* published letters that advocated similar approaches to those found in the architectural journals, without raising any objections to the suggestions either through editorial comment or letters from others. The letter from F E McCaw of Perth suggested that “...the ‘antiquated’ Government House be bulldozed for the purpose of creating the best possible site for the Town Hall.”¹⁵ A J Hepburn, in speaking of the Council House site, stated that ‘Its one drawback is that it will become cramped in time, because no encroachment on to Stirling Gardens should be tolerated. But the answer to this is to get the State Government to agree that Government House can someday be demolished.’¹⁶

Foreman John Calegari and Jim Taylor, stand on scaffolding, checking the placement of each T shaped sun-breaker, 1962. Photo courtesy John Calegari

Council House at night 1962, SLWA 340,585PD

The Architect Magazine, No 2, 1963, History Centre



The proposal to demolish the buildings of the colonial past extended at one point to the neo-classical Supreme Court building to the south of Council House. This great porticoed building was to make way for a new ceremonial drive, a western continuation of the Esplanade.

However, there were dissenters to those who were intoxicated by the modern and the new. A letter to the *Daily News* lamented that ‘...a little more dignity was not incorporated in the administrative block.’¹⁷ And on the following day the same newspaper published a letter whose author was in no doubt about what constituted the necessary elements of a respectable town hall:

Our proposed new Town Hall has no clock and no dome roof, both of which are essential civic building requirements.¹⁸

The *New Review* supported the modern forms of the winning scheme:

Those few old fashioned rate-payers who are suggesting that the new scheme is before its time, should make a point of inspecting the City of South Perth and City of Subiaco new centres, converse with officials and citizens and learn, as they undoubtedly will that these new modern structures have given their respective cities a great boost as well as meeting

a very real necessity in their civic requirements and progress.¹⁹

Council House is a building that was emblematic of the young colonial city of Perth embracing with enthusiasm the promises of international Modernism.

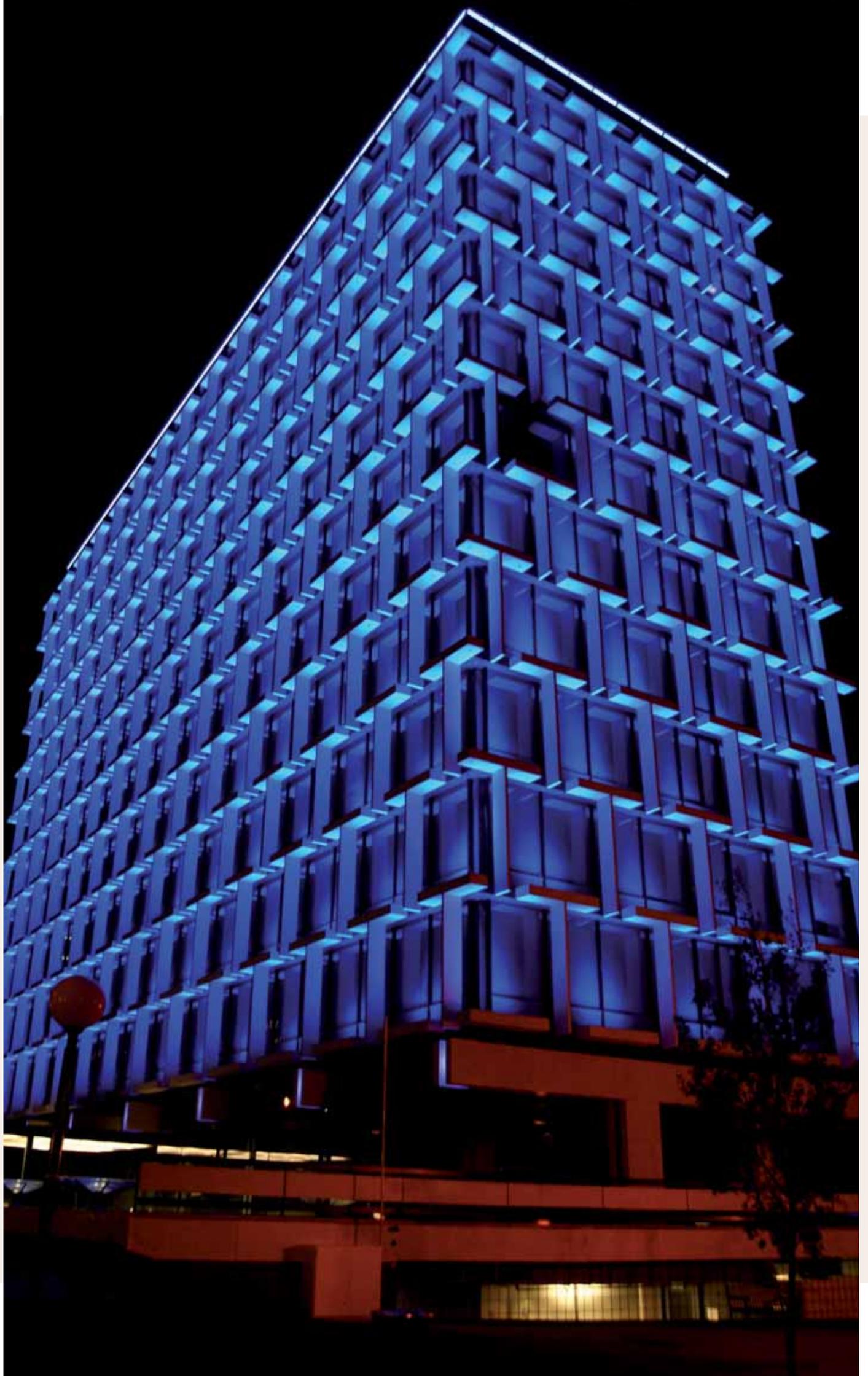
An Illuminated building

Originally Council House was lit externally using strip fittings. When illuminated, they threw light upwards onto the T shapes, creating a sparking effect.

‘Lighting at night is an important feature of Council House, and architects Howlett & Bailey have designed the building so that it has the effect of a glittering diamond in the city when night falls.’²⁰

This tradition has been continued and reinterpreted over the years. During WAY 79 celebrations two huge World War II searchlights operated from the forecourt of Council House. For the first 3 months of 1979 they threw 10,000 metre beams of light into the night sky.

In April 2010, the outside of the Council House building was fitted with over 22,000 LED lights to light up the building at night. The lights, located on the roof, T structures and bulkheads are able to be individually computer controlled and coloured.



1963-1993

From 1963 until December 1993 Council House accommodated the Perth City Council administrative offices, the Mayoral and reception suites, the Council Chamber, the Council Library, and numerous other Council facilities of a less grand nature.

The building under threat

However, in the early 1990s, after just 30 years of life, Council House was earmarked for demolition by the State Government, its consultants, and the City of Perth, with the neighbouring colonial buildings proposed to remain in a newly refurbished 'Heritage Precinct' as part of Premier Richard Court's vision for Perth.²¹

The WA Chapter of the Royal Australian Institute of Architects (RAIA) aggressively opposed the plan to demolish Council House. This may seem paradoxical after its predecessors argued equally forcefully that it not be built on its site. The issue for the RAIA moved on from that of site selection and became the protection and acknowledgment of a key part of Perth's recent past; its most celebrated modern building.

The RAIA joined with CityVision, a voluntary urban advocacy group, and other concerned citizens to argue against the demolition. Their arguments embraced a view of heritage which recognised that heritage buildings were not only from the distant past but were being created on a daily basis as the 'heritage of tomorrow' and were reliant on their distinctive qualities and cultural importance. Council House clearly had such qualities, as recognised by experts external to the state and local governments.

The Perth City Council commissioned Schwager Brooks and Partners Pty Ltd, the Sydney-based conservation and heritage consultants, to evaluate Council House and advise on its future. They reported that:

Council House is a valid, if contrasting, component of a rich group of 19th and 20th century public buildings, all drawn together by the surrounding gardens and parkland.

Schwager Brooks argued that Council House was appropriate in its context as it represented a civic and cultural continuity and should be retained, refurbished and entered on the West Australian Register of Heritage Places. They recognised that the building survives in a relatively intact form, both externally and internally, with few modifications having been made to the building fabric throughout its life, that it was designed to utilise the most modern technological building systems of the time, and that it was a landmark building in this respect in Perth and Australia.²²

The Western Australian branch of the National Trust of Australia recognised that Council House survives as a fine example of office design which featured the most progressive ideas of the time, reflecting influences of the major contemporary examples constructed in Europe and America. The building is acknowledged by them as having national significance in this regard. The National Trust recommendation was strong in asserting that Council House should be conserved in accordance with the recommendations of the conservation plan prepared by Schwager Brooks.



In the face of this evidence the Western Australian Government and the interim Commissioners of the City of Perth publicly expressed the view that Council House should be demolished. They proposed an extension of Stirling Gardens on the site and the re-instatement of the colonial gardens surrounded by turn-of-the-century institutional buildings. While they did acknowledge that Council House has architectural merit, they argued that it should go because it did not 'fit' within a 'heritage precinct'. This view suggested that the saved past is more worthy than the present. Inevitably when such a past is reflected upon it is idealised and is, more often than not, in the words of the British critic, Patrick Wright, '...the historicised image of the establishment'.²³

The Council House Urban Design Assessment Report prepared by the City Planning Department in May 1994 recommended the building should not be entered on the Heritage Register. And the State Government Heritage Minister Graham Kierath refused to place the building on the Heritage Register, despite calls from the Heritage Council and the National Trust to do so.²⁴

At one point in the often acrimonious debate over whether Council House should be retained, the construction of a 'heritage look-alike' in the place of Council House was mooted by Craig Lawrence, the Chair of the Commission then running the Perth City Council.²⁵ The term 'heritage' was used to advocate an historic style. This clearly demonstrated that the problem was not the fact that there was a building on the site earmarked for the colonial garden, but that it was a modern building.

Council House, once willingly and proudly embraced by the public and press as a civic emblem of Perth, its optimism, its modernity, and its future, had been abused and seriously threatened. Its modernity proved to be its vulnerability, its potential undoing.

Of course, Council House was saved and placed on the Heritage List. But while this represents a triumph for those who proposed the retention of the building because of its architectural qualities and what can be understood by 'heritage', in the end, the decision for its retention was made substantially on pragmatic factors, factors quite outside the cultural arguments being made. It is now history that Council House was refurbished, enjoys widespread affection, is a source of local pride, and is the subject of respectful architectural pilgrimages by architectural aficionados from other Australian cities.

Geoffrey London

Geoffrey London is the Winthrop Professor of Architecture at The University of Western Australia and a Professorial Fellow at the University of Melbourne. He is also the Victorian Government Architect, having previously held the position of Western Australian Government Architect. He is a past Dean and Head of School at The University of Western Australia and a past President of the Western Australian Chapter of the Australian Institute of Architects. He is a Life Fellow of the Institute and an Honorary Fellow of the New Zealand Institute of Architects.

This chapter has drawn on previous research and writing by the author, appearing in 'Council House, Perth' in Jennifer Taylor, *Tall Buildings, Australian Business Going Up: 1945-1970*, Craftsman House, Sydney, 2001, pp.228-239.



Endnotes

- 1 After the site was finalised in the second half of 1959, the *West Australian* newspaper of 9 November 1960 reported:
 "I am in favour of disposing of the present Town Hall site and of building a larger town hall on a central site to be selected by ratepayers" ...This could have been a statement from a candidate in the last Lord Mayoral elections. But it was made 59 years ago. It was a plank in the platform of William Gordon Brookman, who was seeking election as Mayor of Perth in 1901. Even then, only 31 years after the completion of the Perth Town Hall, a new site had become a civic issue... Shortly before World War I a referendum on the siting question recorded a majority for the advocates of the present army headquarters site in Beaufort-street... Premier Collier in July, 1934, suggested three sites; Government House, Stirling Gardens and the Esplanade.
- 2 *West Australian* 19.12.58.
- 3 Memorandum by Town Clerk W McInnes Green to the General Purposes Committee 9.3.59
- 4 *Daily News* 13.7.59
- 5 Perth City Council Archive File 40/59, letter dated 2.10.1959
- 6 Assessors' report
- 7 *West Australian*, 2.9.60
- 8 Interview between Lindsay Waller and the author, Perth, 10.10.1995
- 9 Ibid Lindsay Waller
- 10 Ibid Lindsay Waller
- 11 Ibid Lindsay Waller
- 12 Interview between John Calegari and City of Perth Curator Jo Darbyshire, 16.5.2012
- 13 *The Architect*, Volume 6, No 72, June 1963, p. 48
- 14 *Architecture in Australia*, Volume 52 No 4, December 1963, pp. 84-89, p.85
- 15 *West Australian* 24.3.59
- 16 *West Australian* 22.5.59
- 17 *Daily News* 6.9.60
- 18 *Daily News* 7.9.60
- 19 *New Review* April 1961
- 20 *West Australian* 21.11.1962
- 21 *Perth: A City for the People*, brochure prepared as a summary of joint development initiatives between the Government of Western Australia and the City of Perth, 1994. The development proposals were prepared by consultants, Philip Cox, Etherington Coulter and Jones
- 22 *Heritage Assessment and Conservation Plan*, Council House, 1993, p. 5
- 23 Cited in *A Heritage Handbook*, edited by G Davison and C McConville, Allen & Unwin, Sydney 1991, p. 8
- 24 Letter from Thomas Perrigo, CEO National Trust to the Perth City Council CEO, 20.06.1994 and article 'Call for Council House Review by National Trust', *West Australian*, 25.06.1994
- 25 *Business News*, May 26 - June 8, 1994, p.4

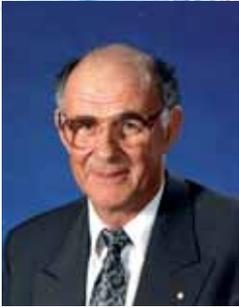
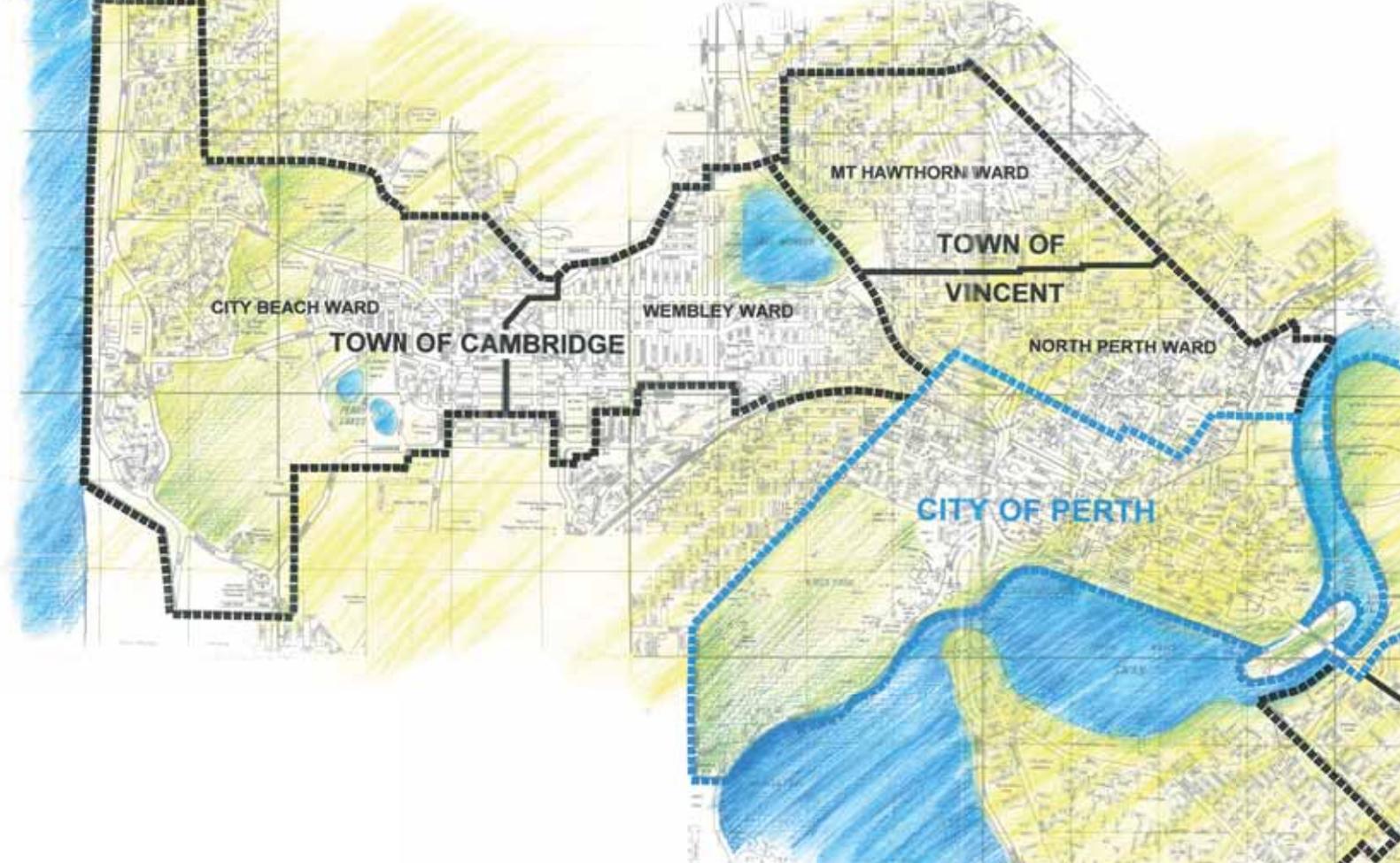
Freedom of the City Parade, Officers and crew of the HMAS Perth, 1966. History Centre

Deputy Lord Mayor, Mr Keith Frame starts the Wescobee 600 Cycle Tour from the front steps of Council House in 1970, when the Wescobee 600 was Australia's longest and richest cycling race covering 327 miles (526 Km) between Perth and Carnarvon over 5 days. SLWA 344656PD

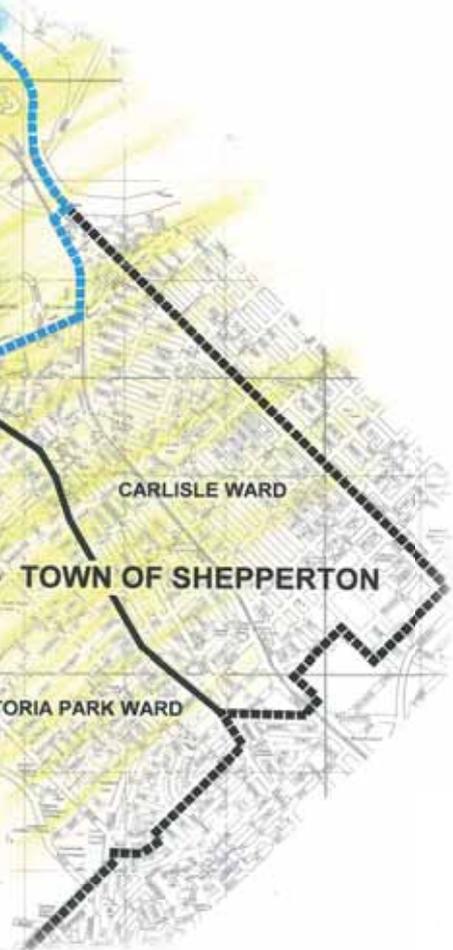
Vogue fashion shoot in foyer Council House c. 1963. Photo courtesy Don Bailey

Kagoshima sister city dancers perform in a street parade for the WAY 79 sesquicentenary celebrations, 1979. Memorabilia Collection

Council Parking Inspectors on the stairs of Council House 1989, *Annual Report* 1988/1989



Saving Council House



Map of newly created Town of Cambridge to the west, Town of Vincent to the north, the City of Perth, centre and Town of Shepperton (later Victoria Park) to the east. 1994. Memorabilia Collection

Commissioners; left to right: Chairman Craig Lawrence, Kevin Karlson, Michele Dolin, Humphrey Park and Anthony Ednie-Brown

Photograph showing staff photo on the last day of work at Council House before it was closed for renovation, December 1993. History Centre

1993

In 1993 the State Government proposed the re-organisation of the City of Perth. Perth became a Capital City with three autonomous Towns created around it; Cambridge, Vincent and Shepparton. These Towns were to have their own councils.

Legislation in October 1993 saw the Perth City Council's 27 members replaced by five Commissioners who were appointed by the State to oversee the restructure of the Perth City Council. Chairman Craig Lawrence and Kevin Karlson, Michele Dolin, Humphrey Park and Anthony Ednie-Brown took over the running of the City of Perth. The Commissioners remained in place until elections for all four councils were held in May 1995.¹

For some years it had been apparent that asbestos had become a major problem in Council House and needed to be removed. In December 1993 all floors of Council House, except the Library, were vacated to allow for the removal of the asbestos that lay throughout the building.

Council moved the rest of its staff to Westralia Square on St Georges Terrace. As there was deemed to be no asbestos in the ground and lower ground floors, the City Library continued to operate in the empty building until March 1995, when it was relocated to the Law Chambers, remaining there until early 2012.²

1994

The Heritage Assessment Report and Conservation Plan by Schwager, Brooks and Partners (November 1993) argued that Council House should be retained, refurbished and included on the West Australian Register of Heritage Places.³ However in May 1994 the City's own Planning Department recommended demolition arguing the estimated cost of re-furbishment would be \$40 million.⁴ The State Government offered the City of Perth the Treasury Building as alternative accommodation, along with \$30 million to assist relocation. Council House was left empty and barricaded by hoardings and many people in the general population perceived it as looking shabby.



Ivan King, a long-time resident of the city:

I went through a stage of thinking the building had as much grandeur as a stack of wheat belt motels...now I think it stands in glorious contrast to the earlier buildings around it.⁵

By January 1994 more than 55 architects had written to the Perth City Council and the Heritage Council of WA to express concern over the potential loss of Council House. As Architect Ron Bodycoat expressed:

The PCC hasn't done the sort of maintenance that something of that significance should have had, so the building has ended up looking tired and jaded and that has given ammunition to the people that don't like it.⁶

Edwin White in a letter to the *Australian*, 29 June 1994:

My trouble with Council House is that visually – it mainly consists of Venetian blinds, an unaesthetic and unimpressive construction material.⁷

Heritage Minister Graham Kierath's refusal to place the building on the Heritage Register 'stunned' the Royal Institute of Architects (RAIA) who became more active in saving the building from demolition.⁸ In August 1994 the RAIA resolved to actively support retention of Council House.⁹

Paul Ritter in a letter to the *West Australian* in 1994:

Rather than sentencing a great building to death prematurely the evidence for the imaginative inclusion of it in the planned precinct should be heard.¹⁰

Architect Bruce Callow in a letter to the Council in the same year:

Over time the city should contain examples of all the significant periods of its development. Wherever possible they should be the best examples not just what was left over from the period.¹¹

Other groups like CityVision, a voluntary, non-party aligned, political advocacy group, were also instrumental in encouraging greater public discussion about

Hoardings protest slogan: 'If you knock this down – you're a bloody idiot'
Photo: Abe Ashbil, 29.3.1995

Closed entrance to Council House 1994, P1706927

Library exterior, lower ground Council House, 1978.
History Centre



whether the building should be kept and what was considered 'heritage'.

Brett, one of a class of ten year old students from Leeming Primary School who sent letters to the City of Perth:

I think Council House should not be demolished because they could jazz it up to be a nightclub or they could leave it there and it could be some kind of history.¹²

A participatory half-day forum titled 'Council House – To be or not to be?' was held on Saturday 3 September 1994 at the Perth Concert Hall. It was organised by the Australian Institute of Urban Studies in association with CityVision.

Speakers included those prominent in the fight to save the building; CityVision co-founder and Perth resident Bill Warnock, architect Ken Adam, Ron Bodycoat, the National Trust Heritage architect, and Professor Geoffrey London, Dean of School of Architecture at the University of Western Australia.

The main speaker who spoke for demolition was Philip Achurch, Executive Director of the Small Business Association who argued that the public open space created could be used to build a "stone part-replica of an amphitheatre at Epidaurus", in Greece.¹³ The idea that Perth needed imported 'heritage' was rebutted by former deputy Lord Mayor, Jack Marks, who joked "Perhaps we should have a Mayan temple where we could sacrifice maidens every week?"¹⁴

This forum made it clear there was a strong body of informed opinion in the community in favour of keeping the building. CityVision called a round-table of interested organisations and individuals on 6 October 1994. This group became the Campaign to Save Council House Committee with the aim to 'fully inform the public'.¹⁵

Founders of the Save Council House Committee met at the Mount St home of Bill and Diana Warnock. The group incorporated the following organisations; CityVision, the RAIA, Design Institute of Australia, Building Designers Association of WA, the Australian Institute of Urban Studies and the Australian Institute of Landscape Architects and individuals.

WA author Tom Hungerford joined the argument by opening an exhibition, organized by the committee, in the GPO foyer in Forrest Place in November 1994. The display showed drawings of the building and promoted alternative ideas for the building, in preference to demolition. According to a report in the *West Australian* he urged the public to generate "bloody hell" to retain the building. Comments in the Visitors' Book at the exhibition strongly supported keeping Council House.¹⁶

The Premier, Richard Court published his 'Perth – A City for People' program, defining a Heritage Precinct based on the Supreme Court, Old Treasury Buildings and St George's Cathedral, but without Council House. In the City Newsletter of December 1994, the Commissioners published a 'before and after' image to justify demolishing Council House and stated they had widespread support to do so. They also published a letter in favour of demolition from prominent historian George Seddon.¹⁷

This City News publication raised the ire of the RAIA and the Campaign to Save Council House Committee who strongly objected to the newsletter and carried out an in-depth analysis of its arguments, stating "We object to the biases, lack of objectivity and unsubstantiated claims made in the publication."¹⁸ They went on to discredit more than 35 statements made in the publication, including George Seddon's letter, and pointed out the before-and-after images presented in the publication were persuasive rather than relevant.

'Opening up the vista' was argued as a good reason to demolish the building but the photographs had been

taken from a viewpoint rarely accessible to people using the city and chosen so that Council House obliterated the Supreme Court Buildings and part of the river.

They also questioned whether demolition was financially prudent; pointing out that it would be cheaper to refurbish Council House than to refurbish the Treasury Buildings at a cost of between \$50 and \$60 million¹⁹

1995

Asbestos was removed from the Council house building by Bayside Group Holdings between January 1995 and July 1996.

In 1995 public sentiment seemed to swing in favour of keeping Council House. In a public meeting at the Perth Town Hall on 13 March 1995, 10 of the 13 speakers were in favour of keeping the building. Architecture students from around Australia, attending a conference, protested outside Council House in March 1995, demanding the building not be demolished. Katherine Howlett, the wife of the original architect was at the protest.²⁰

In April the State Opposition also joined the campaign to save Council House, with Opposition leader Jim McGinty changing his stance on the issue after having listened to heritage experts. McGinty slated Richard Lewis, the Minister for Planning for sitting on the Heritage Council's recommendation for six months – a move he said was unprecedented in WA.²¹

Jack Marks, now the newly elected Mayor of Vincent was an outspoken supporter, asserting that "Heritage doesn't come from the age of a building – it comes from what the building means to the community."²²

A new City of Perth Council was elected in May 1995 and in June, Dr Peter Nattrass the new Lord Mayor, invited three experts: Ian Hocking, a Heritage Architect, Paul Jones, a consultant for Perth a City for People Project and Ken Adam from the Campaign to Save Council House, to give a briefing to the new Council members. This had an impact on the Councillors and Council resolved at a meeting on 25 July, to enter Council House on the Heritage List and that "It would rescind, by absolute majority, the decision of the Commission regarding the demolition of Council House."²³

Letter to Councillor Bert Tudori from Diana Warnock MLA, Member for Perth:

Dear Bert, Congratulations! I am reliably informed that you have been personally involved in the fight to retain Council House. I am delighted that the Council has shown itself to be independent of the Government and that the Planning Minister has met such tough opposition on this matter. ²⁴

Fax to Peter Richardson from Allanah MacTiernan, MLC:

Dear Peter, Congratulations on your terrific efforts to save Council House from those who are incapable of understanding that our cultural heritage is not confined to grand mansions from the colonial era.²⁵

City News publication showing before and after pictures, December 1994

Alston cartoon, the *West Australian*, Friday Nov 18, 1994, 'The key to understanding the Planning Bill...'

RAIA Flyer to protest proposed demolition of Council House, 1993
Courtesy Katrina Chisholm

Claims the council had exaggerated the cost of refurbishing Council House may have contributed to Council's decision in late 1995 to contract for an independent



Bill Warnock formed an organisation called CityVision, which for more than a decade has attempted to improve the centre of Perth, arguing that like many modern cities it was sterile and poorly planned with few permanent residents. The 20 or so people who joined him in this quest remember Warnock's tireless work, his skillful lobbying and trenchant argument. The saving of Council House from demolition was his greatest achievement.

From a eulogy by Perth writer John McIlwraith 2001³²

feasibility study into the refurbishment of Council House.²⁶ This was carried out by architects Cox, Howlett and Bailey, of which one of the partners was the son of original designer Jeffrey Howlett. Quantity surveyors Rawlinsons also worked with the architects on the \$100,000 study.

The study indicated that the building could be economically refurbished. Figures from the report showed it would cost \$20 million to refurbish the building with no council use; \$26 million for full council use; \$25 million for partial council use; and \$47 million to convert the building into a three-star hotel.

1996

On 13 March 1996 the feasibility study was presented at a special Council Meeting. Two hundred people crammed into the Perth Town Hall for the meeting. The two year campaign to save Council House was deemed successful when the Council voted to return to the historic building.²⁷

In October 1996 the Council agreed to accept the refurbishment plans, hoping to move back into Council House by December 1998.²⁸ The decision to refurbish was helped by the fact that interest rates at the time were so low that it was cheaper to service a loan than to pay rent.²⁹ After raising some of the money through selling Council assets a further loan of \$16 million was borrowed, to be cleared over 10 years.³⁰

The contract to refurbish the building was won by John Holland Constructions, the construction company owned by Janet Holmes a Court, on 29 July 1997, at a price of \$25,314,000.³¹ The architects for the refurbishment were Peter Hunt and Daryl Jackson Architects, under Director Geoffrey Clough.

1997

Refurbishment was planned around preserving key features of the building while providing universal access for people with disabilities, in particular.

This was especially visible in the forecourt of Council House. The original fountains were kept but the forecourt would no longer provide a parking area. It was grassed

Bill Warnock (1934 – 2001)
Photo courtesy the *West Australian*
and Diana Warnock

Artist renderings of refurbishment
of forecourt, north and south
faces, Council House, 1998.
Architects Peter Hunt and Daryl
Jackson, Artist CNIC.
Memorabilia Collection

Artist rendering of refurbishment
of interior foyer, Council House,
1998. Architects Peter Hunt and
Daryl Jackson, Artist John Morgan.
Memorabilia Collection



over to give the building a more dignified appearance and to encourage public interaction. Stairs which originally marked the entrance were replaced with a gentle sloping granite pavement. Rear stairs were added to the south side of the building. The entrance foyer space was fully enclosed with glass and the western end of the foyer was designed to facilitate a public service counter. The granite floor was retained and refurbished.

Water seepage had always been a problem in the basement areas of Council House as the building was built near an underground water course. Flooding had occurred periodically and an open spring can still be accessed in the basement. At one point in the refurbishment it was even suggested that the Council bottle the spring water and sell it.³³ However the problem was partly resolved when the engineer for the builder John Holland worked out a system which allowed any water coming into the area to be released or channeled out.

Although the ground water table is only 2 metres below the existing ground level, an underground car park was created and gardens were extended over it.³⁴ The entry was designed with a right of way access on the east side of the building. The car park would service about 90 cars and a new lift lobby was constructed to service the underground car park from inside the building.

One of the 120 year old New Zealand Kauri trees near the building had to be cut down to facilitate the car park. The milled wood from the Kauri was stored, dried and then re-used by Artek to provide trim on new, wooden office furniture in all the executive offices.³⁵

The building itself was 'stripped back to bare bones' and the tiny tiles coating the building's distinctive T shaped fins were removed, repaired and re-glued.

As there was virtually no shading produced by the T shaped fins, and the north side of the building was often uncomfortably hot, it was necessary to re-think ways to exclude as much of the radiant heat as possible. The gold Venetian blinds which had been a feature of the building in the past were replaced by Verosol blinds which were designed to reduce by 50% the effect of radiation entering and heating the building³⁶

The refurbishment involved the construction of a new reception area on the eleventh floor (previously a plant room), which also housed the Lord Mayoral offices.



Girls on the lawn in front of *the Obelisk*, 1975.

Photo: Stevenson, Kinder and Scott, SLWA 347261PD

Paul Ritter (left) and Lord Mayor Dr Peter Natrass inspect the diamond rock added to *the Obelisk* in March 1997.

Photographer Tony Ashby, courtesy the *West Australian*. Article 'Mayor Beats Height to unveil a Diamond', by John Duffy 18.3.1997

The mob of bronze kangaroo sculptures that grace the footpath along St Georges Terrace, were created by Charles Smith and Joan Walsh-Smith for the City of Perth in 1997. Each kangaroo weighs between 850-1000 kilos. Photo: Bob Litchfield, 2012. History Centre



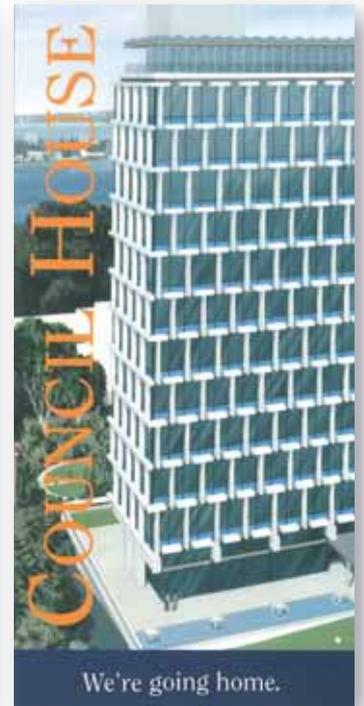
The Obelisk, 1971

The Obelisk, colloquially referred to as the 'Shish Kebab' is one of the sculptures most connected to Council House. It was created to commemorate the mineral and energy boom that began in the 1960s and the large development projects in the north west of the State that were directed from Perth.

The Obelisk was conceived by Paul Ritter, Director of the Planned Environment and Educational Research Institute and represented the idea of mirroring what was happening under the ground and the optimism of the mining boom. From the steel base a 45 ft high (13.7 metres) oil drilling pipe threads 15 different ores and is capped by a drill bit. The ores include bauxite, chalcocopyrite, copper, gold, lithium, magnesite, nickel, silver, tin and iron ore.

The Chamber of Mines obtained ores from many of the main mining companies then operating and transported them via truck, thousands of miles to Perth. Many other companies contributed to the project and the Perth City Council contributed the site at the front of Stirling Gardens near the ornamental pool. It took 12 hours to erect and *The Obelisk* was formally unveiled on 23 July 1971.

In 1997 *The Obelisk* was refurbished and a 16th layer, a diamond rock was added to acknowledge the diamond industry in WA.



To accommodate this, a lift had to be added to allow lift access to level 11. This addition raised the roof level which some architects questioned as it broke the integrity of the original design.³⁷

Seating in the Council Chamber changed dramatically. The sunken circular floor had originally been designed to accommodate 28 Councillors and 20 members of the public in the gallery. This floor was filled and now accommodates only nine Elected Members and 67 observers.

Income was generated by continuing to rent three floors of Council House to private business.

1999

The City of Perth moved back to Council House on the 15 February 1999. After the official opening on Saturday 27 November Lord Mayor Peter Nattrass invited the public to take a tour of the building. The refurbishment was widely considered a great success.³⁸

2000 - 2012

The Western Australian State election of 2001 resulted in a change of government, including a change of Heritage Minister. The restored Council House was finally placed on the Interim Heritage List by Heritage Minister Michelle Roberts, on 5 March 2006. The building was entered as a permanent entry on the Heritage Register on 8 December 2006.

Planning for a series of refurbishments of individual floors to meet the current and future needs of City staff began in 2010.

Modernist Architecture Stamp series © Australian Postal Corporation 2007.
Designer: Gary Domoney, Spark Studio
Photo: Robert Frith/Acorn, Memorabilia Collection

'We're going home.' flyer produced by City of Perth, 1999



Council House continues to be an iconic building in the city of Perth and provides a fitting formality and elegance for state receptions. The building also stands as a striking landmark for important civic and cultural activities. Thousands of people gathered in front of Council House on Saturday night, 11 February 2012, to see the aerial spectacle *Place des Anges* by French company Studios de Cirque. A two ton blizzard of white feathers showered down on the crowd as part of the Perth International Arts Festival (PIAF).

Citizenship ceremonies are held every Australia Day (January 26) in front of Council House and this beautiful building and surrounding gardens continue to provide the perfect welcome for new West Australians.

Place des Anges event,
Perth International Arts Festival,
Photo: Neil Wallace, 11.2.2012

Australia Day 2012, Council House,
Lord Mayor Lisa Scaffidi, Governor
of Western Australia, Malcolm
McCusker, Tonya McCusker and
CEO Frank Edwards.
Photo: Paul Anastas

Parks and Garden staff created flower
displays for the Commonwealth
Heads of Government Meeting
(CHOGM), February 2011,
Photos: Alan Dolphin and
Doug Forster

Endnotes

- 1 *A Capital City for Western Australia, Restructuring the City of Perth*, Oct 1993, West Australian Government flyer
- 2 Abe Ashbil, Overview Report to CEO, 18.1.1995, File no P1000179/2
- 3 *Heritage Assessment and Conservation Plan*, Council House, 1993, p. 5.
- 4 *The Council House Urban Design Assessment Report* prepared by the City Planning Department, May 1994,
- 5 Ivan King in conversation with Jo Darbyshire 4.8.2012
- 6 Vanessa Gould, Call to Save Council House, *West Australian*, 19.01.1994
- 7 Edwin White, the *Australian*, 29.06.1994
- 8 The RAlA had provided a comprehensive submission arguing the significance of the Heritage Assessment and Conservation Report, as noted by a Report to Council (WPPLREP/4884), by D Morgan, Heritage Planner and R Pether, City Planner, 20.05.1994.
- 9 Correspondence with Ken Adam 18.2.2013.
- 10 Paul Ritter, Former City Planner, City Architect and City Councillor (1965-1986), Letter to *West Australian* 12.6.1994
- 11 Bruce Callow, letter to the Lord Mayor and Councillors, 9.7.1994, File No 1010192, vol 3
- 12 Letters from students from Leeming Primary School to the City of Perth, November 1994, File No 1010192, vol 2
- 13 *Council House – To be or not to be?* a publication documenting the half day forum held 3.09.1994 at the Perth Concert Hall, Australian Institute of Urban Studies, p. 22
- 14 Ibid, *Council House – To be or not to be?*, 1994, p.29
- 15 Letter from Ken Adam, Chairman of CityVision to Garry Hunt, CEO City of Perth, 30 November 1994, File No 1010192, vol 2 and letter to the National Trust on behalf of Campaign to Save Council House Committee, 20.02.1995, National Trust archives. The Committee met 21 times in all, the last meeting on 9 August 1995, correspondence with Ken Adam 18.2.2013.
- 16 Deborah Kennedy, Author fights for Council House, *West Australian*, 18.11.1994, p.1. Local interior designer Gary Giles organised the ten day long exhibition, in an effort to raise the public's awareness. Conversation with Gary Giles 2.1.2013
- 17 *City News*, December 1994, City of Perth
- 18 Letter from Paul Wellington, State Manager RAlA to Mr Craig Lawrence, Chairman of Commissioners, City of Perth, 8.2.1995, File No 1010192, vol 2
- 19 Commentary on 'City News-Perth towards 2000', submission of 8.2.1995, File No 1010192, vol 2, p.9
- 20 Deborah Kennedy, Students Rally to save building, *West Australian*, 22.4.1995, p.32
- 21 Deborah Kennedy, Keep Council House: Labor, *West Australian*, 20.4.1995, p.8
- 22 Noel Dyson, Most at meeting say 'yes' to Council House, *Business News*, March 1996
- 23 CEO Garry Hunt, to Planning Minister Richard Lewis, 7 August 1995, File no P1010192 Vol 3
- 24 Diana Warnock MLA, Member for Perth in a Letter to Councillor Bert Tudori from 27.7.1995. File No 1010192, vol 2
- 25 Fax to Peter Richardson from Allanah MacTiernan, MLC, 26 July 1995, File No 1010192, vol 2
- 26 Ken Adam declared that PCC documents obtained through Freedom of Information legislation showed the City of Perth commissioners had exaggerated the cost of refurbishing Council House from \$23 million to \$40 million, Deborah Kennedy, Keep Council House: Labor, *West Australian*, 20.4.1995, p.8
- 27 John Duffy, Council House Saved for now, *West Australian*, 14.3.1996
- 28 Item no 22, Council Meeting, 22.10.1996, File no P 1000179/3
- 29 Dan Minchin, Council House Still Offers Strong Views, *West Australian*, 11.11.1998, p. 61
- 30 The Return to Council House Program, produced for the re-opening ceremony 27.11.1999, Memorabilia Collection
- 31 John Duffy, Council House Job Put At \$25m, *West Australian*, 30.7.1997, p. 24
- 32 <http://www.apersonalhistory.com/BillWarnock> (accessed 14.12.2012). CityVision was formed on Bill Warnock's initiative in 1987, initially under the name of Perth Urban Discussion Group. The name CityVision emerged prior to publication of their first manifesto, under the title "New Directions for Central Perth" in 1988, correspondence with Ken Adam 18.2.2013.
- 33 Conversation with Abe Ashbil, Refurbishment Project Co-ordinator, 11.1.2013
- 34 Peter Hunt Architects, *Architectural Scope of Works*, 5.11.1996, File no P 1000179/3
- 35 This project was also co-ordinated by Abe Ashbil. Artek Furniture was the new name for the firm carrying on the Cornish family furniture business
- 36 Letter to Abe Ashbil from Steens Gray and Kelly Pty Ltd, 22.11.1996, File no P 1000179/4
- 37 Conversation with architect Ron Bodycoat, 26.11.2012
- 38 Braden Quartermaine, House full of Heritage, *Sunday Times*, 5.3.2006, p. 19



Council House Tray, 2013

One of the most popular items in the City of Perth Memorabilia Collection is a souvenir tray, produced as part of a series, made in the early 1960s, showing iconic Western Australian sites. The pressed metal tray depicts Council House and Stirling Gardens.

To commemorate 50 Years: Council House 1963 – 2013 the City of Perth commissioned Australian design company Fink and Co to produce a contemporary souvenir tray. Fink and Co create objects influenced by the Modernist ethos of 'form follows function'; they manufacture in Australia and hand-finish each piece.

A limited edition of 100 anodized aluminium trays has been produced. The tray shows a contemporary image of Council House from Stirling Gardens taken by photographer Greg Hocking. This image has been laser etched to create a modern and vibrant interpretation of the 1960s original.

Council House Souvenir Tray 1960s
and *Council House Tray* 2012
Fink & CO, Edition 100
Colours: turquoise, blue and
orange
Anodized Aluminium
41.5 x 31.6 x 2.4 cm
Photo: Robert Frith/Acorn

Interior design and commissioned work for Council House

Robert Bell

As Perth's new Council House took shape on St Georges Terrace through 1962 it provoked strong opinions about its design, eliciting controversy from the traditionalists and plaudits from a younger emerging design community in Perth. An uncompromised modernist structure set in a precinct of colonial era buildings, it demonstrated a willingness on the part of its client, the Perth City Council, to break with the past and operate its formal business and symbolic functions and events in a setting unlike any before.¹

Having won the competition for the new Council House in September 1960, architects Jeffrey Howlett and Donald Bailey, then employed at the Melbourne practice, Bates Smart & McCutcheon, but submitting their entry as independent architects, had to achieve a tight completion date of November 1962, when the building would be the venue for the Perth City Council's formal civic events in association with the Perth Empire Games.² Along with a Perth-based colleague, Lindsay Waller, they set up their practice, Howlett and Bailey, in Perth to run the project from a local base where they could assemble a team of specialist contractors to develop every aspect of the construction, technical fit-out and furnishings.

While the building's exterior and advanced construction has been extensively assessed for its unique Australian contribution to the language of international modernism, its interior design warrants discussion for its designers' commitment to achieving an integrated and rational program that would celebrate materiality and craftsmanship. Architect Donald Bailey has noted that '...there were few 'off-the-hook' well-designed items of furniture and fittings that already existed notably in places such as Scandinavia, where design is instinctive.

Thus the mission of the architects was to ensure that every item of fit-out received careful and skilled design for a holistic, integrated outcome....It was an additional challenge to find, and encourage WA craftspersons to deliver *de novo* products.³

The design of the building is characterised by its transparency, a metaphor for the visibility of the City's business and functions that would take place there. The meaning of 'interior' would change for its occupants as they worked, not surrounded by opaque walls, but by the visual expanse of the city's horizons seen through every full height window. Each aspect was framed by the building's distinctive leitmotif, the T-shaped external sunscreens which bring an essential part of the architectural fabric into each floor's perimeter offices and rooms. From this aspect, through the windows, the screens' covering of small, white-glazed ceramic mosaic tile can be appreciated at close hand, each crystalline tile suggesting the possibility of haptic intimacy invisible from the street below and providing a changing theatre of refractions as the sun moves across the building. The 'floating' nature of the screens is not lost from this interior viewpoint, inviting a sense of wonder and curiosity about the structure while acknowledging its constructivist credentials. Controlled artificial light from the interior of the building was an integral part of its design when it was seen at night, adding a lantern-like visual spectacle to its heritage precinct.

This lightness begins at street level, where the visitor passed a linear water element of a full-frontal pool, bridged centrally for access, lined with cobalt glazed mosaic tiles and mounted with a sequence of inverted glass pyramids which filled with water in a brimming,

endless flow. The fountain bowls repeated the acrylic canopy forms installed at the rooftop. This placement of water in a geometric abstraction of the city's adjacent flowing Swan river visually refreshed the visitor passing under a light steel entry canopy into a fully glazed pavilion-like enclosure within the grey granite-floored and black vitreous ceramic mosaic-ceilinged entrance plaza where the building's essential structural program is powerfully stated and articulated.⁴ Fourteen piloti supporting the structure are clad in white Sicilian marble and black mosaic tile, a graphic element that also hinted at the visual astringency of the Western Australian landscape, bleached by the sun.

It is here that the visitor encountered the most prominent of the building's commissioned art works, a powerful large metal abstraction of the City of Perth's Coat of Arms. It was designed by Jeffrey Howlett to acknowledge Western Australia's sun and its emblematic black swans and also included one large and five smaller crowns to symbolise Queen Elizabeth II as the seventh Monarch. This work, positioned against the glass of the entrance pavilion, provided a graphic, almost brutalist rendition of the Council's livery, reinforcing its commitment to break with the conventions of the past. Howlett took the region's familiar black swans, crowns, St George cross and castellation of the traditional emblem as a point of departure for an open relief sculpture in reticulated, darkened copper. The elements are encircled by a flattened oval rim of irregular sunflower-like spines, emphasising the aggressive stance of the pair of rampant swans, the whole composition appearing to have survived some conflagration – perhaps a bushfire where the ubiquitous Western Australian grass trees stand in defiant spikiness. In this work, he was inspired by the British artist, Graham Sutherland, whose work for Coventry Cathedral in the early 1960s offered new approaches to the integration of art and architecture.⁵

The photograph (above right) shows the 2.4 metre high crest set on a plinth of granite from the original 1817 Waterloo Bridge in London, which arrived in Perth having been used as ballast for ships that would return to Britain with Australian produce.⁶

The coat of arms was made by the Perth artist and manufacturing jeweller, Geoffrey Allen. Born in Mount Barker, Western Australia in 1924, he trained as a painter at the National Art School in Sydney from 1945 under the sculptor Lyndon Dadswell before returning to Perth in 1953. From 1957 he worked as an art teacher at Scotch College, exhibiting in Perth at the leading Skinner Galleries and also with the Triangle Gallery of design-focused furnishing retailer and advocate for Western Australian art and design, David Foulkes Taylor. Even though Allen had no previous experience with large-scale metal sculpture, these connections may have placed him into the field of view of Howlett, who commissioned him to produce the coat of arms.

Allen provided the Council and the architects with a maquette for the Coat of Arms, with less detail than the final design. Having bought and learned to use a welder for the commission, he struggled with its execution, experimenting with the reticulation of the copper that gave the work its charred appearance and almost losing control of the material in the final process which he described as 'a baptism by fire'.⁷ It remained as his largest work in metal and was the springboard for his post-teaching career as a prominent Perth studio jeweller, metalsmith and passionate advocate for local studio craft and design from the mid-1960s until his death in 2000.



Council House showing forecourt parking, the ground floor enclosure and the water fountains, c.1960s, SLWA 232303PD and SLWA 232281PD

Jeffrey Howlett and Geoffrey Allen
Coat of Arms
Photo: Evan Luly 1965
SLWA 142307PD

This photograph shows the 2.4 metre high crest set in granite from the original 1817 Waterloo Bridge in London. According to Abe Ashbil, project Manager at the time of refurbishment in 1995, the granite was lost during the storage process.



Howlett and Bailey detailed every aspect of the interior design program, specifying fittings new to the market and using Western Australian suppliers and contractors whenever possible. Their use of a standardised furniture system as a central element of its interior program for Council House reflects a similar approach in the celebrated and widely-publicised 1960 design of St Catherine's College at Oxford University by the Danish architect Arne Jacobsen. Its similar structural elements, eloquent use of finely-crafted natural and synthetic materials and rigorous and integrated furnishing program had set a benchmark that reverberated to the opposite side of the world in Howlett and Bailey's Council House of the same period. Scandinavian design had entered the lexicon of advanced modernism in Australian architecture in the early 1950s and the work of Nordic architects such as Jacobsen, Alvar Aalto and Jørn Utzon was admired and understood by many. Council House's rigorous but harmonious design and considered tactility opened a pathway to understanding and appreciating the craft of architecture that was being articulated in many places by designers inspired by Scandinavian examples.

In early 1962, partner Donald Bailey had brought to Perth two chairs and two occasional tables for use as a design template for a range of other furniture that the architects would specify and have manufactured locally for use in Council House.⁸ The chair was *Armchair Model 1001 (Stol 1001)*, designed by the Norwegian designer Sven Ivar Dysthe in 1959 and produced by Dokka Møbler A/S in

Norway. It had been in production from 1959/60 and the *1001* series was officially shown for the first time during the furniture fair in Cologne in January 1960 and later that year at the Milan Triennale furniture fair.

Dysthe was born in 1931 and trained in Industrial Design at Royal College of Art, London, gaining a Diploma and Masters Degree. He joined Peter Hvidt and Orla Mølgaard-Nielsen's furniture design office in Copenhagen before opening his own design studio in Oslo in 1958. He designed the *1001* chair and table range in 1959, winning the International Design Award for it in 1961. He remains one of Norway's most celebrated designers, with examples of his seminal *1001* chair in a number of international design museum collections. The range was designed to be shipped in knock-down form, with its components to be simply connected with visible countersunk steel screws. Its slim elements and architectural form combined luxurious natural materials such as palisander (Brazilian rosewood) and leather with industrial matte-finished stainless steel, making it suitable for modern interiors where a clean, modular appearance was desirable. Dokka Møbler had great success with the *1001* in the United States, being able to supply the product in knock-down form to provide top-level Scandinavian design at a competitive price. An example of the Dokka Møbler *1001* chair was included in the major touring exhibition *Design in Scandinavia* held at the Western Australian Art Gallery in 1968.⁹

Howlett and Bailey contracted Perth furniture manufacturer Donald Cornish to make the furniture





Original Council House
'Norge' chair and telephone
table.
Photo: Robert Frith/Acorn,
Memorabilia Collection

The Cornish Bros factory, 101
North Lake Road, Myaree in
1960 where Council House
furniture was constructed.
Photo courtesy Don Cornish

Cruciforms surround the
Council Chamber 1963.
Photo: Fritz Kos,
History Centre

for Council House because his company, Cornish Furniture, specialised in chairs and bespoke interior fittings.¹⁰ Cornish set about deconstructing the samples in order to replicate the construction methods and specify the materials and tooling that would be needed to manufacture them. He replicated the European nut and Allen-keyed bolt system used to secure the steel and wood sections of the chairs and tables.¹¹ Teak and Australian blackbutt was specified for the furniture with the chairs upholstered in black vinyl or Howe Scottish leather. Cornish developed the construction system of the *1001* chair to enable it be used for a number of variants specified by the architects. These included lounge chairs, desk chairs, occasional tables, office desks, cabinets, couches, meeting tables, the fixed seating in the Council Chamber and the Mayor's chair. Cornish named this collection the *Norge Range* and manufactured it to order for Howlett and Bailey for use in subsequent projects.¹² The original Norwegian samples of the *1001* chair and table were used in the Lady Mayoress' office and exist today as a tangible link to Dysthe's influential work.

The *1001* range of furniture, with its strongly-expressed structure of flat oiled wood planes for armrests and stretchers (revealing a subtle aerofoil shape on close inspection) and subtly-shaped seat shells airily balanced on vertical satin steel frames has some structural reference to aspects of the building's characteristic details – its 'floating' sun screens and the projecting beams supported by the *piloti* on the ground floor. The chair's visual lightness, clearly expressed engineering and structural transparency worked in every location in the building and, while not designed to today's ergonomic standards for office furniture, offered elegant restraint and a practical and egalitarian design for users across all ranks of the Council as well as for members of the public visiting the building.

While the loose furniture could be seen and used everywhere in the building, fixed elements of the interior offered a larger experience of the same design program. The most formal floors were the 8th, with the Mayoral suite and reception rooms, and the 9th, with the Council chamber and associated offices. The chamber was enclosed within a 12 metre diameter glazed drum-like area, encircled on the exterior face with a series of linked tapered wood inverted cruciform shaped 'mullions'.¹³ Bordering the chamber's white Sicilian marble floor, Councillors' black leather chairs faced the raised Mayor's table and high-backed chair behind which a curved screen of vertical, square aluminium tubes anodised black provided a dramatic echo of the black linear elements first encountered on the entrance columns. Door hardware was also designed to reflect the overall furniture design. The

chamber could be obscured with translucent gold silk/nylon curtains, while the perimeter windows were fitted with gold anodised aluminium venetian blinds that were up-lit by concealed, floor-mounted fluorescent lights at night. A large meeting room contained a massive table with curved sides and a glass top on a timber frame. This was designed by Howlett and Bailey in collaboration with Cornish, who manufactured it to the precise tolerances evident in the other smaller furniture from the *Norge Range*.¹⁴

The carpet fitted throughout the formal floors (and the lower ground floor public library) was designed by the architects and woven specifically for this project. Its tile-like geometric design of the T-motif reflected the exterior use of the same form, but in dark blue background with T-motifs in royal blue and mauve, it provided a sense of grandeur and otherness and further emphasised the naturalness of the timber furniture and ceilings. Downlights recessed into the panelled ceilings pooled light onto the purple floor and also emphasised the textures of Japanese slubbed silk wallpaper, vitreous mosaic tile and travertine that were also used in the reception areas.

The Mayoral Suite and reception rooms were fitted out with curtains printed with an abstracted interpretation of the City of Perth's coat of arms. The curtains were designed and executed in 1962 by the artist, Helen Grey-Smith, who silkscreen-printed 915 metres of a repeating design on gold slubbed silk/nylon curtain fabric specified by the architects and supplied through the Perth department store, Aherns, which also made up the curtains.

Helen Grey-Smith (née Stanes) was born in India in 1916 and relocated to England in 1924 where she studied art at the London School of Interior Design from 1937-39 and later textile design at the Hammersmith School of Art in London from 1953-54. She met and married the Western Australian artist, Guy Grey-Smith in England in 1937 and came with him to settle in Perth in 1947. From her studio at their home in Darlington she produced annual collections of printed textiles from 1954 to 1966, exhibiting at Newspaper House Gallery, Foulkes Taylor's Triangle Gallery and the Skinner Galleries.¹⁵ She undertook a large commission for curtain fabric for the University of Western Australia Staff House and followed with another large commission for the Reserve Bank in Canberra.¹⁶ The demanding physicality of hand-printing large quantities of fabric resulted in hand and wrist injuries, forcing Grey-Smith to abandon such work after completing the

Canberra commission and instead concentrate on collage, printing on paper and painting. Her work, culminating in these major projects, placed her as key figure in the development of textile printing in Western Australia.

Jeffrey Howlett (who had also lived in India) worked informally with Grey-Smith, both being a part of the same close circle of artists and designers in Perth. Specifying the fabric and colour of the curtains, Howlett gave Grey-Smith a free hand with the design motif for the curtains. She chose to depict the rampant black swan and crown motif of the coat of arms, repeated down the centre of each curtain drop, in a sketchy manner inspired by 'photographs of medieval shields, which looked "rather rubbed over with age"¹⁷, and crayon rubbings of stone carvings, probably inspired by those she has seen when she had travelled in Sri Lanka in 1963. She silk-screen printed the fabric with the assistance of her husband, roller-printing over the black printed design with gold ink to give a coarse speckle of iridescence to the pattern and integrate it more with the gold fabric. The strong informality of the crest echoed Jeffrey Howlett's and Geoffrey Allen's similarly powerful interpretation of it at the building's entrance. Like it, her design was open and transparent, allowing views through the curtains to the black swans' river habitat beyond.

Such integrated and consistent interior design was rare in Perth by the time Council House was officially opened by the Queen in March 1963. Many staff members of the Perth City Council had some use and 'ownership' of parts of the whole furniture system devised by the architects and such temporary custodianship seemed to have ensured that the furnishings remained in good order during their long use in the building, with a pride of ownership evident.¹⁸ Contemporary workplace ergonomic standards meant that much of the seating and desk furniture was becoming unsuitable and having to be replaced with furniture compliant with current standards. Grey-Smith's curtains, however, were eventually completely removed due their increasing fragility under the constant light and only a few sample sections remain.¹⁹

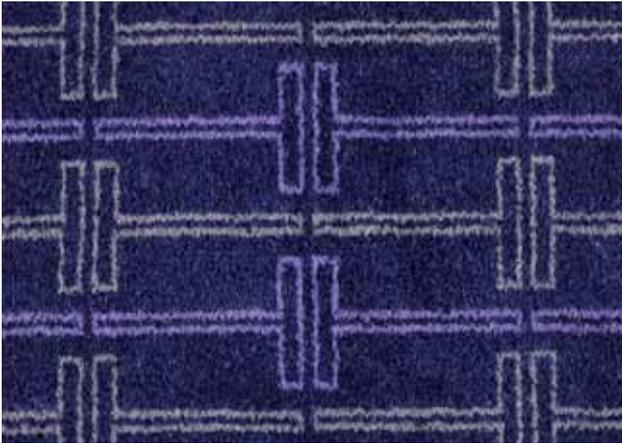
The refurbishment of the building from 1997 to 1999 necessitated the relocation of the Council staff and removal of all of the interior furnishings. A complete new interior was designed as an integral part of the new restoration of the building by Geoffrey Clough of Peter Hunt and Daryl Jackson Architects. The Mayoral suite and reception rooms were re-located to the 11th floor, where the



Council Chambers 1963,
Photo: Fritz Kos, SLWA 340583PD

First meeting held 20 May 1963 in
the new Council Chambers with
Lord Mayor Harry Howard and
Councillors. History Centre

Council meeting in process 1978
with Lord Mayor Fred Chaney.
History Centre



Council House carpet, replica c. 1995 based on original carpet showing T design. Photo: Robert Frith/Acorn.

Helen and Guy Grey-Smith printmaking in her studio, Darlington c.1965. Photo: Richard Woldendorp.

Staff dining room showing Grey-Smith's curtains. The seating used in the staff dining room was Arne Jacobsens well-known Series 7 laminated plywood and steel chairs, supplied by Jason Furniture. Council House c. 1979. Memorabilia Collection

Curtains made by Helen Grey-Smith 1962, Photo: Richard Woldendorp. Memorabilia Collection



interiors on other floors were designed in a current style with some design references to early 1960s modernism. The Council's formal chambers were retained on the 9th floor, conducted in the setting envisioned by the architects

Endnotes

- 1 This program of development was led by Town Clerk, Allan Green, who was an architect and civil engineer.
- 2 This was achieved to a limited extent, with only the entry and a reception floor completed for the formal functions centred on the opening of the Empire Games by HRH The Duke of Edinburgh.
- 3 Notes from communication from Donald Bailey to the author, 30 January 2013.
- 4 This pavilion was later replicated on the western side of the plaza to provide space for the City of Perth's growing collection of art, historical artefacts and commemorative objects.
- 5 Sutherland's influence was confirmed in Bailey's communication with author 30 January 2013.
- 6 This information was recorded by Town Clerk Green in the commissioning process for the crest with Donald Bailey.
- 7 Allen detailed this experimental approach in discussion with the author at his studio in April 1996.
- 8 Jeffrey Howlett purchased the Dokka Møbler chair and table samples from Myers department store in Melbourne (Bailey communication with author 30 January 2013).
- 9 The content and impact of this exhibition on design in Perth is discussed in Robert Bell, *Nordic wave: a study of the reception and influence of Scandinavian design in Australia*, Ph.D thesis, Australian National University, Canberra, 2007.
- 10 Donald Cornish (b. 1938 Perth WA) served a 5-year apprenticeship from 1952-57 with furniture manufacturers WH [William] and R [Robert] Hawkins, before opening his own firm Cornish Furniture at 101 North Lake Road, Melville WA. He had from 20 to 409 employees and specialised in chair manufacture. The firm's name was changed to Artek in c.1971.
- 11 Cornish contracted a German metal worker, Wolf Trittler, to manufacture the metal fittings in his Norma Road, Myaree workshop.
- 12 Items from the *Norge Range* were used by Howlett and Bailey in the interiors of the Reserve Bank of Australia in Canberra. Donald Cornish recalled, in interview with the author on 5 October 2012 that Bailey assured him that manufacturing copyright on the 1001 furniture range was not being breached, although no records exist of an agreement with Dokka Møbler on this matter.
- 13 The interior woodwork was produced by the Perth firm, Arcus. The teak and blackbutt timber for the *Norge* chairs and other furniture was supplied by the Perth firm, Cullity's.
- 14 Cornish recalled that the installation of this table created a problem due to its size. Its glass top had to be brought up through the elevator shaft in a precarious operation. Author interview.
- 15 Helen Grey-Smith's life and textile practice is discussed in Gwen Phillips, *The pedagogical significance of the life and work of Helen Grey-Smith*, M.Ed thesis, Edith Cowan University, Perth, 1997; and in Andrew Gaynor, *Guy Grey-Smith: Life force*, UWA Publishing, Perth, 2012.
- 16 The interior design for the University of Western Australia Staff House was undertaken by David Foulkes Taylor, who designed and manufactured its jarrah furniture. The Reserve Bank architectural design competition was won by Howlett and Bailey Architects.
- 17 Phillips, p.98.
- 18 The furniture was maintained and periodically refurbished by Cornish Furniture and Artek, to the order of Perth City Council premises officers, Jack Wheeler and Max Prince. Cornish interview with the author.
- 19 A pre-production printed length of the Mayoral suite curtains was donated to the National Gallery of Australia by the artist in 1984 (accession number 84.718). Other lengths are held by Perth City Council.

in 1963. Called a 'memory floor' it has carefully re-instated fittings, a wood slatted ceiling, updated technology, some restored original furniture and new carpet re-woven to the original design specification.

Council House has survived the vicissitudes of fashion and is now a drawcard for design aficionados, aligning with a widening appreciation in Australia of the elegantly crafted rationalism of the early 1960s when Perth optimistically committed to the modernist project in its most important and significant civic building.

Dr Robert Bell AM

Dr Robert Bell AM was born in Perth and was Curator of Craft and Design at the Art Gallery of Western Australia before moving to Canberra in 2000, where he is Senior Curator of Decorative Arts and Design at the National Gallery of Australia. He is also Adjunct Professor in the discipline of Design and Architecture, University of Canberra.

25th MARCH, 1963

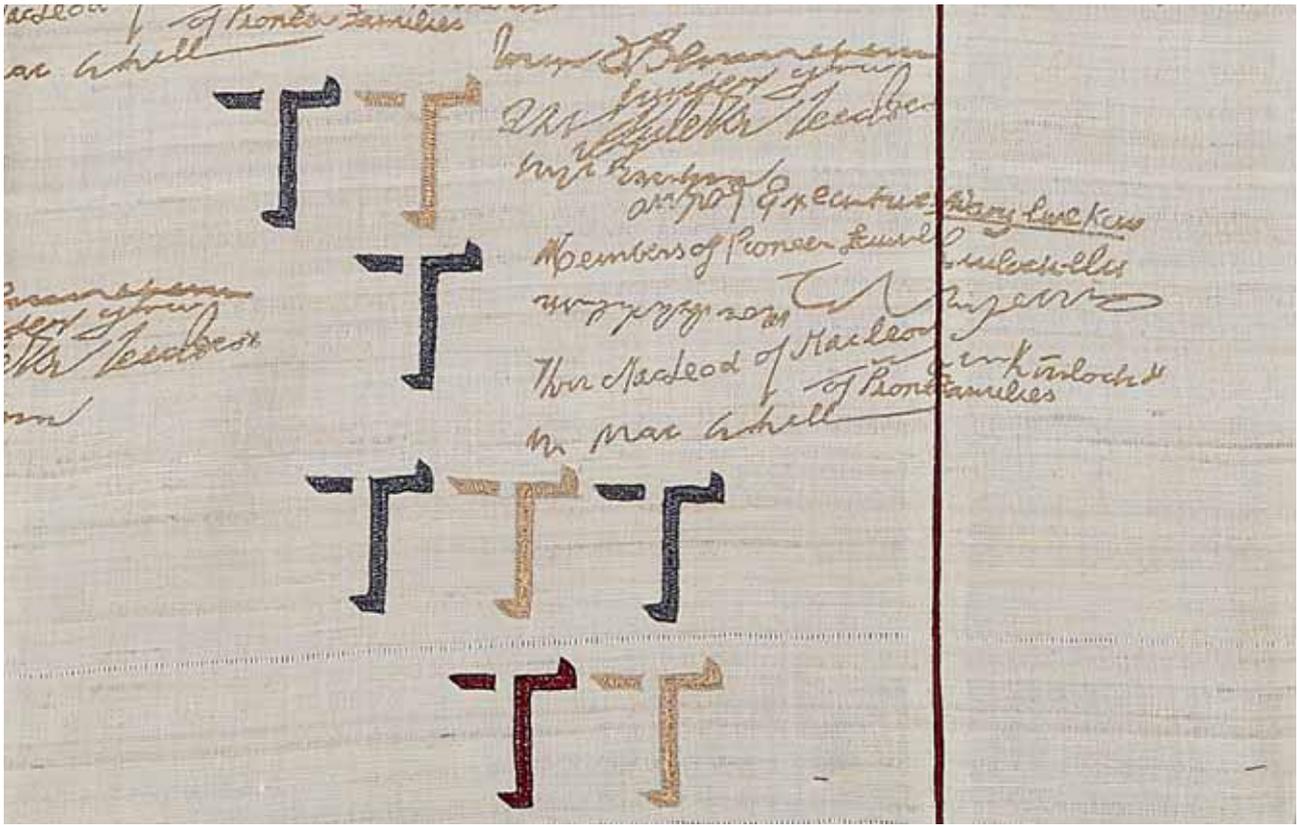
CIVIC WELCOME TO

HER MAJESTY
QUEEN ELIZABETH II

Elizabeth II

50 Years Council House Commemorative Commissions

To celebrate the 50th anniversary of Council House the City of Perth commissioned five Western Australian artists to create artworks that are inspired by items held in the City's Memorabilia Collection or which referenced Council House itself. Each artist created five unique artworks. One of each of the artworks will be accessioned into the City of Perth Art Collection and the remaining artworks will become unique corporate gifts throughout the anniversary year.



Maggie Baxter

An art of balance

Textile artist Maggie Baxter has an affinity for the fabrics, colours and printing techniques of India and has been working with traditional textile workers there for over 20 years. A mutual exchange of cultural and technical customs has enabled her to enrich her contemporary approach to textile work.

Baxter took as a starting point the original curtains made for Council House in 1962 by Helen Grey-Smith. Rather than replicating the material and print of the 1960s curtains, Baxter referenced the texture and tones of the gold print on silk. As Helen Grey-Smith grew up in India there seemed to be a natural synchronicity with Baxter making the work in India.

Two of Baxter's textile pieces have a grey silk backing and are embroidered with gold and grey rectangles of varying thickness. These allude to the proportions of the windows from a street view of Council House, capturing the transparency of the building and the changing tones of the windows throughout the day.

Baxter has also depicted the iconic T shapes on the outside of Council House. By creating negative space around the T she has shown how they appear to float on the surface of the building. Gold signatures glide across these textiles referencing a visitors' book from 1963, which recorded visitors to Council House in the year the building opened.

Maggie Baxter
An art of balance, 2012
 Edition 1/3
 silk, pigment fabric printing ink
 and rayon thread
 197 x 50.1 cm
 City of Perth Council House
 Commemorative Commissions
 City of Perth Art Collection
 Photo: Robert Frith/Acorn Photo

Detail from Official City of Perth
 Visitors Book, March 1963,
 Photo: Robert Frith/Acorn,
 Memorabilia Collection



Sandra Black

Architecture Series – Council House

The use of structured pattern is distinctive in the delicate porcelain work of ceramicist Sandra Black. In her works *Architecture Series – Council House* Black highlights the repetitive patterns found on the exterior façade of the building, connecting them with minimal Op Art design.

Given the often translucent nature of porcelain and the reflective qualities of glazed ceramics, Black was drawn to these elements of Council House. *Architecture Series – Council House 2* shows the 150 year old Kauri Pine which stands in Stirling Gardens reflected within the windows of Council House. In this work Black has shown how Council House and its occupants are linked to their surroundings as well as the balance that Howlett and Bailey achieved in creating a building that is designed to work within Stirling Gardens rather than impose itself upon the landscape.



Sandra Black
Architecture Series – Council House 2 2012
 glazed porcelain
 13.1 x 15 x 9 cm
 City of Perth Council House
 Commemorative Commissions
 City of Perth Art Collection
 Photo: Robert Frith/Acorn

Kauri Pine Sculpture by Peter Lowe in Stirling Gardens behind Council House uses the wood from the Kauri pine which was cut down in 1998 to make way for the underground car-park.
 Photo: Bob Litchfield, 2012
 Histroy Centre



Helena Bogucki
Council House: Archive Study,
 artist proof 2012 (detail)
 oxidised sterling silver, oil paint and
 stainless steel 47 x 5.5 x 0.7 cm
 City of Perth Council House
 Commemorative Commissions
 City of Perth Art Collection
 Photo: Robert Frith/Acorn

Printers block showing Perth City
 Council coat of arms, c 1950s.
 Photo: Robert Frith/Acorn,
 Memorabilia Collection

Helena Bogucki

Council House: Archive Study

The act of collecting and making reference to history through the objects we gather is fundamental to Helena Bogucki's practice. Given the opportunity to explore Council House and the City of Perth Memorabilia Collection, Bogucki was able to make reference to the objects which record Council's history and the building's symbolic identifying marks.

With a background in printmaking, Bogucki was drawn to a 1950s printing block depicting Council House and Stirling Gardens held in the Memorabilia Collection. She used a lost wax casting method to take impressions of the block and the imagery on it. Her necklace and brooches show Council House with its T shaped sun shields, as well as the screws of the original printing plate. They present not only an impression of the structure but a record of how the City interpreted and presented Council House to the community.

While Council House is the celebrated 'home' of the City of Perth, the Coat of Arms is its heraldic bearing. Bogucki also took an impression of the City's Coat of Arms from a 1950s steel stamp used for making Perth City Council badges. The necklace and brooches resulting from this study depict an image of Council House as drawn from the printing block, overlaid with the Coat of Arms from the stamp, reaffirming the Council's connection to this site.



Andrew Nicholls

Council House Collectors Plates

The ceramic work of Andrew Nicholls articulates social and political narratives with a particular focus on Australia's identity as a British colony. Through the use of blue and white china, and the idea of the 'collector's plate' in particular, Nicholls makes connections to the modernist era in Perth when local pottery firms such as Wembley Ware and Darbyshire produced ceramics.

In this series of work Nicholls references the strong design elements of Council House and also links the building to its site in Stirling Gardens. The social history aspect of the site is accentuated by the use of stencilled images made of 22ct gold lustre.

Nicholls takes us on a journey through various moments in the history of Council House and Stirling Gardens. In *Cotton Palm* we see a silhouette of the plant which has been present in Stirling Gardens as far back as 1890, linking the site to the late colonial period.

The Obelisk or the 'Shish Kebab' sculpture, erected in Stirling Gardens in 1971, celebrated the growth of the mineral and energy resource industries in Western Australia. In Nicholls' work *Obelisk* we see the detail of the rough pieces of Western Australian ore set against the clean lines of Council House.



Andrew Nicholls
Obelisk 2012
 Edition 1/2
 decal transfer and 22ct gold lustre
 on porcelain
 33 x 33 x 2.5 cm
 City of Perth Council House
 Commemorative Commissions
 City of Perth Art Collection
 Photo: Robert Frith/Acorn

Verso: *Obelisk* 2012



Denise Pepper

Luminous Burst

Glass artist Denise Pepper creates contemporary sculptural works that push the boundaries of glass as a medium.

In *Luminous Burst* Pepper has created a vibrant interpretation of Council House and its relationship with light. She used iridescent glass sheet to create a form that references the fountains in the building's forecourt. By day, the clarity of the fountain water mirrors the expanse of glass that reinforces the transparent and reflective face of Council House. By night, LED lights move changing coloured light patterns across Council House and this movement is reflected in the fountains.

The City of Perth has an important role in facilitating the annual Australia Day Skyworks, one of Western Australia's largest community events. Their involvement includes launching fireworks from the roof of Council House. Pepper refers to this event by layering thin glass threads over the iridescent fountain forms, building up the intense colour of the fireworks.

Denise Pepper
Luminous Burst 2012
Edition 1/5
glass
10.5 x 30 x 29.5 cm
City of Perth Council House
Commemorative Commissions
City of Perth Art Collection
Photo: Robert Frith/Acorn



‘But for this *one* man,
this project would
certainly not have
happened’

Don Bailey, Council House architect,
correspondence January 2013.

William Allan McInnes Green

As town clerk and Perth’s chief executive officer, Green was renowned for his ability to master long and complex agendas. It was said his will lay behind every important decision... As an engineer he was quick to grasp essentials, as an architect he had a flair for seeing things as a whole, and as an administrator he believed in thorough preparation and research. He was either the designer or the advisor for practically every building constructed by the city council between 1944 and 1966. He was Western Australia’s most experienced, qualified and versatile local government officer. Green was a kindly, perceptive, articulate and resolute man who, in serving the city council to which he was devoted, found a congenial place in which to develop and practise his talents.

Martyn Webb, ‘Green, William Allan McInnes (1896–1972)’, Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/green-william-allan-mcinnnes-10354/text18335>, accessed 31 January 2013.



St Georges Terrace and
Council House c.1960s.
History Centre

