

ITEM 2. PROPOSED ACQUISITION, RESTORATION AND RELOCATION OF THE TRAM SHEDS WWI MEMORIAL**FILE NO: X006727****SUMMARY**

This report recommends that ownership of the Tram Sheds WWI Memorial be transferred from the State Transit Authority of NSW to the City of Sydney, that the Memorial be accessioned into the City's Public Art and Cultural Heritage Collection in accordance with the *City of Sydney Guidelines for Public Art Acquisitions and Deaccessions*, and that the City undertake the restoration of the Memorial and re-install it in a suitable location near its original site within the reinterpreted rose garden of the Rozelle Tramway Depot in what is now Harold Park. The report also summarises the investigations undertaken in response to a formal request to relocate the Memorial made by community and stakeholder representatives, and outlines the steps taken to investigate the possibility and suitability of the acquisition and reinstatement of the Memorial.

The Tram Sheds WWI Memorial was erected on 26 November 1916 at the site of the old Rozelle Tramway Depot, and was dedicated to Depot workers who lost their lives in WWI. When the Depot closed in the 1950s, the monument was moved to its current site, the then Leichhardt Bus Depot, as a way of maintaining the association with transport workers.

With the completion of the new State Transit Leichhardt Depot on the adjoining Balmain Road site in 2009, the monument remained in place at the old Bus Depot, which is now the head office for State Transit's Fleet Operations and Infrastructure Division. In this location it is neither publicly visible nor publicly accessible, and its setting is not sympathetic beyond the association with transport workers.

The investigation has revealed that the Tram Sheds WWI Memorial is historically and aesthetically significant, and relocation of the Memorial to the reinterpreted garden area of the former Rozelle Tramway Depot would be a sympathetic conservation outcome that would facilitate the interpretation of the Memorial in context and foster an appreciation of the lived history of the Depot.

RECOMMENDATION

It is resolved that Council:

- (A) approve the transfer of ownership of the Tram Sheds WWI Memorial from the State Transit Authority of NSW to the City of Sydney, and the accession of the Memorial into the City's Public Art and Cultural Heritage Collection; and
- (B) note the proposed project to restore the Tram Sheds WWI Memorial and relocate it in a suitable and sympathetic location at Harold Park.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A: Tram Sheds WWI Memorial Summary Information and Images

BACKGROUND

1. In May 2016, a formal request was made by the State President of the Returned and Services League of Australia (NSW branch), the General Manager Fleet Operations, State Transit Authority, and a Glebe resident representing The Glebe Society, that the City consider the relocation of the Tram Sheds WWI Memorial from the Leichhardt Bus Depot to its original location at Harold Park.
2. Consultation with community representatives and stakeholders suggested that the City is better placed to care for a memorial than the current custodian (State Transit Authority); that reinstating the Memorial near its original location would further connect the community and visitors to Harold Park with the site's history; and that the Memorial would be more visible and accessible to the public in the proposed location. The City agreed to investigate the matter.
3. Advice was sought from the City's heritage team as well as heritage specialists from the then Leichhardt Council, both confirming that the proposed relocation was acceptable from a heritage perspective.
4. A Condition Assessment was undertaken by Sydney Artefacts Conservation and the report submitted in July 2016 provided an assessment based on non-invasive visual inspection of the memorial and recommended a process for the conservation and restoration of the statue and plaques.
5. An indicative siting of the memorial was prepared by the Harold Park public space upgrade design consultants in September 2016.
6. In October 2016, the City's Public Art Advisory Panel endorsed the transfer of ownership of the Tram Sheds WWI Memorial from the State Transit Authority of NSW to the City of Sydney, and the accession of the Memorial into the City's Public Art and Cultural Heritage Collection in accordance with the *City of Sydney Guidelines for Public Art Acquisitions and Deaccessions*. The Panel recommended that the reinstatement of the Memorial to its original location at Harold Park be treated as a heritage re-instatement project allowing for its installation in the new rose garden, and that a contemporary plinth be designed for the Memorial.
7. A Statement of Significance was prepared by Robyn Conroy Heritage Planner, completed in March 2017. The report identified the Tram Sheds WWI Memorial as 'Highly Significant' under the 'Historical', 'Historical Association', and 'Aesthetic' values categories, and recommended relocation of the memorial to the reinterpreted garden.
8. The Tram Sheds WWI Memorial consists of a life-size 'digger' statue in painted cast cement or stonelite (an early quartz/cement composite), set on a low dark red brick base to which three copper plaques are attached. The statue depicts a young soldier dressed in battle-ready uniform of World War I, with rolled-up sleeves, open collar and the iconic felt hat.
9. The statue remains intact but in poor condition, with rust marks, cracks and concrete cancer evident. The original masonry monumental plinth has been replaced by a smaller brick pier on a slightly wider base to which the beaten copper lists of the fallen have been affixed.

10. The Rozelle Tram Sheds were built in 1904 for the stabling and maintenance of trams on the inner-west routes and remained operational until the closure of the tram system in 1958. The Tramways were a major employer and many workers from each depot enlisted in WWI. Losses were significant and deeply felt by workmates. Local Irish-born sculptor Edwin McGowan (1883-1959) was commissioned by the Rozelle tram workers to create a memorial to their fallen colleagues, which was unveiled in the southern garden of the depot on 26 November 1916, only months after Gallipoli and Fromelles and still two years before the war was over.
11. Rozelle Tramway Depot included an ornate award-winning garden, proudly tended by the Depot staff. The Memorial provided a strong focus for the garden composition and plantings.
12. The Rozelle Tramway Depot was decommissioned in 1958 as part of the closure of Sydney's tram network and all staff were transferred to the Leichhardt Bus Depot. The Memorial was also relocated to the bus depot and placed at the main entrance adjacent to the control office, where it remains today.

Significance

13. The Tram Sheds WWI Memorial is unique. Although the inclusion of a 'digger' figure became one of the most popular devices on memorials of the World War I period, McGowan's work was only the second to be installed in Australia, and was the first to be designed and carved here.
14. Edwin McGowan's work was carved in the months immediately after Gallipoli and Fromelles, and installed in 1916, only seven months after the first memorial of any type, an obelisk and water fountain in Balmain in April 1916, which was followed by an obelisk in Wickham, near Newcastle in May 1916. The first recorded memorial with a figure was also in Newcastle, near the Post Office, which had its statue imported from Italy. It was unveiled on 18 September 1916, only weeks before the memorial at the Rozelle Tramway Depot.
15. The 'digger' figure at Rozelle is particularly notable for its informal character, which is very different from the hundreds of later works that feature a formally posed soldier or officer in full uniform and a position of reflection. This later standardisation was due in part to the strict guidelines established by the Public Monuments Advisory Board. McGowan's work pre-dated the prescriptive requirements of the Public Monuments Advisory Board, and he created a sculpture that is clearly dedicated to the everyday soldier, whilst demonstrating a sophisticated understanding of the principles of classical sculpture.
16. The Tram Sheds WWI Memorial is also the first substantial monument to be erected as a workplace memorial by subscription by the colleagues of the fallen.
17. According to the Statement of Significance, the 'Historical', 'Historical Association', and 'Aesthetic Significance' values of the Tram Sheds WWI Memorial are high and have the potential to extend beyond the boundaries of Leichhardt (now Inner West Council) and Sydney City areas.

18. Regarding the proposed relocation, the Statement of Significance asserts that the historic and aesthetic heritage values of the Memorial are strongly associated with the place of its original installation, the former Rozelle Tramways Depot. Although a memorial is not usually considered an item of movable heritage, it is relocatable, as borne out by its relocation to the bus depot in the 1950s, and further relocation could be appropriate, providing that the new location reinstates or enhances the identified heritage values of the Memorial and the place being considered for re-siting.
19. The historic and aesthetic values of the former Rozelle Tramway Depot (a listed heritage item in Sydney LEP 2012) include its setting, and the Tram Sheds WWI Memorial formed an important part of this setting. Relocation of the Memorial to the reinterpreted garden area of the former depot would therefore be a sympathetic conservation outcome that would facilitate the interpretation of the memorial in context and also an appreciation of the lived history of the Depot. The Statement of Significance further directs that the relocation option would only be appropriate if proper and sophisticated siting, interpretation and protection from harm can be ensured.

KEY IMPLICATIONS

Strategic Alignment

20. The key policy document is the *City of Sydney Guidelines for Public Art Acquisitions and Deaccessions*, adopted by Council in May 2011.
21. The Guidelines outline the process for new acquisitions, be they through commissions, unsolicited proposals, gifts and bequests, or transfers.
22. The Guidelines state that, where art works or cultural objects are proposed to be transferred to the care of the City, the proposals are to be assessed by the Public Art Advisory Panel who will then make a recommendation regarding the suitability of the work for the collection. Depending on the work, the Panel's recommendation will be referred to Council or the Chief Executive Officer for approval.
23. The criteria for new acquisitions listed in the Guidelines include: contemporary and high quality artwork; site-specific response; consistency with Council strategic directions; consistency with current planning, heritage and environmental policies, accessibility standards, urban design and public domain plans, and Plans of Management; evidence of funding source and satisfactory budget, including resources for commissioning process; and an allocation for ongoing maintenance.
24. In October 2016, the City's Public Art Advisory Panel endorsed the proposal to acquire through transfer the Tram Sheds World War I Memorial and to restore it, adding a recommendation that the reinstatement of the Memorial to its original location at Harold Park be treated as a heritage re-instatement project allowing for its installation in the new rose garden, and that a contemporary plinth be designed for the Memorial.

Organisational Impact

25. The acquisition, restoration and installation of the Tram Sheds WWI Memorial will be a Capital Works project undertaken by City Projects and Property.

26. Once acquired and accessioned to the Public Art and Cultural Heritage Collection, the Tram Sheds WWI Memorial will require regular inspection and ongoing maintenance. These requirements have already been identified and included in the Public Art Basic Maintenance Contract to be actioned once the Memorial is installed.

Social / Cultural / Community

27. The proposed installation of the Tram Sheds WWI Memorial near its original location at Harold Park will make it more visible and accessible to the community, and provide a greater connection to the site's cultural and historical background.

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

28. There are sufficient funds allocated to the project in the 2017/18 Capital Works Budget.

CRITICAL DATES / TIME FRAMES

29. While there are no critical dates, it is proposed to align the reinstatement of the Memorial with the completion of the City's upgrade of Harold Park, estimated to finish in early 2018.

OPTIONS

30. The City could choose to not proceed with the acquisition, restoration and relocation of the Tram Sheds WWI Memorial at this time. The benefits of this option are saving of the allocated costs and resources, however, it would mean that the opportunity to undertake the work as part of the upgrade of Harold Park public space would be lost, the Memorial would remain inaccessible to the community, and its condition would likely deteriorate further.

PUBLIC CONSULTATION

31. The project was initiated following a formal request by community and relevant stakeholders.
32. The Heritage Team at the then Leichhardt Council endorsed the proposed acquisition and relocation of the Tram Sheds WWI Memorial.
33. The Public Art Advisory Panel endorsed the acquisition and relocation of the Tram Sheds WWI Memorial.
34. Further public consultation will be undertaken when a design for the plinth, siting and setting of the Tram Sheds WWI Memorial is developed by the City's consultants.

AMIT CHANAN

Director City Projects and Property

Eva Rodriguez Riestra, Public Art Program Manager