

Project Scope - Sydney Town Hall Façade Conservation Stage 3

File No: X013348

Summary

This report requests that Council endorse the general scope of work, indicative cost estimates, and program for the calling of public tenders for conservation work for Stage 3 of the façades, roof, stained glass and the vestibule dome for Sydney Town Hall.

Sydney Town Hall is one of the finest examples of High Victorian Second Empire architecture in the country. The elaborately decorated exterior (and interior) is significant and includes the first known use of Australian flora and fauna in an architectural setting. The stained glass windows of the Sydney Town Hall are described in the building's Conservation Management Plan as of 'Exceptional Heritage Significance'.

Sydney Town Hall Façade Conservation Stage 3 works represents the final stage of a broader external conservation project. Previously delivered conservation works include the Clock Tower (Stage 1) in 2012-2014, and Stage 2 in 2013-2015, which included the east and north façades and a portion of the south façade, and east façade lighting replacement (George Street facing).

Works for Stage 3 are focused on the southern, western and clerestory façades, roofs, northern stairs, the vestibule dome and clerestory stained glass to the Centennial Hall. The planned conservation works include masonry, joinery, roof works, seismic bracing and stained glass window refurbishment.

Jackson Teece Chesterman Willis Pty Ltd (Jackson Teece) were originally engaged to provide heritage architectural consultancy services for the Sydney Town Hall Façade Conservation Project Stage 2 and 3 in June 2012. The works were split into Stage 2 and Stage 3 to align with the City's 10 year Capital Works program and to minimise impacts of ongoing construction on Sydney Town Hall visitors and the community.

It is envisaged that Stage 3 construction would commence early 2020 and take approximately two years for the sandstone work, and four to five years for the stained glass windows. Works would be undertaken from scaffolding in a staged approach with the reintroduction of a construction yard within Sydney Square, adjacent to Sydney Town Hall south east corner (same location as Stage 2). All building entrances will be kept available and pedestrians protected from overhead construction. Whilst the project will be highly visible, it will have limited operational and event impact within Sydney Town Hall.

Recommendation

It is resolved that Council:

- (A) approve the scope of the Sydney Town Hall Façade Conservation Stage 3 project, as described in the subject report and detailed in Attachments A, B, C and D to the subject report, for progression to documentation and construction tender; and
- (B) note the estimated project costs as detailed in Confidential Attachment E to the subject report.

Attachments

- Attachment A.** Program and Plan of Works
- Attachment B.** Scope of Works: Sandstone
- Attachment C.** Scope of Works: Stained Glass
- Attachment D.** Scope of Works: Vestibule Dome
- Attachment E.** Financial implications (Confidential)

Background

1. In August 2006, the then NSW Department of Commerce was engaged to undertake a preliminary investigation of the urgent and make-safe needs for the exterior facades of Sydney Town Hall. As a result, Council received a detailed proposal from the Department of Commerce to undertake interim make-safe works and prepare an overall Stone Conservation Strategy (Strategy).
2. In October 2006, Council resolved to contract the Department of Commerce to carry out the make-safe work and to prepare the Strategy at a total cost of \$485,000, with Tanner Architects engaged to monitor the works.
3. The Strategy was completed in December 2006 and the make-safe works were completed in March 2007.
4. In November 2009, Council endorsed further investigation into design, documentation and pricing of the proposed façade upgrades for Sydney Town Hall following the receipt of a detailed Stone Conservation Strategy in 2006 prepared by the Department of Commerce.
5. The Strategy recommended that the Clock Tower should be the first priority due to safety issues. It was therefore agreed to divide the work into portions with the first stage being the Clock Tower.
6. It was agreed that the overall conservation strategy would be in accord with the property's Conservation Management Plan and that the sandstone strategy would allow the building to show some of the vicissitudes of time thus presenting its age of some 140 years. The objective was not to make it look like new.
7. Safety from the possible fall of stone was and continues to be an important criteria. The continuance of "make-safes" (regular inspections and removal of loose pieces of stone) is not the preferred strategy, only serving in the long term to "defoliate" the building, losing a lot of carved decorative stonework.
8. The type and scale of façade upgrade proposed in the strategy is expected to be required every 30 to 50 years.
9. Conservation of the Clock Tower was commenced in February 2012 and completed in June 2013.
10. In June 2012, Council endorsed a tender from Jackson Teece Architects for heritage architectural services for the remaining façades project. This included consultant disciplines of Structural and Hydraulic Engineering, Masonry, Stained Glass, Hazardous Materials and Lighting.
11. In 2013, the remaining façade conservation was developed as two stages (refer Attachment B);
 - (a) Stage 2 to address the east and north façades and portion of the south façade and replacement of east facade lighting. To be commenced forthwith.
 - (b) Stage 3 to address the west façade and remaining south façade, the stained glass collection and the vestibule dome. Work to be commenced in five years.
12. During 2013 design was completed for Stage 2 and 3.

13. Stage 2 conservation construction works commenced in November 2013 and were completed in December 2015.

History and Significance

14. The construction of the building commenced in 1868 and was undertaken in two stages, Stage 1 during 1868-1878 and Stage 2 (the halls) during 1885-1890. As Council is aware, the building is of exceptional heritage significance. The building is one of the finest examples of High Victorian Second Empire style in the country. The elaborately decorated exterior (and interior) is significant and includes the first known use of Australian flora and fauna in an architectural setting.
15. The exterior of both Stage 1 and 2 is constructed of Sydney yellowblock sandstone. The stonework to the first stage exhibits a high level of carved decoration and is considered as a rare and outstanding element contributing to the building's Local and State significance.
16. The NSW Department of Commerce has advised that new sandstone has an overall life span of approximately 100 years based on the Department's long and extensive sandstone experience. The building is now well passed this time frame.
17. The stained glass windows of the Sydney Town Hall are described in the building's Conservation Management Plan as of "Exceptional" Heritage Significance.
18. The NSW Heritage Office Asset Management Guidelines advise State and other agencies to regularly monitor, maintain and repair heritage assets so as to retard or prevent deterioration.

Stage 3 Scope of Works

19. This comprises conservation of the masonry facades, the stained glass windows within Centennial Hall and the vestibule dome. Details together with a Program and Plan of Works are outlined in Attachments A to D.
20. It is expected to call two separate tenders for the work (i.e. two separate construction contracts), one for stained glass windows and one for facades (all other work). This is because of the unique nature of the stained glass. There is a real scarcity of heritage stained glass contractors in Australia and a suitable repair workshop in the Sydney region is required.

Key Implications

Strategic Alignment - Sustainable Sydney 2030 Vision

21. Sustainable Sydney 2030 is a vision for the sustainable development of the City to 2030 and beyond. It includes 10 strategic directions to guide the future of the City, as well as 10 targets against which to measure progress. This report is aligned with the following strategic directions and objectives:
 - (a) Direction 5 - A Lively and Engaging City Centre - Sydney Town Hall is the city's most popular central meeting place and the stage for many of Sydney's public civic events.

- (b) Direction 7 - A Cultural and Creative City - Sydney Town Hall is the largest and most ornate late 19th century civic building in Australia. This project seeks to preserve a building of exceptional heritage significance so that it may be enjoyed for future generations to come.

Organisational Impact

- 22. Whilst the project will be highly visible, it will have limited operational impact on the City's service levels, staffing and internal processes.
- 23. All building entrances will be kept available and pedestrians protected from overhead construction. The same construction yard as Stage 2 will be reintroduced into Sydney Square for site administration and deliveries. All scaffolds will be protected by A class hoardings as they were for Stage 2.
- 24. Whilst the vestibule dome is being restored, there will be short periods when the vestibule itself will need to be closed for protection of people within. This will be coordinated with Events and Security staff.
- 25. Stained glass window conservation works taking place over around four to five years will need to be coordinated with Events to minimise impacts.

Risks

- 26. Key identified risks for the construction phase of the project include the following:
 - (a) Safety, including public safety. Scaffolding and hoarding to be constructed to provide protection for contractors and the Public. Contractors to operate under WHS systems.
 - (b) Access and use of public facilities. Scaffolding and hoarding to be constructed to enable safe continued use of Sydney Square and Sydney Town Hall during construction. Coordination with local stakeholders including Town Hall events.
 - (c) The project will provide appropriate communications to affected stakeholders and the general public to inform them of works.
 - (d) Quality of work and preservation of heritage value. Experienced heritage contractors to be selected with a high emphasis placed on quality of works. Source of appropriate stone and stained glass.
 - (e) Limited number of specialised stained glass contractors. Funding of a stained glass apprenticeship to enable retention of an important heritage trade.
 - (f) Coordination with the George Street Light Rail once in operation to access Sydney Square.

Social / Cultural / Community

- 27. The construction yard around the building will slightly reduce the space for public gatherings and other events. Consultation has been held and will continue with relevant parties.
- 28. During stained glass window conservation works part of the clerestory windows will be temporarily removed for conservation. During this time the window openings will be covered by a hoarding or similar.

Environmental

29. Undertaking the necessary steps for long term conservation of this significant heritage building aligns with the City's Sustainable Sydney 2030 strategies of Sustainable Development, Renewal and Design.

Economic

30. The conservation of Sydney Town Hall is essential for the continued occupation of the building and Council activities. The project will minimise and mitigate any effect on the events program.

Budget Implications

31. There are sufficient funds allocated for this project within the current year's capital works budget and future year forward estimates as detailed in Confidential Attachment E.

Relevant Legislation

32. Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 (NSW).
33. Heritage Act 1977 (NSW).
34. Local Government Act 1993 (NSW).
35. The City's draft Hoardings and Scaffolding Policy.
36. Attachment E contains confidential commercial information which, if disclosed, would:
 - (a) confer a commercial advantage on a person with whom Council is conducting (or proposes to conduct) business; and
 - (b) prejudice the commercial position of the person who supplied it.
37. Discussion of the matter in an open meeting would, on balance, be contrary to the public interest because it would compromise Council's ability to negotiate fairly and commercially to achieve the best outcome for its ratepayers.

Critical Dates / Time Frames

38. There have been a series of reports over the last two decades recommending repair to the external envelope of the building. For this reason, it is important to progress with the final Stage 3 conservation works.
39. The tenders are scheduled to be called for Stage 3 in June 2019 and it is intended to present a Tender Report to Council later in 2019.
40. Stage 3 construction commencement on site is expected to be in late 2019, and to take up to two years for the sandstone work and four to five years for the stained glass windows.

Options

41. If the stonework is not repaired, the fine detailing on the façade would gradually disappear (loss of heritage fabric). The fall of stone pieces may occur in public areas. There may be water damage to the fabric of the building.
42. If the stained glass is not repaired the windows would deteriorate with particular risk to the leadwork.
43. Sydney Town Hall is a nationally significant heritage building. Council has a duty of care to preserve the heritage for future generations and to make safe

Public Consultation

44. Consultation has been held with: The NSW Heritage Branch, NSW Police, the NSW Department of Commerce, The Glebe Administration Board, The Cathedral Administrator and the City's Design Advisory Panel.
45. Development consent No D/2013/1177 was received on 13 December 2013 together with a S60 Heritage approval. This approval remains current for Stage 3.
46. Consultation has also been held extensively with representatives of industries and crafts associated with sandstone supply, sandstone cleaning, stone joints, stone mortar technology and stained glass. A stained glass window workshop was undertaken with industry experts (heritage, arts and academic) and City staff in February 2018 to inform and solidify conservation direction.
47. No complaints were received about the construction yard in Sydney Square during Stage 2. Whilst all parties have accepted the previous layout, it is expected that some discussion will continue with the Glebe Administration Board over operational issues on the Square.

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