



# Revitalising urban heritage through adaptive re-use

A LITERATURE REVIEW FOR URBANGROWTH NSW

UNIVERSITY PARTNERS



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## 1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, adaptive re-use of heritage buildings has become a core element of successful urban policy. Many property developers, once shy of the restricted commercial viability of heritage structures, now see them as core elements in creating distinction and a sense of place for otherwise highly commercial schemes. Yet the costs of rehabilitation, and the need to find appropriate and sensitive uses post-restoration, present a significant and often site specific challenge.

This literature review provides an overview of major re-use projects in both Australia and around the world as a means of informing UrbanGrowth NSW of various options for optimizing use from their heritage assets. Many of these buildings and sites have strong community association, with sometimes sensitive, conflictual and strong emotional attachments to the existing place. For example, As the National Heritage Assessment of the Parramatta Female Factory Precinct notes:

*“Over 30,000 girls were admitted to the Parramatta Industrial Girls’ School (1886 – 1974). Within this institution girls were often subject to systematic emotional, physical and sexual abuse. Their treatment characterises the treatment of many children in institutions over the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. National Apologies to the Forgotten Australians and Stolen Generations acknowledge the lack of state protection for these children, including many Indigenous girls.”*

(Australian Government, Department of the Environment and Energy 2016)

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In Australia, from the 1990s in particular, there has been a dramatic shift in the development of heritage legislation, heritage inventories and heritage practices at local, state and federal levels. The professionalization of cultural heritage assessment and management and the subsequent development of inventories of heritage assets conserved that many items, places and landscapes that might have otherwise been “lost to history”. However, “top down” approaches to contemporary Australian heritage

practices (guided by the Burra Charter and related heritage assessment procedures) emphasises the role of expert, professional knowledge and tends to focus on the authenticity of physical heritage fabric. Over the last three decades, this has led to perhaps an over accumulation of heritage items on heritage registers and some stagnation in the approaches to the identification, interpretation and management of heritage in dynamic urban settings. What diverse residents in a particular community identify as heritage changes over time, and heritage practices must be responsive and adaptive to change. James Semple Kerr (2008) argues that heritage is not just about the things we want to keep, but rather it is about “the things we inherit”. Inherited heritage is more complex because it entails aspects of heritage that is present regardless of whether it is officially recognised as such. It also includes less tangible, more emergent forms of heritage, including elements of the past that are disused, fragmented or left to decay (De Silvey 2006; Houston 2012).

It is this concept of adaptive re-use that is gaining traction in many cities around the world, despite some resistance by the urban regeneration and development industries that view the retention of heritage fabric as uneconomic (Bullen and Love 2009). There are many examples of built heritage that is adaptively re-used in some capacity (for example, historic buildings converted into boutique hotels, galleries and offices). For example, the Tate Modern Museum in London, a contemporary art gallery located in the former Bankside Power Station and New York’s High Line, an elevated railway repurposed as a corridor park connect 2.33km of urban green space in lower Manhattan. Both the Tate Modern and the High Line drew record numbers of visitors in 2016, approximately 5.8 million and 5 million people respectively.<sup>1</sup>

However, these redevelopments often have to address complex attachments to place. **Part one** of the review provides an overview of the academic literature connecting tangible and intangible heritage in places. This includes an understanding not just of the best way to sustain the fabric of historical buildings and place, but also the nature of urban nature, of the gendering of urban space, and of the power of place memory.

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1 Source: BBC News: <http://www.bbc.com/news/entertainment-arts-39404206> (last accessed 27/6/2017);

**Part two** provides a discussion of two examples that might inform our understanding of the options available for the development of Parramatta North and White Bay Power Station: Melbourne's Abbotsford Convent precinct, and New York's Brooklyn Navy Yard. This section includes a discussion of three key issues: first, the management structures for heritage precincts; second, the masterplan and place-making concept and mission for each precinct; third, the programme of uses for the site, including the distribution and pacing of leases, the mixing of uses, and the choices made on revenues for on-going financial sustainability.

## 2. PLACE, IDENTITY AND GENDER IN HERITAGE SITES

### 2.1 The adaptive re-use concept

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In the built environment, conventional heritage practices are primarily concerned with preserving the integrity of historical fabric of a site, where the focus is to keep a site as close to its original condition as possible (while allowing for limited, appropriate re-uses)<sup>2</sup>. Inclusion on state, federal and world heritage registers depends on the integrity and authenticity of the material fabric of listed heritage. In some cases, this poses a significant challenge for heritage management for the governments, private owners and institutions responsible for their restoration and upkeep. DeSilvey (2006) has highlighted some of the material and cultural problems presented by heritage practices focused on the preservation of objects and sites. To preserve an object, building, precinct or landscape as historically significant is to place a boundary around it. To prevent damage and decay to buildings and sites, conservation technologies and interpretive strategies are deployed, often with the effect of making "a museum of the site" (Victoria Heritage Council 2013) and thus capturing the heritage item in a 'static, unchanging past' (DeSilvey 2006, 326). Adaptive re-use is a more fluid and relational approach to heritage practice – where the boundaries between past and present are thoughtfully and ethically addressed in the material transformation of the site, and where it is the layering of past elements itself that is the object of focus rather than the strict preservation of the site.

Best practice adaptive re-use works with the concept of palimpsest, where the markers of decay and regeneration upon which the past are left inscribed in the heritage development process (Marshall et al 2017). Thus, rather than placing a boundary around a heritage item or landscape, attention is paid to the layering of history in buildings and landscapes. This offers up different possibilities for heritage practice and interpretation, including the incorporation of new technologies and radically different uses. Here, the adaptive re-use of the heritage item, site or landscape is seen as another layer of history adding to its living and continuing history (Victoria Heritage Council 2013).

However, Marshall et al (2017, 1164) caution that while 'urban rebuilding efforts may play a part in social healing and "normalization," they may also represent another act of violent erasure targeting particular memories of the past.' Adaptive re-use of heritage is therefore not an invitation to rewrite the past or to change the heritage to the extent that the past is superficially addressed or erased altogether. Neither should the adaptive re-use of a building or site represent a 'carcass of past use', as Crinson (2005, xi) observes: 'memory with the pain taken out.' Done well, adaptive re-use is not only aesthetically interesting; it becomes a powerful tool for understanding and making sense of urban transformation.

Adaptive re-use considers multiple, and often, discordant temporal, ecological and spatial relationships. The term palimpsest 'helps us to visualize how contemporary life stories overwrite surfaces upon which partially visible traces of the past, especially past violence, appear' (Marshall et al 2017, 1165). For example, Australian cities contain layers of Aboriginal and settler histories that unfold in time-spaces that are not synchronized (Crabtree 2013; Porter 2010). Sydney's heritage buildings and landscapes contain many layers of colonial, migrant, ecological and post-industrial histories that are entangled with the present. Unsettled pasts can cause significant social and political tensions within contemporary urban landscapes, particularly in urban places undergoing transformation (Sturken 1997; Jacobs 1998; Till 2011; Crabtree 2014). But they also reflect the complexity of urban sites – where multiple histories, perspectives, materials and

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2 This practice is outlined by the Burra Charter in article



environments converge. The challenge for adaptive re-use is to understand and meaningfully interpret this complexity – in terms of what communities, developers, architects, owners, councils, planners and heritage practitioners “want to keep” and in terms of what a heritage site or landscape “inherits.”

**In summary, there are three key ways in which adaptive re-use is currently revitalising contemporary heritage practice:**

- 1 *It reflects living history – by recognising the plural temporal and spatial layers of history, decay and renewal in new and inventive ways*
- 2 *It is attentive to both the tangible and intangible stories and memories of the site – engaging communities in the entire process*
- 3 *It recognizes heritage as “inherited” and is thus open to emergent forms history, place-making and value*

## 2.2 Social and cultural memory and site contestation

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Heritage as “the things we inherit” emphasizes the continuous interplay between presence and absence. The question of how we can make sense of presence and absence when adapting and interpreting cultural heritage is fraught. Remembering and forgetting are complex psychological processes that entail both conscious and unconscious elements (Sturken 1997). Drawing on literary and cultural studies, psychology, geography, anthropology and philosophy – the field of “memory studies” investigates how practices of remembering and forgetting are made public and are enacted in place (Nora 1989; Hoelscher and Alderman 2004). This can be a difficult process: “selective” acts of remembering are often criticized for remembering past stories and events from the perspective of the status quo or for sanitizing and commodifying aspects of subaltern, ethnic, Indigenous, womens’ and working class cultures, identities and histories (Waitt and McGuirk 2005).

In Australian cities, this problematic has been explored by Waitt and McGuirk (1997) in their work on the commodification of “history as heritage” in Millers Point, Sydney. They argue that tourist-oriented practices of commemoration such as walking tours

and historic wayfinding focused on the settlement’s colonial history represent a particular version of Australian national history. In a similar vein, Byrne and Houston (2005) have discussed the erasure of Indigenous histories by the East Perth Redevelopment Authority in plans aimed at transforming the former industrial area into a “cosmopolitan” technological-residential hub. The redevelopment of East Perth entailed both the physical and symbolic displacement of Aboriginal and working class people. Urban memory is thus often associated with feelings of loss, displacement and abandonment (Crinson 2005).

Yet the past is never completely erased – fragments and traces remain and the ‘uncanny effects’ of these fragments and traces of the past can continue to unsettle the present in unpredictable ways (Gelder and Jacobs 1997; Crinson 2005; Byrne and Houston 2005; Byrne and Searle 2002). For example, within the East Perth development, the public artworks commissioned for the site are surprisingly subversive – representing acts of remembrance of the area’s layered Indigenous, working class, and (contaminated) ecological histories. Millers’ Point today remains a fraught site – where the politics of redevelopment, community history, gentrification, and emergent forms of heritage (for example the fight to save the brutal modernist public housing, Sirius Building) collide.

### ***Remembering and forgetting: significance and contestations***

Memorialisation serves the dual purpose of recalling the past and creating new dialogue for the future, encouraging “critical consciousness, committed memory-work, and the possibility of engaging with the world through transformative practices” (Bonder 2009: 62). The acts of memorialising in this sense should not be the ‘act’ of elite groups (e.g. urban planners and policy makers), but a project of citizens with the ability of engaging with multiple meaning and making their co-existence possible and material. Tyner, Alvarez & Colucci (2012) address issues of selective memorialisation that have occurred in popular narratives of post-genocide Cambodia. More specifically, They argue that the highly visible and officially commemorated sites of Tuol Sleng Museum of Genocide Crimes and the killing fields at Choeung Ek have obscured other less visible sites and practices of violence (2012: 854). It is through the negotiation of politics and power relations in memory construction

that some narratives are overlooked and sometimes forgotten. The authors argue that it is of fundamental importance to acknowledge “those unmarked but not forgotten sites, for these sites speak loudly to the ongoing contestation of the inscription of memory and remembrance on the landscape” (Tyner, Alvarez & Colucci 2012: 586).

The example of Anlong Veng in northern Cambodia raises questions about the contested essence of memory and memorialisation, and the appropriateness of commemorating contested sites of pain and shame. The area is notoriously known for being the last bastion of the violent Khmer Rouge regime and several former Khmer Rouge leaders' residences and Pol Pot's gravesites are also located there. In recent attempts to promote the site as a historical tourism site, the atrocities committed by the regime have been collectively ignored, resulting in type of amnesia that implicitly neglects the genocide and violence that occurred as recently as the late 1990s. Long & Reeves (2008) argue that attempts to promote heritage tourism at this site have been premature, occurring before the historical contextualisation and necessary processes of acknowledgement and healing have been concluded: “[d]oes [historical tourism] exacerbate or absolve the events of the past? Or is it part of a constructive dialogue of reinterpretation of the recent past with the broader aim of reconciliation in present day Cambodia?” (Long & Reeves 2008: 69). This example highlights how recent the trauma inflicted by the Khmer Rouge is, and as such “it is extremely difficult to interpret and promote the site in any objective, non-politicised or constructive capacity... the impact of the genocide [is] too difficult a topic to broach in terms of public commemoration” (2008: 68). The question is: could it ever be a place devoid of it all?

Hoelscher & Alderman (2004) use the example of the transformation of Robben Island in South Africa, from a high-security prison and symbol of the inhumanity of apartheid to a World Heritage site and symbol of resistance against human rights abuses globally. There was resistance to this transformation at the time, with right-wing proposals to turn the island into a leisure resort, focusing on the natural environment rather than the political and historical significance of this site. The idea favoured “a remembering that allowed for public forgetting of its political role” (Hoelscher & Alderman 2004: 347). Tyner et al argue

that there is a contestation for the monopoly of what is to be preserved and show about the past (2012: 856), almost like ‘charismatic memorialisations’ of what should be publicly shown as ‘the memory’.

This conflict regarding ‘what to remember’ is present amongst the Madres de Plaza de Mayo in Argentina, where internal conflicts led to the group's fragmentation: “two competing Madres organisations carry out public performances at different spatial scales as they disagree over the strategic value of commemoration and how best to keep the human rights movement alive” (Hoelscher & Alderman 2004: 351). This type of conflict, although not uncommon, reveals that experiences of the past and their memorialisation are not homogeneous among groups.

A large number of heritage buildings worldwide have been sites of imprisonment – prisons, asylums, particularly. As such, many people of different generations may have a strong emotional response to the future uses of these buildings and precincts. Some may seek to have their negative connotations swept away, and others may wish to have them commemorated. This is often complicated by their association with religious orders, who often provided services in the absence of state intervention. As such, sites such as Kew Asylum and Abbotsford Convent in Melbourne, and the Cumberland Hospital, Parramatta provide a challenging context for redevelopment (Franklin 2013, Reeves & Nichols 2008).

Franklin (2013) outlines the history of the ‘Magdalen’ institutions, including reports of predominantly negative experiences and memories of the institutionalised women and girls. Such accounts involve strict discipline, psychological cruelty, forced confinement, relentless hard work, and emotional deprivation and abuse. Franklin (2013) references Parramatta Girls Home as an institution where similar conditions were experienced with a terrible record for physical abuse and assault (2013: 77). It is interesting to note that official and journalistic accounts from these institutions differ markedly from the reports of the ‘inmates’. This example also resonates with the construction (and maintenance) of unequal power relations and politics in the process of memorialisation (Hoelscher & Alderman 2004; Tyner, Alvarez & Colucci 2012; Drozdowski, De Nardi & Waterton 2016), and the silencing of alternate narratives that do not ‘fit’ with the popular narrative.

### 2.3 Scars, ruins and 'letting things go'

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The examples discussed above demonstrate that while it is possible to adaptively re-purpose buildings and landscapes; without the careful interpretation of multiple historical layers, the outcomes are frequently mired in contested and unsettled community memory politics and the real and perceived loss of authentic heritage connections to place. And yet, dealing with public memory and dark and difficult pasts in the adaptive re-use of heritage is not always about physical presences enacted through memorialisation (Sturken 1997). As discussed above, memorialisation is a heritage practice that acknowledges relationships between people, events and objects – usually in the form of visible markers – such as plaques, signs, heritage walks, and other forms of written inscription on the landscape. The physical elements of memorialization leave semi-permanent historical markers on the urban landscape – often which work to tell specific stories about places – such as in the case of Waitt and McGuirk's work on Miller's Point and the Rocks – where memorial practices tell tourist oriented stories about the site as the “cradle of the nation” (refs). In the case of the Rocks, the foregrounding of early settlement narratives, erased Indigenous histories of the area – which continued after 1788. In other words the way in which these stories are told and represented means that curatorial and development decisions have to be given great deliberation.

One solution to this problem is to learn lessons from past exclusionary heritage practices, where more inclusive approaches that broadly recognise the plural and discordant time-spaces of urban palimpsests are developed (as discussed earlier in this section). Public memory-work in the design and interpretation of the new Barangaroo Reserve is an attempt to do just that – with the site's recreation of the 1836 shoreline and strong cultural references to local Aboriginal history. Aboriginal artists Genevieve Grieves and Amanda Jane Reynolds recently unfolded a multimedia interpretation 'Barangaroo Ngangamay (Barangaroo Dreaming)' where: “Virtual signposts in the sky guide visitors, via a geolocation app, towards five engravings hand-carved by Aboriginal elders into sandstone rocks around the reserve. Standing near the engravings triggers a series of short films on their mobile screen, depicting the sun, moon and life cycles of Indigenous women” (Munro 2017). A critical analysis of the interpretation of Barangaroo Reserve's cultural and natural heritage

layers is beyond the scope of this review (see Walliss 2014) – the example given here demonstrates how new technologies using smartphones, participatory engagement and other forms of digital storytelling place a different emphasis on the complex interaction between tangible and intangible heritage.

Ruins and decay play particular functions in 21st century cities. DeSilvey and Edensor (2012) argue that ruins and processes of ruination can “create the conditions of possibility for the emergence of alternative orders in ostensibly regulated urban spaces.” Ruins provide opportunities for unstructured engagement with buildings and places where uses become jumbled – opening up possibilities for other kinds of activities: urban farming, keeping bees, dog walking, a space for youth, graffiti, animals, plants – enrolling derelict space into new networks and possibilities, this is discussed further in the section on 'urban nature' below (DeSilvey and Edensor 2012; Fraser 2013). It is, of course, important not to overly romanticize ruins: in their essay 'Ruinopolis,' Hell and Steinmetz (2014) argue that ruins in cities are the wounds and detritus of economic restructuring.

Anna Storm (2014) uses the useful metaphor of the scar ('a reminder, a trace of the wound') to explore this complex social (and often socio-ecological) relationship between tangible and intangible post-industrial heritage, ruination and renewal. 'Landscape scars' refer to the social processes associated with postindustrial sites, where Storm (2014, 3) writes: “the process of healing, from wound to scar, is neither linear nor automatic...the process may cyclical, can happen in stages, and even demand active work.” For Storm, the metaphor landscape scar is an alternative to the palimpsest approach – because it is “organic and created on the basis of past significances entangled with present standpoints” (3). To the definitions of “reused” and “ruined” postindustrial heritage that has been discussed extensively in this review, she adds “undefined” postindustrial heritage - reflecting places and processes currently left outside of the sphere of contemporary heritage recognition. Understanding processes of adaptive re-use through the metaphor of the post-industrial scar – offers significant opportunities for critically and creatively working with “inherited” heritage in a way that utilizes heritage as an opportunity for healing. Like organic scars, it is the context of how, how deep and what context the scar was made that is important for understanding the possibilities and limitations of its capacity to heal.





**The Neon Boneyard, Las Vegas, c. 2004. Before the site became open to the public. Photograph by Donna Houston. Image Copyright: The Neon Museum, Las Vegas.**

### **Ruins: the Neon Boneyard, Las Vegas**

An example of this can be found in the Neon Boneyard Museum and Park in Las Vegas (view online: <http://www.neonmuseum.org/about/the-collection/neon-boneyard>). For much of the late twentieth century, the Boneyard site was an elusive urban folk story – an empty lot on the edges of town where neon signs collected from demolished motels and casinos were sent to die. Like many urban folk stories, there was truth to the myth. The Boneyard had its origins as an outdoor storage yard for retired and reclaimed neon signs produced by the Young Electric Sign Company (Houston 2012). Las Vegas’ urban form is frequently updated and the decommissioned signs were collected so they could be re-purposed. The site came to be known as the ‘Neon Boneyard’ – an earthly grave for the discarded signs of Las Vegas’ successive growth machines. However, over the years, the Boneyard began to take on a life of its own – the worn and peeling signs, broken light bulbs, weeds and protruding wires held an aesthetic appeal which spoke directly to the problems of postmodern urbanism. It became a place of interest to artists, architects, historians and urban geographers – the Young Electric Sign Company eventually handing the site over to the Allied Arts Council in 1996. The Allied Arts Council had always planned to restore Las Vegas’ neon history to display in a dedicated museum. However, it was the popularity of the aesthetics of the Boneyard itself that came as something of a surprise. This led to the partial restoration of the Neon Boneyard Park – where signs continue to lie in haphazard, dusty repose. Despite being in a residential location, well off the famous “Strip”, the Neon Boneyard Museum and Park is one of Las Vegas’ most popular tourist destinations, with the Museum expected to surpass 100 000 visitors sometime between June and July 2017. <sup>3</sup>

The Neon Boneyard is an example of inherited heritage that owes much of its existence to passionate individuals who recognised the value of mid-century signage and kitsch and advocated for its inclusion as part of the city’s urban heritage. In retaining the outdoor site in addition to the museum, which is located in the lobby of the former La Concha Motel, the Neon Boneyard is an excellent example of how adaptive re-use has the potential to redefine contemporary heritage practices to create authentic and economically viable places that acknowledge the past by thinking outside of conventional definitions and procedures. In the Neon Museum’s case it was the fragmented archive of discarded neon signs that told an authentic story about Las Vegas’ urban development, providing tangible links between the past and present.

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<sup>3</sup> Source: Las Vegas Review Journal: <https://www.reviewjournal.com/business/casinosgaming/neon-museum-sets-new-highs-for-attendance-revenue/> (last accessed 27/6/2017)



**The Brickpits, Sydney Olympic Park, 2012. Photograph by Donna Houston. This is an example of a ‘postindustrial scar’ (Storm 2014) that is being allowed to slowly heal. The site has been left since the discovery of critically endangered Green and Gold Bell Frogs – and the focus of the interpretation of the ring walk is on valuing urban nature.**

## 2.4 Urban Nature

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Postindustrial landscape scars have strong associations with urban nature. The creation of a public park from a disused elevated rail corridor in New York (the High Line) has become something of a game-changer for 21st century urban heritage practices and place-making. The High Line brings together key elements of adaptive re-use within the design and interpretation of the park utilizing discordant layers of industrial and natural heritage. In the 21st century city, obsolete industrial infrastructure and landscapes are no longer viewed as ‘blank slates’ for decontamination and redevelopment. The

pressures of urban growth, a lack of open, green and community space, and the growing recognition that ‘informal’ (Gandy 2013), ‘invisible’ (Foster 2014) and ‘ambivalent’ (Jorgensen et al 2007) landscapes are socially and ecologically important to communities – often precisely because of their lack of expert design and commodification - has resulted in fundamental changes to the way in which people regard the value and aesthetics of urban nature (Gandy 2011). A consistent theme of adaptive re-use is to critically re-think the value of discarded objects, sites, buildings, communities and landscapes – blurring distinctions between culture and nature, waste and value.

The High Line makes reference to, and renders sublime, the concept of the terrain vague (though this only now loosely applies to the park's post-industrial, novel ecosystem aesthetics, see Langhorst 2015). The terrain vague is a term developed by the Spanish architect and philosopher Ignasi de Sola-Morlaes to describe "non-places" that are common in cities (Foster 2014, 125, see also Ignasi 2006). The idea of vagueness – relates to everyday forms of urban obsolescence, often hidden in plain sight – "former industrial sites, abandoned buildings, disused railways and portlands, or old cemeteries" (Foster 2014, 125). The High Line remains a significant site, despite the valid criticisms that it helped complete the eco-gentrification of the surrounding Chelsea neighbourhood and that it has successfully managed to "rebrand" postindustrial nature as a consumable urban spectacle (Langhorst 2015; Rothenberg and Lang 2015; Patrick 2014; Littke et al 2015). The dilemma here resides in the hidden value of the terrain vague – where the interstitial nature of these places – the novel ecologies, the informal urban uses offer important resources that would otherwise be unavailable to people, and the myriad of nonhuman animals, birds, insects, and plants that inhabit these places. The High Line (and the successful adaptive re-use of other post-industrial sites) has changed the way in which urban nature is regarded in cities – no longer a degraded and humanized landscape ripe for development – but as sites that should be valued for their novel social and ecological historical orderings.

The High Line's novel ecologies no longer exist (it was the novel ecosystem documented by the photographer Joel Sternfeld the 1980s that sparked the idea for the public park: <http://www.cabinetmagazine.org/issues/3/sternfeld.php>) no longer exist. In other words, the ecological function of the disused elevated railway line for other species was overridden by other community concerns in the design and implementation of the public park. Recent urban literature, however, has documented the significance of vacant lands as informal green space and as important urban refuges for other species (Gandy 2011, 2015; Jorgensen and Keenan 2012; Rupprecht and Byrne 2014; Lorimer 2008; Low 2002). In Sydney, for example, ex-industrial sites make up nearly half of the city's top ten wildlife spots (Macy 2008). This awareness gained public attention during the redevelopment the Sydney Olympic Park

site, with the discovery of endangered Green and Golden frogs in the contaminated, former brick pits. The presence of the critically endangered frogs in a difficult to redevelop part of the site, presented a different opportunity for interpreting the site's cultural and environmental history. In this regard, the post-industrial parklands at Sydney Olympic Park is an example successful adaptive re-use of a scarred post-industrial landscape.

The lessons learnt from the adaptive re-use of ex-industrial sites, and other similar landscapes with extensive, weedy gardens, overgrown riparian corridors – what Jorgensen and Keenan (2012) call "wildscapes" is that while they might be forgotten pockets of disused land to urban development authorities, they are by no means uninhabited (Foster 2014). These sites contain significant opportunities to reconnect urban ecologies with urban memories and for local communities to co-exist live alongside nonhuman animals with whom we share our cities (Houston et al 2017; Hinchliffe and Whatmore 2006). The over development of vacant, informal landscapes (such as in the case of the High Line) renders them a shallow echo of past urban biodiversity (Patrick 2014). However, it is also true of the High Line – that if members of the local community had not formed the group 'Friends of the High Line' to bring the public park into a reality, it is also likely that the railway would have been demolished to make way for more expensive buildings. The High Line came into existence in a gentrifying neighbourhood. This section has only touched on the issue of "eco-gentrification" (Quastel 2009) in passing. However, it should be noted that there are significant social and ecological tensions surrounding adaptive re-use of disused and vacant urban/postindustrial lands in relation to environmental justice (Pearsall 2015; Langhorst 2014, 2015; Evans 2015; Patrick 2014; Anguelovski 2015; Schopf and Foster 2013; Foster and Sandberg 2014; De Sousa 2014).

Indeed, one critique of the concept of the terrain vague is that while it may offer different and subversive socio-ecological orderings and possibilities for re-use – it does not adequately address questions of justice and access (Foster and Sandberg 2014). Thus, while urban greening is increasingly viewed as a significant activity for urban environmental justice, ecological resilience, public health and local



amenity – Wolch et al (2014) note the paradox where such activities result in making neighbourhoods less affordable to local residents. On the other side of this dilemma, making spaces for nonhumans in the city – particularly less charismatic creatures (in the case of Sydney) such as ibis or grey-headed flying foxes means that they are continually displaced as pests. Developing approaches to adaptive re-use in the “more-than-human” city in a manner that is just to both humans and other creatures remains an open and ongoing challenge (Houston et al 2017; Metzger 2015).

In summary, the literature in this section highlights the deeply contested, but at the same time deeply valued nature of postindustrial heritage. The past matters

to the present in manifest and yet unpredictable ways. If there is one overarching theme of the current literature on adaptive re-use, urban memory and urban nature - is that practitioners must work with the complex particularity of places in new ways. The idea that heritage stories and practices must adhere to the linear progression of history is especially questioned. Best practice adaptive re-use ideally should open us up to the wild, discordant, and untapped possibilities of the city, where value is not just an economic consideration, but is intimately tied to the life of the city that unfolds across multiple temporal and spatial patterns and which engages diverse stakeholders (including nonhumans) in the process of redevelopment.

**The High Line, New York in 2012. Photograph by Donna Houston.**



## The Port Arthur Historic Site

The Port Arthur Historic Site, founded in 1830, began as a timber-getting station for the colony and then operated as a penal settlement between 1833-1877. After it was closed in 1877, some of its convict-period buildings were demolished “as Tasmania tried to erase the hated ‘convict stain’” (<https://portarthur.org.au/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2015/08/Port-Arthur-Conservation-Factsheet1.pdf>) and some were burned in the bushfires in 1890’s. However, many buildings remained in the site in 1877. Thus, the site was opened to private settlement and renamed Carnarvon, where a township grew around the ruins. “Many locals wished the remains of the penal settlement would crumble into oblivion; at the same time, they realized its potential for income. Thus began Carnarvon’s evolution into a tourist town” (Mason, Myers, de la Torre 2003, p.7). The Site was inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 2010 as one of the Australian Convict Sites. (<http://portarthur.org.au/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2015/08/Port-Arthur-World-Heritage-Factsheet1.pdf>).

Lieutenant-Governor Arthur envisaged that “Port Arthur would be ‘a place of terror’ that combined hard labour and unremitting surveillance.” Despite the forced migration and punitive imprisonment of convicts, rehabilitation through forced labour and reforming through religion to build the colony in the site, Port Arthur has been an iconic place for the foundation of the state and nation. As values-based heritage management, some values are meticulously selected from the multilayer history of Port Arthur and attributed to the site. The “historical value” of the site is framed through its pioneering role in the punishment of modern era (<http://portarthur.org.au/heritage/heritage-values/>). Besides taking a national pride in the innovative punishment system, the engagement with the Port Arthur’s contested past is promoted through documenting and collecting individual stories of the site at the local level: The Convict Database Project and the Project of Collecting Memories in 2011, for example, are to celebrate “community connections to [Port Arthur’s] significant places” (<http://portarthur.org.au/heritage/collecting-memories/>). The event called Port Arthur Memories was also organised in 2012 “to remember and celebrate Port Arthur’s post-convict heritage and the people associated with it, by acknowledging their contribution and embracing and looking forward to the future of Port Arthur and the region” (<http://portarthur.org.au/heritage/port-arthur-memories-revisited/>).

The local community is socially valued along with the Isle of the Dead and the Soldiers’ Memorial Walk in the site to develop a national sense of place. The significance of Tasmanian Aboriginal people to the site, however, is not addressed as part of “social values” but rather assessed as “indigenous values,” because “the Tasmanian Peninsula region generally has significance to Tasmanian Aboriginal People” (<http://portarthur.org.au/heritage/heritage-values/>).

Furthermore, although the 1996’s tragic massacre that left 35 dead has still been a disturbing issue, the commemoration of this tragedy also has a significant role to enhance a sense of national identity. The tragedy is only outlined briefly in the memorial brochure not to distress people more (<https://portarthur.org.au/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2015/08/Port-Arthur-Memorial-Garden-Brochure1.pdf>). Even the name of the gunman is not used in the brochure deliberately, and visitors are requested not to ask staff about the event but rather read the plaque at the Memorial Garden (Frew 2012, p. 44). The repeal of gun laws in consequence of the tragedy, which had national significance in Australia, is listed as “social values” of the site: “For both the broader and local community, the memorial for the 1996 tragedy provides an opportunity to reflect upon that event and the new laws controlling gun ownership that it inspired” (<http://portarthur.org.au/heritage/heritage-values/>). There are few studies on the 1996 massacre focusing on the Broad Arrow Café in the site, where 20 people were killed. The café was turned into the Memorial Garden keeping only the shell of the café four years after the tragedy. In these studies, the commemoration of the massacre is addressed in terms of heritage management (Casella 1997; Lennon 2002) and dark tourism (Frew 2012).



Choosing the convict period for the significance of the site, however, has caused some controversy in terms of the representation/interpretation of the past and the heritage management of the site since the new National Parks and Wildlife Service drafted the first historic management plan in Australia in 1971. Egloff and Newby (2005, p. 22) points out that Port Arthur was “transformed from a rural township with a tourism orientation into an historic site to be managed by individuals who were more familiar with natural area conservations than with historic site management.” Mason, Myers and de la Torre (2003, p. 42) address the conflict between cultural and economic values in early conservation plans: “The whole history of Port Arthur as a historic site revolves around balancing concerns for conservation with desires (and requirements) for the economic benefits of tourism development and economic use.” Mason, Myers and de la Torre (2003, p.48), however, consider the recent heritage management and conservation plan as a good example, which proves that assessing economic and cultural values separately does not prevent dealing holistically with site management.

Tracy Ireland (2004) reflects on the early conservation procedures of the Site (The 1979-1986 Port Arthur Conservation and Development Project (PACDP) and the Burra Charter) focusing on the conflict between the archaeological approach and the architects’ plans. As an archaeologist, Ireland argues that archaeological interpretations of the past based on historical evidence had a limited impact on popular debates about the site. Ireland (2004, p. 28) concludes that “the relationship between historical archaeology, heritage and nationalism [shows] that modes of practice had tended to limit archaeologists’ participation in interpretations of material culture, places and landscapes which are key sites for contested mythologies of identity and nation.”

As part of national identity construction, Carolyn Strange (2000, p.3) points out that “through the design and planning process some aspects of Port Arthur’s past were inevitably muted whereas other elements were amplified”. Based on her on-site ethnography, she indicates that “some interpretation choices have challenged commonly-held notions (principally the site’s historic reputation as a place of misery) while others, notably the decision to exclude the site’s pre-European history and leave issues of gender and sexuality unaddressed, have reinforced the image of Port Arthur as a place that matters because male convicts were made to work there.” (p.10). Sharon Sullivan (2004, p. 16), member of the Port Arthur Historic Site Management Authority’s Board since 1999 ( <http://portarthur.org.au/pahsma/board/>), considers Port Arthur as a good heritage site management example in terms of “practicing advocacy and promotion.” By this, Sullivan means “well-planned and steady promotion to key stakeholders that is aimed at enhancing and reinforcing the site’s values.” She argues that promoting all the values of the site provides support for Port Arthur: “Managers provide a continuous flow of positive news stories, actively promote on-site improvements, and ensure the attendance of key leaders and public figures at site events” (p.16).

## 2.5 Conclusions

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While highlighting excluded, subaltern, gendered, working class and Indigenous pasts urban heritage is a critical component of contemporary heritage practice – themes of refusal, decay, and ‘letting go’ are undeveloped in literature on heritage and adaptive re-use (De Silvey 2012; Storm 2014). It is worth mentioning here, as adaptive re-use belongs to a sphere of urban growth activity that aims to

improve buildings, sites and landscapes through better utilisation, effective design, and neighborhood revitalization. Sometimes, what gets overlooked, is that some particular sites, buildings and places cannot or should not be fixed or improved in this way, but rather, placed under “palliative care” (De Silvey 2012).

### 3. HERITAGE MANAGEMENT AND ADAPTIVE RE-USE

This section reviews some international examples of two of the key building and district types that UrbanGrowth is addressing: disused power stations (White Bay), and vacated health buildings, with particular reference to histories of psychological health (Parramatta North).

#### 3.1 An arts and wellness precinct: Abbotsford Convent

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In 1994: “the Urban Land Corporation was commissioned to sell the land. In 1997, the Corporation accepted an offer from developer Australand. Reputed to be over \$20 million, it more than doubled the Valuer General’s valuation. The initial Australand proposal was for approximately 240 units on the north and south sites including three-storey units along the bike path and numerous other large new buildings among the existing buildings. Many existing buildings were to be demolished, with some to retain just their façade...” (Strategic Plan 2016, p.12). In 1998, the Abbotsford Convent Coalition succeeded in presenting an alternative plan that sat alongside the Australand DA, which was approved by council, and the State Government transferred the land to the Abbotsford Convent Foundation. This began operating in 2004, and subsequently the Foundation has opened the C3 Contemporary Art Space (an exhibition space with a bar-café), and has initiated a volunteer program.

*“Sixty per cent of the Convent’s built form has been restored and much of the gardens have been returned to their former glory, both becoming hugely popular attractions in their own right. However, 40 per cent of the Convent is still in a state of disrepair, out-of-bounds and at critical risk of ruin if not restored soon. Walls threaten to topple onto footpaths, buildings have split foundations, stonemasonry is coming away from facades and some floors are near collapse. The Convent is home to several of Victoria’s oldest, most historically significant buildings, yet some have seen no substantive work since their construction over 150 years ago.”*

*(Abbotsford Convent 2014, p.5)*

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In 2014, faced with this significant shortfall, the Foundation launched an investment and philanthropy prospectus, entitled Let’s Finish the Job. The prospectus detailed the problems that remained on the site, and the imminent danger that the buildings would move into an irreparable state. To counter this, the document set out a number of proposals to tenant the site and increase revenue.

The Trust argued that it had made a contribution in three different ways. The first is economic: “The Convent has generated a huge return on its sole state government grant of \$4 million (10 years ago). Visitors now spend more than \$7 million annually. The ACF generates \$2.5 million in annual income and returns small surpluses that are reinvested into the site. It does not receive recurrent government funding. More than 900 jobs have been created as a direct result of activity at the Convent. Businesses based at the Convent grow: 2012 gross tenant annual income was estimated to be up to \$34 million (PricewaterhouseCoopers); an increase on \$12.7 million in 2007 (Essential Economics). The site attracts hundreds of strategic planning, learning and team-building workshops for the not-for-profit, cultural, government, academic and corporate sectors. Based on a survey of 2,000 people, international visitation has more than doubled in the past 12 months (67,575 in 2014, up from 28,900 in 2013).”

The second is cultural: “The Convent has become a landmark attracting more annual visitors than Australian cultural destinations such as Uluru, the Sydney Theatre Company, Kakadu and the National Gallery of Australia. The Convent is now welcoming more than four times as many visitors as MONA and Port Arthur. The Abbotsford Convent is nominated for National Heritage Listing. The Convent provides unique amenity to Australia’s film and television industry. As a busy creative precinct, thousands of rehearsals, workshops, exhibitions, markets, events, festivals and meetings occur annually.”

The third contribution is social: “more than 60 per cent of the Convent’s audience is aged under 35, highlighting its dynamic appeal. With free entry, affordable spaces for hire and a variety of catering options at differing price points, the Convent also appeals to those who are socially and economically disadvantaged. Seventeen per cent of visitors spend no money when at the Convent. In June 2014, more

than 330 people were volunteering at the site's not-for-profit organisations." (Abbotsford Convent 2014, p.8)

It also noted that the precinct had become particularly well used by wellness businesses:

*"The Convent has more than 30 wellbeing practitioners working onsite in the Convent's WellBeing Wing, offering services such as yoga, counselling, shiatsu and acupuncture. During 2013, there were 608 wellbeing workshops and fitness classes at the Convent, well up from 370 in 2010."*

(p.10)

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In terms of attracting new businesses, the refurbishment and preservation of structures was tied into a program of attracting start-ups and 'makers'. As they note: "There are 531 individuals and small businesses on the tenancy notification register awaiting news of available tenancy space (June 2014)." (p.16). And so the new spaces in the Sacred Heart building would be used as an employment zone:

*"The ACF will restore upper floors to become a dynamic new cluster of up to 100 start-up and emerging creative micro-businesses such as; digital content providers, designers, e-publishers, makers, independent entrepreneurs, inventors, animators, games developers, producers and more."*

(p.11)

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The Foundation note that they are "liaising with the Economic Development

department at the City of Yarra to develop its own creative cluster plans and is aligned with the City of Yarra's next five-year Economic Strategy." (p.18)

The campaign launched by the Trust is an interesting example of a precinct heritage funding appeal. As the Trust's Chair Nicholas Gruen put it in the appeal document:

*"The site made a promising investment for private property development. But privatisation would also compromise much – though not all – of its public good value. Or it could continue in the ownership of a proud community, eager to rebuild and reinterpret its role as provider of public goods. Ten years on, how thankful we all are that the latter, more immediately difficult course was chosen."*

(p.21)

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In 2016, the Convent adopted a new strategic plan, based around four principles: activation, place, viability and governance. Under activation, they included the need for "Encouraging experimentation and risk-taking in the artistic space - working at the cutting edge." Under place, this included "Enhancing the Convent's practical connection to the surrounding city while maintaining its unique character of seclusion within the Yarra" (p.2).

Under viability, there were four goals: "Maximising occupancy; Continuing to utilise the car park to generate a strong income stream; Exploring other sources of commercial financing initiatives; and Maintaining a sustainable balance between commercial users and cross-subsidised space". (p.2). Under governance, they note the "need to raise the bar on the degree of professionalism we bring to our governance and management of it." (p.3)

The leasing strategy the Trust has adopted followed four categories: a small number of long term leases (10 years); a food and beverage lease (and it is important to note the Lentil as Anything controversy); a Wellbeing Centre with its own sub-leasing strategy; a creative industry lease which allows for small-scale retail activity.

In terms of attracting tenants: 'The ACF uses a variety of methods in seeking to attract applications for an available space, these include but are not limited to; private search and/or marketing, call for Expression of Interest (open public or selective), from register of interest (where held) and expressed interest from existing tenants.' (p.3)

<http://abbotsfordconvent.com.au/site/assets/uploads/5b8eba1f-acf-strategic-plan-presentation-d-laidlaw-sept-2016.pdf>

In May 2015 the Commonwealth Government announced that the ACF would receive \$2.681m from the National Stronger Regions Fund (NSRF) to restore the 3200 sq. m Sacred Heart building – a dilapidated historic building on the Convent site that awaits restoration and is therefore currently out of bounds. The NSRF support matches the generous \$2m donation from the Dara Foundation, as well as other funds the ACF has generated over the past decade. (Strategic Plan 2016 p.3)

It is important to note that Abbotsford has undergone some significant tensions within its tenancies. The first concerned the independent Steiner primary school on the premises, who applied to incorporate some precinct land within its operations, which was strongly resisted. The second concerned the Lentil as Anything café, a well-known social enterprise which attracted a substantial counter-cultural following to the site. The café was threatened with lease termination, resisted by a high profile campaign which rekindled the coalition that had saved the site from residential development. These examples show that even small scale tenancies can have significant impacts on the on-going evolution of the site's identity.

### 3.2 Industrial heritage: the Brooklyn Navy Yard

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The Brooklyn Navy Yard, a 300 acre site that faces Manhattan on the East River, is one of the most prominent major industrial heritage projects in the United States. Until its closure in 1966, the Yard was a major manufacturing and maintenance site of naval warships. As a result, it contains a wide range of buildings, from a 19th century naval hospital and officer residences to art deco factories to post-war maintenance sheds (it is not dissimilar to Cockatoo Island in the range of buildings from different periods that still remain). As a secure base, the precinct is strictly defined by perimeter walls and the waterfront. Given the impact of its closure on the surrounding communities, the Defence Department handed the land over to a New York State body, the Brooklyn Navy Yard Corporation. As a result, the Yard followed through a fairly conventional jobs growth program for its initial decades with little attention to the maintenance of the buildings.

There was a change of direction in the mid-2000s, with the appointment of Andrew Kimball as CEO, who sought to alter the configuration of tenants in the Yard.

This included maximizing how the heritage space was used as an employment site. As a result, the Yard profile includes a wide mix of new economy firms, including creative industry sectors such as design which require large fabrication spaces, and buildings focusing on incubating specific sectors such as the internet of things. As Kimball and Romano note:

*“Twenty-first Century manufacturing at the Yard includes building sets for film shoots and installations for cultural institutions. It includes restoring artwork. Yard tenants use high-end design and high-technology manufacturing equipment to fabricate products from furniture for luxury apartments to body armor for the U.S. and British Special Forces. Maritime ship repair tenants service the Port of New York and medical testing labs service the rapidly growing health sector.”*

**(Kimball and Romano 2012, p.201)**

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In an overheated New York residential market, where industrial uses were being squeezed out by higher profit residential, there was a high demand for the sites:

*“With 99% occupancy for the last ten years, the Yard has a waiting list of 100 businesses eager to locate there. Many are very small – 70% of Yard tenants use fewer than 5,000 square feet and have five or fewer employees. But 25% have over 25,000 square feet and 50 employees, and 5% have over 50,000 square feet and more than 300 employees.”*

**(Kimball and Romano 2012, p.201)**

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As Kimball, has pointed out, heritage preservation became a core offer of the site as an employment destination:

*“Maintaining the historic industrial character of the site has not only been the right thing from an historic preservation and sustainability point of view but also created an ambiance desirable to New York's creative class and 21st century manufacturers.”*

**(Kimball and Romano 2012, p.203)**

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The 'curated' nature of the site was focused around a key heritage building, known as Brooklyn Navy Yard Center, located at BLDG 92. The building includes a museum of the Yard's past, and a display profiling of the Yard's businesses. It also hosts an Employment Center, which focuses on placing local residents in jobs in the Yard over the last six years. "Ten percent of those placements have gone to very low-income residents living in local public housing and 10% have gone to formerly incarcerated individuals." (Kimball and Romano 2012, p.203)

In 2015, the Yard management announced several major redevelopment or refurbishment projects within the Yard's boundaries, including a revamped dry dock, a refurbished warehouse building which was converted into workspace, a Green Manufacturing Center which occupied a revamped industrial structure, and contained two high tech tenants (Crye Technologies and the New Lab) and the co-location of a Carnegie Mellon University film school in the unoccupied naval hospital in the quietest corner of the site. This is designed to connect to the film production studio, Steiner Studios, which is already on-site.

### 3.3 Comparison 1: Brooklyn Navy Yard and White Bay Power Station precinct

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The BNY (91 hectares) is comparable in size with the Bays Precinct (95 hectares) in its widest geographical definition. Although the Yard consists of a large number of buildings, dry docks, and a film studio, there are several buildings that are worth pulling out to be compared with White Bay. One of the most striking elements of BNY is the way in which multiple floors of each building are used in different ways.

BLDG 92 – a heritage building which houses the Navy Yard management, a museum, and classrooms for various extra-curricular courses for school students. This 'hub' building is the most public on the site, and forms an important entry point into the Yard.

BLDG 3 – a building which houses a high-tech military apparel firm, but which also has a 65,000 square foot rooftop farm. The farm, while producing a respectable crop of various green vegetables, also doubles as event and 'urban agriculture' education space.

BLDG 77 – previously a largely windowless warehouse, the city government of New York invested \$140 million to punch windows into the walls, and to support a

refit which will see the single building offering housing 25% of the Yard's employment. This meant that upper floors of buildings could be used for creative and maker industries:

*"Conventional industrial leasing theory suggests that a landlord receives more for ground floor space with loading dock access than for upper floors. With scores of artisans willing to pay a premium for small upper floor spaces with quality natural light, the Navy Yard has turned this thinking on its head. New Yard buildings all are multi-story."*

(Kimball and Romano 2012, p.201).

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New Lab and green manufacturing centre – this previously derelict building was refurbished and opened as an internet of things accelerator under a private head lease. It is notable for being 'hardware-centric', in contrast to the many software focused firms that are often located in such re-used spaces. It includes shared 'platform' technologies that start-ups can use for product prototyping and development.

King's Distillery: the Paymaster Building (White Bay). This reflects an interesting trend within global cities, which could be referred to as boutique drinks production. This distillery offers tastings and, as well as operating a commercial business, also has an area for public consumption.

There are many other buildings used for both new economy and more traditional firms. The key point about the current Navy Yard management's leasing strategy includes the diversification of tenants and uses. The following table suggests a very tentative mapping of the BNY buildings and tenants onto White Bay.



Building name and type	Tenant	White Bay comparison building	Similar Sydney tenant
BLDG92 [brick]	BNYDC	Control panel building	Friends of White Bay/ Power Station Trust/ educational or tourism providers
BLDG77	Digital start-up incubator; food court	New build integrated with Boiler House or Coal Shed.	Tramsheds; The Grounds of Alexandria
BLDG 3	Various craft manufacturers, artists, photo studios. 12 floors.	Admin buildings	Surry Hills or Marrickville tenant mix.
BLDG128 New Lab [converted]	Internet of Things incubator	Turbine Hall	None: huge gap in Sydney innovation ecosystem
Paymaster Building	King's County Distillery	White Bay Hotel	Microbrewery (eg. Four Pines, Brookvale)

**Figure x: Brooklyn Navy Yard and White Bay: a comparison**

### 3.4 Comparison 2: Abbotsford Convent and Parramatta North

It is instructive to compare the redevelopment experiences of Abbotsford with the possibilities and responsibilities required at Parramatta North. Of the two sites, it is interesting to note that alternative uses have already been proposed. We note the insightful study undertaken by UTS MBA students with reference to the Parramatta North site, which recognises the need to avoid large commercial tenancies and to divide the precinct into zones respecting the differing backgrounds of buildings on the site. This study proposes splitting the site into three: the Norma Parker Precinct, which covers the orphanage, Bethel House, and the laundry building; the Greenup precinct, covering the main hospital buildings; and the Burramatta Precinct, which covers the relatively less significant heritage buildings at the North of the site. The study proposes tenanting the Norma Parker Precinct with arts and craft-based activities, as has happened with Abbotsford and other sites such as the Fremantle Arts Centre. The Greenup precinct would be

anchored by a boutique hotel and food and beverage options, and the Burramatta Precinct would have a focus on innovation and start-up businesses.

When we look at Abbotsford, we can draw some further conclusions about how each site has been used. This precinct, for various reasons, has failed to generate sufficient revenue or public funding to sustain the condition of some of its key buildings. In 2016, a major fund-raising campaign was launched, called 'Let's Finish the Job', which set out the condition of the existing buildings and the investment required to repair them, and focused on two sectors to provide sufficient revenue for sustainability: cultural tourism, and creative clusters. It did not, notably, identify innovation or start-up activity as a use for the site.

The Abbotsford experience, as the strategy document argues, has been important in terms of reinforcing community infrastructure, including a radio station, regular markets, and a children's farm. It also includes a wellness centre, and one of the famed Lentil as Anything not-for-profit restaurants.

Would Abbotsford be a good model for Parramatta North? Certainly, although individual lease terms are confidential, it would appear that the site does not generate significant commercial revenue. Compared with Parramatta, which will have a much higher density of housing and also a new light rail route, there is quite striking locational differences between the two sites. However, the fabric and scale of the two

precincts are similar. The suggestion of a boutique hotel, perhaps linked to a wedding and events industry, is likely to be the most suitable commercial use, with the possibility of creating small-scale innovation hubs that might benefit from proximity to Westmead Hospital (notwithstanding the provision of innovation space on that site) would be the most realistic and suitable commercial outcomes.

Building name and type	Tenant	White Bay comparison building	Similar Sydney tenant
BLDG92 [brick]	BNYDC	Control panel building	Friends of White Bay/ Power Station Trust/ educational or tourism providers
BLDG77	Digital start-up incubator; food court	New build integrated with Boiler House or Coal Shed.	Tramsheds; The Grounds of Alexandria
BLDG 3	Various craft manufacturers, artists, photo studios. 12 floors.	Admin buildings	Surry Hills or Marrickville tenant mix.
BLDG128 New Lab [converted]	Internet of Things incubator	Turbine Hall	None: huge gap in Sydney innovation ecosystem
Paymaster Building	King's County Distillery	White Bay Hotel	Microbrewery (eg. Four Pines, Brookvale)

**Figure x: Abbotsford Convent and Parramatta North: a comparison**

## 4. CONCLUSIONS

This review has provided an overview of some key issues in adaptive re-use. It recognized the important claims that many social and cultural groups have for these sites, given the long associations that individuals and families have with particular buildings. Some of these associations hold problematic and troubling memories, which have to be actively addressed and incorporated into sensitive place management and building reuse. It also highlighted the important sense of nature or slow development that often attaches to these spaces. In a period of intense urban development, the need for a phased redevelopment of the precinct might be appropriate.

For this reason, the core elements of any re-use strategy revolve around three different axes: place memory; building preservation and – where appropriate – augmentation; and economic programming or curation that allows for a sustainable business model to develop. These economic uses must be chosen in such a way that the site's fabric, and social identity, are consistent.

Of course, there are a wide variety of heritage typologies that could be examined, and there is a significant contrast in how White Bay – as a port and power station complex – and Parramatta North – as a site of institutional mental health facilities – might be approached. Adaptive re-use strategies are very different in terms of the configuration of specific sites, and to the degree of public claim on the space, and are thus more labour intensive in terms of how the site is managed during and after restoration.

### **This leads us to five conclusions:**

First, debates over the future of heritage precincts should be understood as having three different type of relationship to the past: first, negotiations over preservation of the fabric of the built structure; second, recognition of the often contested social histories of the place, related to memory practices; third, on-going identification with the business or activity associated with the precinct, which may determine the new uses of the precinct.

Second, these places require a level of attention that will absorb more resources in the short term than more orthodox developments. However, they can be understood as concentration sites of identity and

history that have a social value great than a particular market value at a moment in time. Their development potential should not be assessed using conventional expectations of commercial return, and – certainly in the case of Parramatta North - the site could be a good opportunity to examine alternative paradigms of public value.

Third, to ensure active use and to fund upkeep and maintenance, such sites have to become viable entities. Both of the core case studies – Abbotsford Convent and Brooklyn Navy Yard – have attracted lower than market tenants to the site, despite (or perhaps because of) commercial pressures in the wider city. The leasing strategy is thus the core mechanism by which such precincts develop, and keeping control of leases is a fundamental element of the site. This may require actively recruiting firms as tenants that are seen as adding value more broadly across the precinct, rather than providing the highest market rents, and these may be offered rent incentives to relocate. The study undertaken by UTS Business students into the re-use of Parramatta North provides some helpful scenarios as to how this might be achieved.

Fourth, this requires careful consideration about the governance arrangements for each precinct. Both Abbotsford and Brooklyn have specific, legislated board structures. On a day-to-day level, it is important to have a visionary development manager, who may have to adopt a different mindset to established 'highest value' strategies of tenant recruitment. As the example of Andrew Kimball in Brooklyn Navy Yard shows, heritage value can be leveraged as part of a proactive development strategy that is reconciled with social benefit.

Fifth, the uniqueness that the sites possess means that they add to a strategic asset in a city's portfolio of spaces, a point of distinction that is important both for citizens and, in purely functional terms, for tourists. As such they should be given high priority within any public urban development agenda.

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