

CASE STUDY



Community Housing
INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION VICTORIA

DRILL HALL MELBOURNE CITY

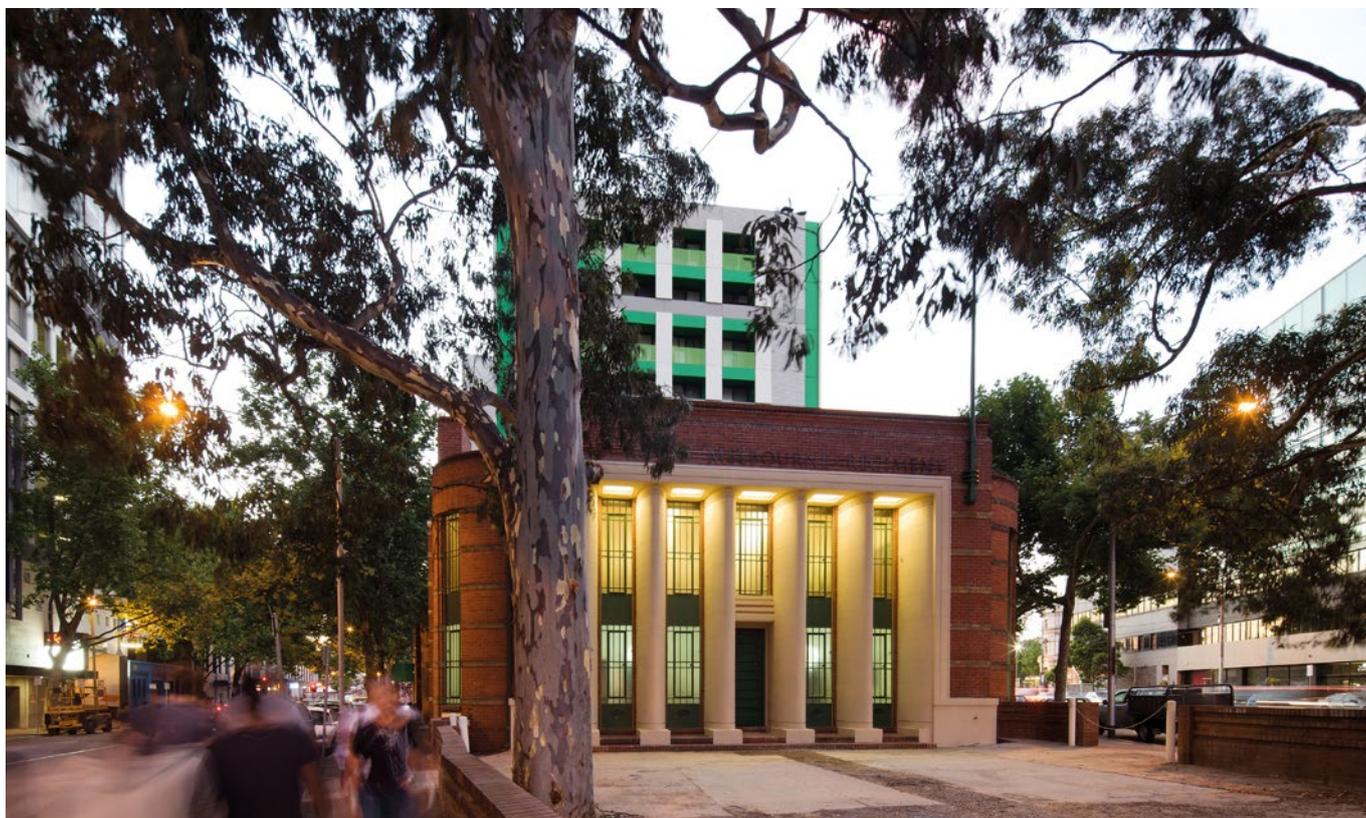
ADAPTIVE RENEWAL OF A HERITAGE SITE WITH
ADDITIONAL PUBLIC BENEFIT OF AFFORDABLE
HOUSING BY HOUSING CHOICES AUSTRALIA



Supported by



The heritage-listed Royal Melbourne Regiment Drill Hall, or 'Drill Hall' as it is known in Melbourne, is located in the CBD on a triangular site bounded by Therry Street, Elizabeth Street and Victoria Street. Drill Hall was built in 1937 specifically for the Royal Melbourne Regiment, formed in 1854 and referred to as Melbourne's "own Regiment" which served in the Boer War, First World War and the Second World War¹.



Source: MGS Architects, <https://mgsarchitects.com.au/projects/housing/melbourne-drill-hall-redevelopment>

According to a plaque on the exterior of Drill Hall, the building:

“is an outstanding and highly detailed example of the Moderne style, not previously adopted by the Commonwealth Government architect, George Hallandal...It is one of the most intact of the red brick drill halls of the 1935-1939 period.”

Drill Hall provides an excellent example of how a public building with heritage significance can be adaptively and sensitively repurposed through award-winning design² to retain its heritage values and create additional public benefit through the delivery of affordable housing and improved community use spaces and facilities.

The Drill Hall site was purchased by Melbourne City Council in the late 1990's. In 2006, Melbourne Affordable Housing (now Housing Choices Australia) approached Council to use the building for affordable housing. The Council resolved to give in principle support for an affordable housing project on the Drill Hall site of at least thirty units.³ In 2007, Melbourne City Council resolved to transfer the land to Housing Choices Australia for no cost with conditions including that it could lease back the ground floor of the original Drill Hall for a 99 year period.⁴

In 2009, the project received funding under the Nation Building Economic Stimulus Plan (NBESP) with the Melbourne City Council, Sidney Myer Centenary Fund and Housing Choices all contributing additional funds. Specialist heritage consultants and an engineer with experience restoring other Drill Halls in Melbourne were engaged by Housing Choices Australia to assist through the design and construction process.

1 http://vhd.heritage.vic.gov.au/places/result_detail/125395

2 Australasian Housing Institute - winner of the Leading Housing Solutions Award in 2011, Australian Property Institute - winner of the Property Review Australia Heritage Property Award in 2012, Property Council of Australia - Victorian finalist for the Award for Best Heritage Development in 2013.

3 Melbourne City Council, Council Report, Agenda Item 5.8: Affordable Housing - The Drill Hall Site, 27 June 2006.

4 Lennon, M (2015) Innovation in affordable housing supply: heritage redevelopment - Drill Hall, October, Presentation of Housing Choices Australia Managing Director. Melbourne City Council, Extract of confidential Council Meeting Minutes of Tuesday 18 December 2007, 5.10 Affordable Housing - Drill Hall Site.



Source: MGS Architects, <https://mgsarchitects.com.au/projects/housing/melbourne-drill-hall-redevelopment>

Other project partners included the Department of Human Services, Icon Construction, MGS Architects and the National Australia Bank.

There was no reported community opposition to the project. However, some opposition was expressed by the National Trust, due to impact on the heritage values of the building and the precedent set by the affordable housing project opening the gate for similar yet for-profit developments.

“It would be far preferable that the building stays and was restored without a tower sticking out of the roof... (Drill Hall) was allowed partly because it is social housing, that just opens the gate for developers to do exactly the same thing to increase profit - it sets a precedent.” – Rohan Storey - architectural historian of the National Trust.⁵

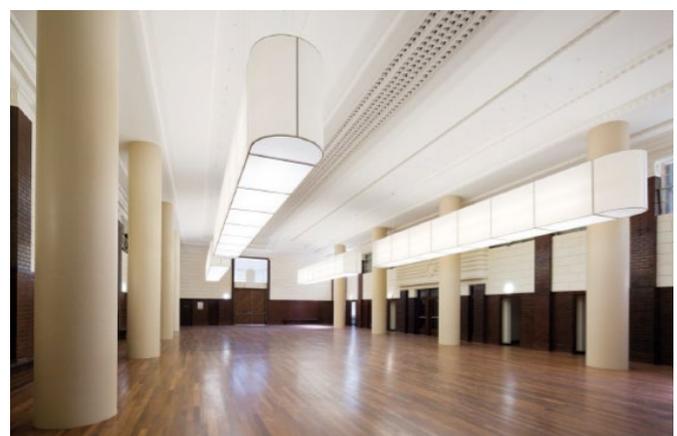
Ultimately, the development was completed in November 2011 and retained 90% of the original building including the structure of officers’ and sergeants’ mess rooms, the main hall and lobby, the hall ceiling and a three-bedroom heritage apartment.

Eight large columns were inserted into the Drill Hall to support the seven storey tower that includes 59 affordable housing units.

The ground floor of the building is home to the City of Melbourne’s Multicultural Hub, which uses the refurbished hall for community groups and events, and cohealth, a not-for-profit community health organisation providing a range of health services to people on low incomes.



Main Hall during renovation.
Source: Housing Choices Australia



Main Hall after renovation.
Source: MGS Architects, <https://mgsarchitects.com.au/projects/housing/melbourne-drill-hall-redevelopment>

⁵ Dowling, J (2010) Drill hall building project under fire, The Age, May 8. Accessed online 10/12/2019 at, www.theage.com.au/national/victoria/drill-hall-building-project-under-fire-20100507-uj0.html.