

## **Brief Old Observatory Interpretation Project**

The National Trust of Western Australia manages the Old Observatory on behalf of the community and Government of Western Australia and is committed to ensuring the heritage values of the place are acknowledged through innovative and engaging interpretation.

Proposals are sought from a consultant team experienced in working with heritage places to undertake an interpretation project that focusses on the Old Observatory and the work of the National Trust of Western Australia.

### **Background**

The National Trust has been successful in an application to Lotterywest for funding to undertake interpretation work focussed on the Old Observatory and the work of the National Trust as an organisation. The project is funded for completion this financial year (to end June 2019) with grant acquittal in September 2019.

The National Trust of Western Australia aspires to awaken the community to the value of heritage. To achieve this outcome the Trust wishes to share the stories embedded in the places in its care through interpretation, education and public programs that will activate engagement. The National Trust manages the tangible and intangible values of a portfolio of significant heritage places and collections.

To preserve, interpret and make these values accessible requires a commitment to best practice heritage management including conservation, adaptive reuse and interpretation. Engagement is driven through a range of narratives and interpretive techniques underpinned by knowledge, research and analysis.

As the central office of the National Trust of Western Australia, the Old Observatory is one of the most significant properties in the organisation's portfolio. This project meets the Trust's strategic goals of being valued by more people and through activation of its storytelling. Additionally, it meets the Trust's goals to be valued by more people, stimulates appetite to support the Trust, and ensures a sustainable Trust.

### **Aboriginal Acknowledgement**

The Trust acknowledges its properties are situated on Aboriginal land across the state. The Trust recognises Aboriginal people remain the cultural and spiritual custodians of their land and continue to practise their values, languages, beliefs and knowledge. The Trust is committed to working with Aboriginal people to ensure these practices are recognised and included in the conservation and interpretation of its properties and Aboriginal people are consulted and involved in the development of Trust projects and programs.

## **Brief History and Significance**

The Former Government Astronomer's Residence and Offices was part of the greater 1896 Perth Observatory. The complex consisted of the Astrograph Dome building which housed the main equatorial telescope and seismograph equipment, the Transit Circle building which was connected to the State triangulation system, and the Government Astronomer's Residence and Offices. What is now known as the Old Observatory, namely the former Government Astronomer's Residence and Offices, is all that remains of the site.

The building has been the central office of the National Trust of Western Australia since 1985. As well as housing professional staff, it is a hub for Trust volunteers including the Board and Executive Committee, and offers rooms for like-minded not for profit organisations to meet at little to no cost. Although not made accessible as a heritage place with standard public opening hours, its prominent location attracts regular visitors and it is open to the public for very popular guided tours during events such as Open House Perth, Australian Heritage Festival, Heritage Perth, and Seniors' Week.

There is currently no on-site interpretation of the heritage values of the Old Observatory. This project will provide external interpretation about the place for the foot traffic in the precinct and interpretation in the reception, lobby areas and meeting rooms for the many people who visit the building for meetings or on tours. This is vital to achieving major goals of developing a heritage audience and inspiring enquiring minds to understand and explore the role and values of heritage.

## **Interpretive Vision**

It is expected the interpretation will be enticing, engaging and intriguing. It will provide unexpected insights into a place that somewhat misleadingly named "The Old Observatory" but is in effect the former Government Astronomer's Residence and the offices of the original Perth Observatory. Audiences will find the stories associated with the place to be enlightening, understand its heritage values and treasure it as a significant heritage place.

Audiences will also recognise the broader work of the National Trust of Western Australian in built, natural, Aboriginal, moveable and historic heritage, and as a manager of heritage places, collections, stories, that undertakes meaningful work with and on behalf of the community. They will feel positive about the organisation's role and compelled to support it as a member, a volunteer or through donations and bequests. Above all they will value our work and see its relevance to contemporary life, be unexpectedly surprised and amazed at the diversity of what we do, and be convinced of our innovation and entrepreneurship.

## **Audience**

There are three distinct target audiences for this interpretation project.

The first is a general audience of people who encounter the building while exploring the area and those who work in the precinct surrounding the Old Observatory. This general audience is diverse and will include many who would not be considered a heritage audience but would most likely fall into a category of those with an incidental or passing interest. This audience will generally not enter the building and will engage with it externally, often outside business hours. However there are many who make an unplanned visit into the Reception area with a query about the building.

Secondly there is the audience that visits the building in association with the day to day activities of the National Trust or for meetings of unrelated but like-minded organisations that are using one of the meeting rooms. Many will be unaware of the extent and breadth of the organisation's work and are attending for a specific or potentially unrelated purpose. This audience will generally be confined

to the three meeting rooms (Daisy Rossi, Medcalf and Annexe) and other public spaces including the reception area.

Thirdly there is the heritage audience of people who are engaged with the stories and built heritage of Perth and Western Australia, and of the National Trust (particularly its members). This audience will primarily utilise the reception area but will also explore the building during guided tours (eg during Heritage Week) and the Trust's website. It also includes people who drop in, unaware it is utilised primarily as an office, and wanting to visit.

Through interpretation we want all these audiences to be quickly engaged and intrigued. We want them to be surprised by what they discover about the building and the work that goes on within it. We wish to provoke curiosity and a desire to know more. We want to challenge preconceived notions of the work of the National Trust and the role of heritage. While the work of the National Trust is valuable and worthy we want our audiences to be delighted and to see us through a lens of contemporary relevance and with a sense of humour.

### **Scope of Works**

The project is to be guided by the principles, objectives and philosophy articulated in the National Trust of Western Australia Interpretation Strategy (attached).

The consultant team will:

- Prepare an approach to the delivery of interpretation for the Old Observatory
- Develop interpretive content incorporating text and images using existing sources
- Provide detailed documentation of the proposed interpretive content and design approach, including detailed costings, for review and approval by the National Trust
- Source high quality digital images and obtain reproduction/copyright approvals
- Provide content for inclusion on the National Trust's website
- Design, produce and install the interpretation

It is proposed the story of the Old Observatory will be confined to at least one outdoor interpretive sign and indoor interpretation content in the Reception area. The story of the work of the National Trust will be concentrated in the Daisy Rossi and Medcalf meeting rooms. Both the Old Observatory and the National Trust stories will be presented in the Annexe.

It is expected the project, for which this brief applies, will be carried out within a budget of \$18,500 +gst inclusive of all fees, production costs, travel and disbursements.

The date for practical completion is 22 February 2019 which will coincide with an allied project to upgrade community use facilities in the Annexe. This building will become a flexible meeting and work area for use by National Trust staff, volunteers and community groups.

## **Existing Resources**

- Fmr Government Astronomer's Residence Conservation Plan
- Historic and contemporary photographs
- National Trust Strategic Plan
- 'From the Barracks to the Burrup' (a history of the National Trust of Western Australia)
- Annual reports
- National Trust staff assistance, particularly in relation to messaging around the work of the organisation

## **Copyright**

Copyright of all original material generated during the project will remain with the National Trust of Western Australia. Permission to use of already copyrighted material must be obtained and appropriately acknowledged. Further publication or distribution of all or part of the work produced must receive prior permission from the National Trust.

## **Insurance Requirements**

Consultants are expected to hold both Professional Indemnity and Public Liability insurances, each to the value of \$20million.

## **Attachments**

1. National Trust of Western Australia Interpretation Strategy
2. Floorplans of the Old Observatory and the Annexe

## **Client Contact**

The primary contact for this project is Sarah Murphy, Manager Interpretation and Collections.

## **Information Required for Lodging Submissions**

Priority for selection of the interpretation contractor for this project will be given to those with a well-developed understanding of the special conditions associated in working with heritage places, and with demonstrated experience in the interpretation of heritage places and the expertise in the design, procurement and installation of engaging interpretation.

Submissions must be limited to 10 pages and will be evaluated against the following criteria:

1. Demonstrated experience in the interpretation of heritage places
2. Response to the brief and proposed approach to the project
3. Credentials and expertise of key personnel
4. Understanding of the tasks and outcomes
5. Value for money (confirming the proportion of budget for production against content development and design)

The following details must also be included within the submission:

- Name of the contractor, business address and relevant contact details
- Details of services offered, background and financial standing

- Total fee including travel and other disbursements
- Hourly rates for any additional works outside the agreed scope
- Names and contact details of three referees who have had recent dealings with the contractor
- Details of any sub-contractors proposed
- Level of professional indemnity insurance and name of the company that holds the policy

### **Submissions**

All submissions should be clearly marked, “**Old Observatory Interpretation Project**” and submitted no later than 9am WST on Monday 5<sup>th</sup> November 2018 at the following address:

*Location Address*

National Trust of Western Australia  
The Old Observatory  
4 Havelock Street  
WEST PERTH WA 6005

*Postal Address*

National Trust of Western Australia  
PO Box 1162  
WEST PERTH WA 6872

*Email Address*      [trust@ntwa.com.au](mailto:trust@ntwa.com.au)

Email proposals received by the nominated closing date and time will be accepted provided that they are completed, signed, legible and include all necessary information required to be submitted as part of the proposal, and a hard copy of the proposal is forwarded to the National Trust of Western Australia on the same day.

*Contact Officer's Details:*

Ms Sarah Murphy  
Manager Interpretation and Collections  
National Trust of Western Australia  
4 Havelock Street  
WEST PERTH WA 6000

Telephone: (08) 9321 6088  
Mobile: 041 995 1454  
E-mail: [sarah.murphy@ntwa.com.au](mailto:sarah.murphy@ntwa.com.au)

## NATIONAL TRUST OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA INTERPRETATION STRATEGY

### Strategic Intent

West Australians will cherish the National Trust's places and collections because they contribute to an understanding of our identity, in all its diversity, and our place in the world.

### Strategic Theme

Illuminating the spirit of our places

### Historical Context

We will use the Australian Historic Themes Framework to help ensure broad scale thinking about our places and their connections. The themes provide a broad context within which we can consider the National Trust's places and our role in their conservation and engagement with the community.

Each place is connected by major themes while projecting its unique personality as part of the broad National Trust family.

The themes are: Tracing the Evolution of the Australian Environment; Peopling Australia; Developing Local, Regional and National Economies; Building Settlements, Towns and Cities; Working; Educating; Governing; Developing Australia's Cultural Life; and Marking the Phases of Life.

### Principles

1. The starting point for all our interpretation is based on the premise that all our places are settings for human activity.
2. There is no place with a single story: all have layers which we will aim to illuminate.
3. Landscape and place are inseparable and we acknowledge the stories of a place are broader than the extent of the property boundaries
4. We will tell the stories of our places referencing the landscape, collections and other forms of tangible and intangible heritage
5. We shall address Aboriginal connections to our places
6. We will articulate connections between the places and collections in our portfolio
7. The Interpretation Strategy will inform future acquisitions
8. We will strive to be honest and transparent (genuine) in the presentation of our places and our collections and the stories they tell
9. Accessibility is a priority and we shall find as many pathways as we can to maximise visitation experiences
10. Our interpretation will be evidence based and built on a foundation of research and knowledge.

### Purpose

Interpretation enables audiences to engage and make connections that have long term value. The purpose of the Interpretation Strategy is to guide the design and integration of messages and mediums, to inform conservation and communications, and to contribute to education and

engagement activities so as to create a clearly defined identity across National Trust of Western Australia places.

## **Aim**

The aim of interpretation is to open new perceptions and perspectives of National Trust places and collections so that people are inspired to visit and experience the heritage values expressed in the places in our care and in broader contexts

## **Interpretation Objectives**

1. To reveal and provoke consideration about what our places reflect and mean
2. To help our audiences find meaningful connections and a contemporary relevance to heritage
3. To provide satisfying audience experiences so that they become ambassadors for our places and our cause
4. To position the National Trust place experience as a unique and essential part of the WA narrative
5. To have broad appeal to a diverse audience
6. To redress imbalances in how our places have been conserved and interpreted
7. To ensure our volunteers to be well informed and aligned to the strategy
8. To communicate a personality that aligns to the overall interpretative framework adopted by the Trust
9. To tell different stories at each place informed by research, audience needs and strategic priorities
10. To achieve a minimum agreed standard of presentation across priority places

## **Philosophical Approach**

The principal aim of interpretation is not instruction, but provocation. The place should be presented as a space for public discourse and invite the visitor to share the excitement of thinking about the past, the present and the future. The visitor experience should thus be one of discovery or inspired insight. The local visitor should experience a degree of self-revelation while those from further afield should enjoy a richer insight into the place, the State and the country.

Interpretation should aim to present the whole rather than a part. It should resonate with voices that encourage open-minded consideration of different perspectives. The interpretation should celebrate the significance of the place by promoting the exploration of knowledge and ideas and by providing a dynamic forum for discussion and reflection. When challenging convention and encouraging debate, the interpretation may sometimes be controversial but never dull.

Interpretation is not mere information - it is revelation based upon information. But the information upon which it is based must be thematically organised, based on rigorous research and specific to each place. The interpretation should aim to relate to the place being displayed to something within the visitor.

Interpretation is an art, which combines many arts. Interpretive techniques should be appropriate to the place and the various, or multiple, audiences. They should reflect a contemporary perspective and clearly distinguish themselves from the historic fabric, artefacts or reality. They should be imaginative, reflecting the best in creativity and ingenuity.

There are, however, many options for interpreting a place. There is no single right way. The philosophical approach outlined above should be used to explore all the options.

(Mulloway Studio/ Paul Kloeden 2005 for the National Trust of Western Australia)

## **Audiences**

### *Volunteers*

- We want our volunteers to embrace the National Trust's approach to interpretation as well as embracing the breadth and depth of the stories relating to the place

### *Visitors*

- We aim to increase visitation and find new and more diverse visitor segments
- We aim for visitors to become ambassadors to National Trust places: to come back, go to another, and tell friends about the experience

### *Users/Tenants*

- We want users and tenants of National Trust places to sign up to the story of the place they occupy

### *Local communities*

- We aim to develop an understanding of a National Trust place's role and its contribution among in the immediate community

### *Education*

- The content of the education program will align with the narrative the National Trust has adopted for a place and this will stimulate further enquiry about its significance

### *Public program participants*

- The public program content will be informed by and respond to the interpretation strategy

## **Interpretation Approach – Places**

- Acknowledges the National Trust's interpretation strategy and aligns with agreed principles and objectives
- There will be a focused interpretation strategy for each priority place
- The strategy provides for the implementation of the interpretation plan at each place
- The interpretation plan will include, but not be limited by the following contents:
- Significance
- Reasons why the place is being interpreted
- What meanings and messages we wish to communicate
- Identification of audiences
- Key messages
- Goals – what will visitors find relevant, what stories will we tell
- Critical review – what is known about the place before visitors arrive and what will they come to understand on the journey through the visitor experience

## **Design and Implementation**

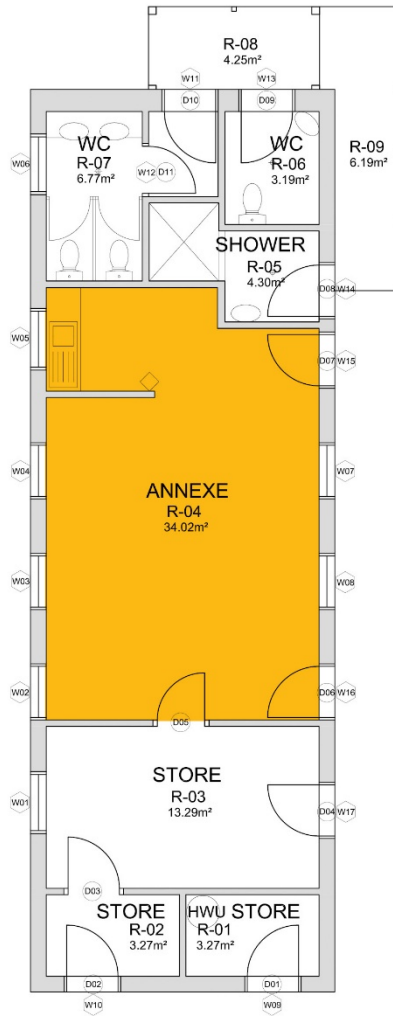
- We will apply a range of techniques and develop approaches selected to most effectively connect the stories of the place with the intended audience
- The interpretation will enhance, not dominate, the visitor experience
- Acknowledge that conservation impacts interpretation
- Acknowledge that interpretation should inform conservation
- Making a place 'accessible' may impact the place's fabric and its stories



# ATTACHMENT TWO



B-01 OLD OBSERVATORY  
GROUND FLOOR PLAN  
SCALE: NOT TO SCALE



B-02 ANNEXE  
 GROUND FLOOR PLAN  
 SCALE: NOT TO SCALE