

A NEW HEART FOR CAMBERWELL

With the \$21 million Camberwell Library and Office Project, Abigroup have succeeded admirably, transforming an aged facility into a stunning, sustainable new asset for the staff and citizens of Boroondara.

CAMBERWELL LIBRARY AND OFFICE / ABIGROUP

The official opening in September 2012 celebrated what can be achieved when real collaboration occurs; the council's vision is matched with a contractor's skills in redeveloping an old tired building into a new vibrant and functional building. This civic landmark will benefit the community for decades to come. With the \$21 million Camberwell Library and Office Project, Abigroup together with its consultants, contractors and suppliers have transformed this aged facility into a stunning, sustainable new asset for the citizens and staff of The City of Boroondara.

Essentially the project involved three distinct and overlapping elements being: major and

detailed demolition to internal structures of the existing Camberwell Civic Centre's envelope; construction of new internal elements including two internal floors, a new library, and a highly detailed fitout throughout; plus a substantial landscaping and civil works element.

The internal structure is constructed of a composite structural steel and concrete bondek system, with double glazing in the auditorium façade for thermal performance and 16mm thick toughened glass in the external feature curtain wall. Internally most of the walls comprise metal stud framework and plaster walls, with flooring of carpet tiles throughout the library and office spaces, a

new parquet floor to the Parkview Room, and vinyl to all wet areas, kitchen, and Back of House, areas. A unique timber 'bendy' ply was used as part of the lining for a curved feature wall in the centre of the building's void, linking the new skylight to the floor of the Library, and a combined glass and stainless steel balustrade system was incorporated around voids and open areas of offices.

The planning phase commenced in early 2011, and involved extensive collaboration between The City of Boroondara, Abigroup, the Architect, engineers and contractors in developing the initial design concept to final drawings stage.

The final result comprises a library on the ground floor, with two new mezzanine floors above for Council office space, equating to a Total Gross Floor Area (GFA) of approximately 2,600m², consisting of eight new Manager's office rooms across ground, first and second levels. Each level has a large meeting room with acoustically treated bi-fold doors, allowing them to be sub-divided into smaller meeting rooms.

Substantial changes were required to bring retained elements of this 1968 built building into compliance with the current Section J of the Building Code Regulations, and to ensure the performance of the building would be efficient throughout its life cycle.



Some of the aspects which were addressed included replacing the existing glass façade with double glazing to better control heating and cooling gain/loss; increasing natural light into the high ceiling areas of the existing auditorium; a new mechanical system to efficiently run thermal heat and cooling; new electrical switchboards and removal of redundant, non-compliant cabling.

Typically when a project involves major demolition of this nature, there are always unknowns and unforeseen elements that can have an impact on the program, however through innovative and practical collaboration this phase was completed on schedule and most importantly safely.

A large scope of the works was the re-shaping and construction of the existing landscape around the Precinct. Approx. \$2 million was spent on hard and soft landscaped areas to the North of the Precinct, blending in with a newly constructed raised suspended podium, spanning from East to West. Sweeping

granitic pathways, grassy knolls and mulched garden beds helped lift the overall look of this previously uninviting precinct.

Council and the design team elected to incorporate as many ESD features as viably possible. These included a 100,000 litre water harvesting tank to supply grey water for toilets, irrigation for external landscape and to feed the water feature to the North of the Precinct.

One large central skylight and nine smaller skylights were cut into the existing auditorium's roof to add natural light. This allowed sensor-responsive lighting to be installed which adjusts light levels depending on the amount of natural light fed into the building, reducing power consumption. The installation of a new motion sensing system that allows light to come on when detecting movement, and switch off after a designated period, also to saves on power consumption.

An important aspect to this project was actually saving the embodied energy in

the building by not demolishing the entire building. Very rarely are buildings able to be retained and refurbished these days.

Abigroup's Project Manager, Guy Chipperfield commented "the reinvigoration of this building and it's surrounding precinct could not have been achieved within the tight 14 month timeframe and or the high quality without the effort, skill and dedication of the council staff, our consultants and workforce."

This rejuvenated building allows the Booroondara residents, council staff and the general public to enjoy this magnificent space full of history, whilst having a cup of tea in the new café which is aimed at encouraging community & communication.

For more information contact Abigroup, Level 6, 476 St Kilda Road Melbourne VIC 3004, phone 03 9828 5000, website: www.abigroup.com.au





Camberwell Library & Office, VIC

AKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Client Design : City of Boroondara, Mr Rick Kwasek Project Manager

Client Developed Design & Documentation & Construction : Abigroup Contractors Pty. Ltd. Mr Guy Chipperfield

Architects : Nicholas Daviotis (Dir), Alexander Gecse (Dir), Chiang Ning (Arch), Celine Finzinger (Arch.), Christine Kennelly (Arch)

Landscape Architects : MDG Landscape Architects

Services Engineers : Connor Pincus Group Pty. Ltd.

Structural/Civil Engineers : Gillon Consulting Group Pty. Ltd.



Take a purpose, a community and an environment, and you have a unique matrix of factors which inform the architectural vision of a public building like the new Camberwell Library and Offices. For Nicholas Alexander Architects, synthesising these variables was a multifaceted process of integrating heritage, sustainability, and the client's needs and aspirations into one cohesive whole.

In many ways, the project encapsulates the practice's approach to design. The project consists of 1,800m² dedicated to the Camberwell library, support areas and public meeting and multifunction spaces on the ground floor, and 6,500m² of council offices over two levels above all connected by a glazed three-level void topped by a clerestory bringing natural light to all internal spaces.

"We are a very diverse practice, and our approach to design is to be free from constraints of any particular aesthetic style. We believe architecture is something that emerges out of a given set of circumstances that is unique to each project," explained Nicholas and Alexander Architects Partner Nicholas Daviotis, who led the architectural team for the Camberwell project.

"We strive to create architecture that responds to a given place, time and context, and is responsive to the environment and its users."

At Camberwell, the brief was to create new municipal office spaces for the City of Boroondara as well as a new public library, by converting the existing and under-utilized Camberwell civic auditorium. This project was the second major design commission by Nicholas and Alexander Architects for the City of Boroondara. It follows the successful completion with AbiGroup of a \$25 million project undertaken for the design, upgrading and refurbishment of the 1890s Town Hall, Municipal Corporate Offices and Council Chamber.

The nature of the Stage 2 Project presented numerous design challenges.

"That's where the challenge was – the Civic Centre housed an auditorium. A large dark volume, and the design question was how to achieve a metamorphosis of such a space into a modern office building and library," said Nicholas.

"The Camberwell precinct is quite an important area with its civic buildings dating back to 1891. It is a challenge in itself when you are working

with a complex site which has varying built forms and has evolved over the past 100 years. There is a mix of different architectural styles defined by the 1960s neo-classical style office building, Civic Centre, and the 1890s Council building with its second empire influences, all set in a park with a car park on one side. We wanted to link them in a way that expressed the historical continuity and on-going development of the community.

"That is where the idea of "a historical ribbon" emerged which provided a physical link to all buildings and the park; an elevated platform that provided a seamless link with a historical progression from east to west.

"The Civic Centre's building's fabric has an important heritage value and provided a familiar stage and background to the existing precinct. Its façade of large north and south facing windows provided an excellent opportunity for natural light however it presented as a very austere and formal institutional expression. This was the antithesis of what we believe a library should be, which is colourful, engaging, informal and inviting. Essentially, we wanted to add elements in a way which was sympathetic, kept as much of the original architectural fabric as possible to continue the historical dialogue while adding movement, colour and excitement. This was to a large extent the inspiration for the coloured matrix screen element facing Camberwell Road."

"The opportunity also presented to open and engage with the landscape taking advantage of the site, the northerly orientation, the park setting, the visual link with the Urban surrounds, and the existing topography and floor levels. Working closely with MDG Landscape Architects, a concourse element and forecourt was introduced responding to these opportunities and creating beautiful spaces within the park for people to meet over a coffee; relax under a tree and enjoy a good book; meet at the forecourt and provide a seamless pedestrian access that flows from one building to another. The Library becomes that "public lounge space" that opens and embraces its context.

"Internally the library is linked and is part of the Civic Space of the Precinct. There is a breaking down of the barriers between those engaged in Civic administrative functions and the citizen. It is part of the City of Boroondara's inclusive and democratic philosophy. It is expressed in the three-storey void element and "ribbon" of veneer that links the municipal office spaces to

the "public" library. They share the same light and air and are open acoustically. There is no mystique here, no secrets, open governance. The void also speaks of the history of the space as the original theatre ceiling is retained and thus the history of the building is retained. The library is state-of-the-art, with WiFi, automated check-out, computers, children's areas, and spaces for community meetings which are equipped with A/V technology. The library also opens into a landscaped courtyard with a pre-existing mature tree, creating a peaceful outdoor space for children's reading and play, which is open and visually linked once again to the Civic Offices."

Other aspects of the design which bring the project into the 21st century are the full DDA-compliant access points, including the public lifts, and assisted-access amenities for the severely disabled and their carers.

As an adaptive reuse project, it is inherently environmentally responsible, and the design also aimed for the equivalent of a 5 star energy rating and incorporated stormwater harvesting. The park now includes interpretive signage which educates the public, including students from the two adjacent schools, about the environment.

"It is a major metamorphosis which retains the buildings heritage aesthetic, from a black box theatre which is dark and enclosed, to something else entirely different," said Nick. "We have done other library projects, and this is a culmination of those previous experiences."

"Nicholas & Alexander were but a part of a large Team of consultants led by both our Clients the City of Boroondara and Abigroup who worked in a cooperative manner to achieve this great result. It reflects the openness and good will of all participants to achieve the maximum benefit for the community. Clear goals, engagement with the community and end-users, good communications and openness are the ingredients of any successful project."

"Community projects are the ultimate for an architect, as it is a very public form of art. The responsibility comes in expressing what the community wants to express, and making sure the end -result reflects the community's aspirations."

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Right Solcrete undertook the concrete and reinforcing for the main Library and offices building, the Plaza building and car park.

Placing concrete for a new building has challenges enough, but when work is being done amidst the everyday activities of a working Council, its staff and the community it serves, organisational skills and a safety-focused approach like Solcrete's is vital. For the Camberwell Library and Offices project, their solid skills across all aspects of concreting, formwork and reinforcement also ensured the timely completion of all these aspects of the construction program.

Solcrete were on site with a crew of 25 staff for eight months undertaking the concrete and reinforcing for the main Library and offices building, the Plaza building and car park. The scope of works included off-form finish suspended slabs and exposed concrete soffits to the underside of the concrete in the car park areas, so maintaining a high quality of workmanship was imperative.

"The main challenging aspect was that the building was pre-existing and therefore access for concrete trucks was restricted for concrete pours," said Solcrete Director, Paul Bassford.

"The timeframes were also constrained, and it is a matter of pride that we had the ability to complete the project within the timeframe allowed and also within the allocated budget."

The project also had a stringent environmental policy formulated by Abigroup, and a strong focus on OH&S. Solcrete also has a dedication to OH&S which includes regular training for its workforce in safety, and successfully completed the project without any LTIs.

Solcrete was established by Paul Bassford in 2000, and with over two decades of experience in the concreting industry, his comprehensive understanding of the construction process has given the company an edge in providing an integrated concrete solution to major projects.

The company's capabilities cover every aspect of concrete construction, from formwork and

reinforcement installation, through to placing and finishing of concrete. For the builder, this leads to smoother management of what is often one of the most substantial parts of the structural scope of works, by having one company to work with as opposed to separate operators for steel-fixing, formwork and concrete.

Solcrete has approximately 120 staff, including concreters, formworkers and formwork carpenters, steel-fixers, dogmen, riggers, estimators, quantity surveyors, contract administrators, skilled labourers and support staff.

In addition to their comprehensive safety training, which has resulted in an unblemished company-wide safety record, all Solcrete employees are encouraged to undertake a range of further learning about the construction industry. These opportunities range from advanced plan reading skills, through to lectures by visiting experts on concrete technology.

Their technical capabilities include ground slabs, suspended slabs, burnished off-form finishes, and load-bearing off-form feature walls, as well as all basic structural concrete construction, whether for a multi-storey commercial project or a public space project. The company services the entire Melbourne metropolitan area and surrounds, undertaking to deliver the best quality results to projects across the commercial, industrial and Government sectors, in addition to private projects and developments.

Other major projects recently completed include Leongatha Hospital; Victoria's largest private hospital, the Epworth Hospital at Camberwell, and Eastland Shopping Centre.

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Below Bernie Leen & Sons Pty Ltd undertook the demolition and removal of the pre-existing theatre, offices, administration areas and both basement and external plant rooms.



Knowing how buildings are put together makes pulling them apart a much safer endeavour, as Bernie Leen Demolition and Contracting (BLDC) demonstrated at the Camberwell Library and Offices redevelopment project. BLDC worked on the project for five months, undertaking the demolition and removal of the pre-existing theatre, offices, administration areas and both basement and external plant rooms. Works were undertaken in a staged manner, to coincide with the construction program.

Asbestos was present throughout, including sealing around gaps, and gaskets in ducting and plant rooms. As a Licensed Class B Asbestos Removalist, BLDC had the required skills, equipment and experience to safely deal with the contaminated materials. Other materials removed included brick, concrete, mineral fibre tile ceilings, metal studs, timber, fibro, parquet, carpet and vinyl, with around 90% of materials recycled or redeployed.

Plant and equipment used on the job included the company's own excavators, bobcats, scissor lifts, boom lifts, general scaffolding and wrecking bars.

"The biggest challenge was removing the internal theatre skins, which comprised 12m high brick walls. There was a lot of engineering involved in the propping we used to ensure the integrity of the building was maintained," said BLDC Senior Project Estimator and Camberwell Project Manager, Ron Erichsen.

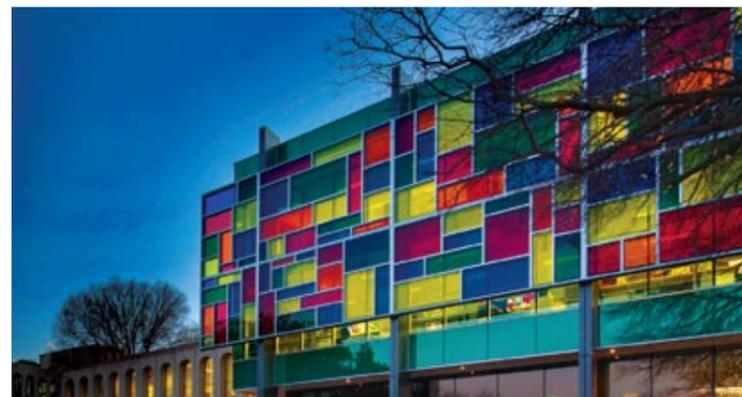
"There was also a 20m long, 2.4m wide steel beam under the theatre seating which weighed between 80 and 90 tonnes, and had to come out in pieces.

"We had to come up with a detailed engineering methodology for the project and maintain it throughout. We had a successful partnership working with Abigroup, and worked on the methodology with them during the quoting process. "The client commented to the builder that they had never seen a demolition contractor leave a building so safe and clean at the end of every night."

Other major projects BLDC have recently completed include a \$4M demolition contract at Hamer Hall for Multiplex and demolition of the east end of the Crown Casino and the walkway along the Yarra River for Baulderstone. Currently, they are working on stripping out the ground floor of Crown Casino for Probuild, and undertaking works at St John of God in Geelong for Kane Constructions, among other jobs.

The company's workforce of around 50 has a teamwork focused safety culture, with quarterly training sessions for all staff at the company's yard. All their onsite workforce are licensed for traffic management, in addition to tickets for heavy machinery, enclosed spaces and other specialist tasks. "Communication is paramount throughout our workforce. All our jobs are discussed fortnightly, and we hold quarterly discussions with all staff on improving quality and safety. We are a family company, and we run the company according to those values," said Ron.

For more information contact Bernie Leen Demolition and Contracting T/A Bernie Leen & Sons Pty Ltd, 9-15 Riversdale Road Newtown VIC 3220, phone 03 5222 2675, fax 03 5222 4889, email: info@bernieleen.com.au, website: www.bernieleen.com.au



With specialist skills in environmentally sustainable design, consulting engineers Connor Pincus Group (CPG) were able to ensure the Camberwell Library and Offices reflect the high green ideals of Boroondara Council. CPG designed and documented the lighting systems, power systems, fire detection, sprinkler systems, access control, CCTV, and communications systems. Their team of experienced engineers also documented the hydraulics, hydrants and hose reels services and prepared the design brief for the mechanical services.

"The architect provided an exciting building design concept and then working with the architect we make the building habitable," said CPG Founding Partner, Gary Pincus. "We endeavour to make every project as energy-efficient and cost effective as possible. We orchestrated thermal building modelling to develop the most effective mechanical services to suit the existing building envelope. The lighting was specifically designed to minimise the visual impact of the space and included occupancy sensing and daylight harvesting controls. There was a close collaboration from the outset between ourselves, Abigroup, Nicholas Alexander and the Client, City of Boroondara." CPG are inaugural members of the Green Building Council of Australia, with a wealth of engineering expertise in building services developed over many years of adding value to projects across commercial, retail, education, industrial, residential, institutional and heritage sectors both across Victoria and interstate.

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