



Ian Thorpe Aquatic Centre

FRH Group's landmark development in its use of environmental initiatives



Gold medal performance

FRH Group's construction of the world-class Ian Thorpe Aquatic Centre is sure to benefit Sydneysiders for many years to come

The Ian Thorpe Aquatic Centre is the result of the vision of the City of Sydney Council, the creative architecture of Harry Seidler and Associates (HSA) and the construction ability of FRH Group (formerly Belmadar Constructions).

In this project, collaboration between all parties was a key aspect of the works and with considerable changes from the initial design through to secondary designs and then the adoption of the first design with amendments. It was clear that everyone involved worked exceptionally hard to produce the correct result for Sydney and the Ultimo area in which the centre is located.

Constructed in a single stage the three-story centre is a landmark development in its use of environmental initiatives, including natural ventilation from hydraulically operable roof vents, rainwater harvesting for internal amenities such as toilets and sprinkler systems and active lighting integrated into the BMS to minimise wastage. The extensive use of natural daylight from large 52m span trusses and continuous glazing beneath each truss provides an open and light atmosphere to the centre. The completed development includes a 50m heated indoor pool, leisure pool with spa, program-hydrotherapy pool, sauna, café and fitness centre.

The construction undertaken by FRH was complex and required considerable skill, coordination

and logistical control, being located on a busy intersection in Sydney. The project was carried out in one stage with the fit out of café, gym, spa and other facilities being completed prior to opening. The unique waveform roof provided considerable challenges for FRH in erecting the steel work as did the western façade and roof supporting Piloti columns.

The final result of the combined efforts of the many contractors and parties involved in the creation of the Ian Thorpe Aquatic Centre is a landmark of achievement in itself and the creation of a world-class facility is sure to benefit the people of Sydney for many years to come.

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Making history

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As a specialist heritage consultancy, Graham Brooks and Associates operate as the flux between the developers and /or owners of historic sites and the public agencies who grant them permission to redevelop or renovate these sites and buildings. The company offers design and strategic development advice in addition to the preparation of heritage impact statements, conservation management plans and other documentation. This additional input into the process allows the developers to avoid some of the pitfalls, or at the very least minimise possible areas of contention.

Development in and around heritage buildings and historic places is often seen by the owner and developer alike as problematic. Perhaps something, that should not be undertaken unless prepared for a 'long hard slog' through mountains of paperwork, by laws, technicalities and difficult public agencies. This view is in fact quite untrue and the redevelopment and use of such sites can be achieved with the minimum of fuss when approached correctly.

Due care of a site's historical significance combined with the pragmatic requirements of modern day construction and redevelopment can generate enormous benefits for the owner, developer and the broader community and Graham Brooks and Associates are a part of the process that can allow this to happen.

With a team of highly qualified and skilled specialists including architects, historians, cultural tourism management experts, urban planning and museums/collections management, Graham Brooks are well versed in all the aspects of heritage management. Their staff hold postgraduate qualifications in their chosen fields and bring with them a strong desire and enthusiasm for the preservation of the past without hindering the future. This in itself ensures a fresh, creative, and clever approach to their work.

This creativity is reflected in the solution they chose (in collaboration with the City of Sydney Council) for the 'Interpretation Plan' for the Ian Thorpe Aquatic Centre. (The plan was a Condi-

tion of Consent for the development application, and was intended as a means of addressing the social and cultural history of the site in conjunction with new development).

"Previously we developed a remarkable and interactive website for the NSW Heritage Office in Parramatta that enabled visitors to see how the site and the surrounding context changed from indigenous occupation through many historic layers of use and development." Graham Brooks explained.

After consultation, it was agreed a similar approach was ideal for the Aquatic Centre. It also provided some significant advantages over conventional means of representing the historic aspects of a site. The web-based interpretation could be reached by a broader audience, it was vandal proof, the interpretation could be updated or corrected at a low cost, and it could be linked to other historic sites to allow interested parties to follow a historical path of information.



"The projects heritage aspects were largely determined by a major fire some years ago, when the huge former wool store was effectively destroyed," Brooks said, "Our task was to develop a heritage interpretation strategy, to ensure that the heritage significance of the former uses on the site were recorded and celebrated as part of the new building project. The most effective means to achieve this aim, given the tight budget, was to develop the web-based presentation that was then lodged on the City of Sydney Councils website. The website provides five chapters of the history of this Ultimo site and includes historic photographs of the former wool-stores and the powerhouse, the port and the rail yards," Brooks added, "It also includes photos of archaeological treasures recovered from the former residences and a discussion of the earlier public bath on the peninsula."

In addition, the web-based presentation also integrated regular updated images of the progression of the current project from an on-site camera. In

effect, a catalogue of the past combined with a record for the future.

"The use of the web based interpretation programme enabled us to address a very wide audience." Brooks said, "Normally heritage interpretation programmes result in the erection of plaques, signs and photos in the foyer of a new building. In that location, they can only inform visitors to the building. The web based format was therefore able to meet the many and diverse visitors to the City Councils web site and in doing so, reaching a huge audience."

The results accomplished by Graham Brooks and Associates on the Ian Thorpe Aquatic Centre are a clever combination of appropriate technology used to enhance the historical aspects of the project. What they have created is something that will not only benefit the local community and those who use the Aquatic Centre, but also national and international visitors to the City of Sydney Councils website.

With experience in the brick and block industry becoming harder to find and with a resources boom drawing much of the labour west, the Ian Thorpe Aquatic Centre construction team was fortunate to obtain the services of Southern Cross Masonry. Southern Cross Masonry, formerly known as 'Witchway Bricklaying', is a highly experienced and qualified company of tradesmen. Located in the Hawkesbury Nepean region of NSW, the company is now under the management of Tony Strauf who has over 22 years experience working in the commercial, industrial and housing markets.

Southern Cross was engaged to undertake all the brickwork and block work for the project. "With our management team, employees and FRH," Tony said, "The masonry works ran fluently and on time." Working very closely with FRH was an integral factor in the projects success and Southern Cross were able to facilitate a strong relationship with the developers, ensuring high quality, speedy and efficient completion of the works.

Southern Cross has been involved in a number of prestigious projects including work on Mount Panorama in Bathurst and the Penrith Football Stadium to name a few. They offer a complete service from consultation through to procurement, supply and speciality services. The company's success and philosophy is heavily reliant on strong and effective communication between themselves and their clients and the Aquatic Centre is a perfect example of how effective this approach is. All the staff of Southern Cross Masonry are very proud to have been involved.



Starting blocks

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Advertisement

ECHO Tiles Pty Ltd

ECHO Tiles are a company that thrives on challenge. Established in 2001 the company is young enough to generate the enthusiasm so often missing in larger and older operations. However, although youthful in approach, they have ensured that they have a broad base of experienced tradesmen and management staff to guarantee that levels of service are of the highest quality and standard.

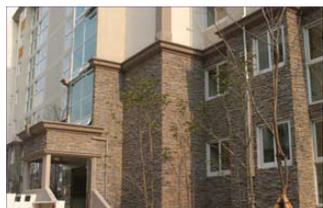
ECHO supply and install a wide range of tiles and finishes on a range of projects from domestic

right up to large scale commercial and high rise. They are able to source quality products specific to their client's requirements from Asia and Europe, including high quality Japanese mosaics and vitrified porcelain and ceramic tiles from both Europe and Asia.

The company is ISO 9001:2000 accredited, provides guaranteed on time and on budget operations, has over 70 skilled tradesmen available to accommodate the largest of projects, and provides extensive and thorough consulta

tion and coordination for their client's. To learn more about the services ECHO Tiles can provide, contact their offices below.

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Judging the results

For purposes of good corporate governance and the avoidance of any suggestion of conflict of interest, the Sydney City Council, as the regulatory body, decided to appoint an independent and separate authority as the Principal Certifying Authority for this, their own project.

As a consequence Dix Gardner Pty Ltd was appointed by the owners to be the Building Certifiers for the Ian Thorpe Aquatic Centre Project.

Mr. Lyall Dix, principal of the firm, is the Building Certifier in charge of issuing all building approvals (Construction Certificates) undertaking building inspections and the subsequent issue of occupation approvals (Occupation Certificates).

Dix Gardner Pty Ltd is well known and regarded as one of Australia's pre-eminent private building certification firms. In business since 1998, Dix Gardner Pty Ltd has a broad level of experience in all sectors of the industry. Lyall Dix was New South Wales' first accredited building certifier.

Dix Gardner Pty Ltd operates from its principal office in the CBD of Sydney and also has an office in Newcastle. All technical staff employed by

Dix Gardner Pty Ltd are appropriately qualified and accredited by the New South Wales Building Professionals Board. Their staff have also had extensive public service experience at Local, State and Federal Government levels, as well as the private sector.

Dix Gardner comprises 17 staff and is one of the largest building certification practices in the State of New South Wales.

During the last calendar year the firm approved \$1,320 million of building work.

The interesting aspect of this project is the Architects, being Harry Seidler & Associates, a well-known, respected and renowned Architectural practice, who are very innovative and who have an excellent reputation, therefore making it more exciting and challenging from the point of view of the regulator to balance the competing needs of architectural innovation and public health and safety.

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