

15.2 REPORT ON WORKS AT THE URALLA COURTHOUSE  
REFURBISHMENT



**Department:** Infrastructure & Development  
**Prepared by:** Interim Director Infrastructure and Development  
**TRIM Reference:** UINT/22/9375  
**Attachments:** UINT/22/9658 Attachment 1 – Survey results and submissions  
 UINT/22/9660 Attachment 2 – Concept plans  
 UINT/22/9415 Attachment 3 -ADG architects Heritage Impact Statement

**LINKAGE TO INTEGRATED PLANNING AND REPORTING FRAMEWORK**

**Strategy:** 1.3 A diverse and creative culture that celebrates our history  
**Activity:** 1.3.4 PROJECT: Develop the Uralla Old Court House as a community entertainment venue (subject to grant funding)

**SUMMARY:**

1. The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the progress of the Uralla Courthouse refurbishment project.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

**That Council note the Uralla Courthouse refurbishment project progress report.**

**REPORT:**

2. Council was awarded \$925,000 in funding for the refurbishment of the Uralla Courthouse from the Bushfire Local Economic Recovery Fund. Approved works under the deed of approval were roof repairs, painting, furnishings, asbestos removal, installation of flooring, solar power system, fencing, doors, and electrical infrastructure.
3. There are two key phases for the project:
  - a. Phase 1 – refurbishment
  - b. Phase 2 – fit-out and adaptive re-use within remaining budget subject to Council and funding partner approval.
4. The status of the sub-elements in each phase is as follows:

Phase	Item	Scheduled	Status
1A	Roof repairs, removal of built-in, access works, external painting and solar power system	April – June 2022	COMPLETED
1B	Electrical infrastructure	July–August 2022	IN PROGRESS

1C	Internal painting and doors	September – October 2022	PENDING
1D	Installation of flooring	November 2022	PENDING
1E	Furnishings	December 2022	TBC WITH COUNCIL PENDING USE
1F	Fencing	May - June 2023	PENDING POST WORKS
2A	Amenities / outdoor area /roofing	January – May 2023	TBC WITH COUNCIL PENDING USE

5. The next steps for this project will require further workshopping by Council and subsequent decisions on:
- The use of the Old Courthouse spaces once refurbished.
  - The fit-out and adaptive re-use within remaining budget subject to Council and funding partner approval.
6. Council has already undertaken a community engagement process on this potential uses of the Old Courthouse building. The results of the survey and associated submissions is at attachment 1. The outcomes of this engagement are summarised as follows:
- a. It should be used for community group reuse.
  - b. It should deliver a new service to the community.
  - c. It should have a mixed reuse as an event space.
  - d. It should be used for cultural and entertainment purposes.
7. Concept designs were provided to the Council and community in May 2022 - see attachment 2.
8. At the 12 July 2022 General Manager’s briefing, Councillors raised a number of questions regarding the nature of the works being undertaken at the Courthouse. The questions are addressed individually below.
9. *Why were solar panels installed on the Courthouse?* The solar power system was installed to minimise any ongoing operational costs and Council’s carbon footprint. This is consistent with:
- Council’s primary consultation principle for the project was that the Courthouse be self-supporting.
  - Council’s commitment for Uralla to strive to be a net zero emissions town.
  - Recent solar installations at Council facilities to minimise the cost to ratepayers of rising energy prices.

- The broader movement to renewable energy and lower emissions.

The previous Council was advised of the incorporation of the solar system into the project at a workshop on 10 August 2021, prior to the execution of the funding deed on 5 November 2021. Estimated annual energy savings from the installation of the solar panels and battery are estimated to \$2,300 - \$3,500 (approximate current electricity pricing) and the reduction in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions over the lifecycle of the system will be circa 330 tonnes. The system is also incorporated into the Community Centre broader electrical framework to maximise efficiency gains.

- 10.** *Why was Colourbond used for the roof sheeting instead of short-sheet galvanised iron?* Solar panels on galvanised roofs cause dissimilar metal corrosion. This is an electrochemical process that destroys metal, reducing its strength and thickness. Solar panel extrusions (the metal case the panels sit in) are usually made from aluminium. Sitting the aluminium panels on top of the galvanised metal creates a corrosive setting that is activated when it rains, facilitating the flow of electrons from one dissimilar metal to the other. Quite quickly corrosion commences and the galvanised roof will show signs of rust along the path of the waterflow. See image below:



A roof with no end-laps also eliminates the possibility of water being forced to sit between the sheets due to capillary action. Water trapped between end laps will reduce the life of the alloy coating, bringing forward the onset of corrosion and reducing the life of the roof. Modern corrugated roofing is roll formed with anti-capillary side laps which reduce the chance of water being trapped between sheets at side laps.

- 11.** *Why was a disabled access ramp installed at the building entrance?* Under the National Construction Code disabled access is required from the principle pedestrian entrance. Although this requirement was not triggered as no construction certificate was required for the project, it is considered appropriate that Council provides compliant access to community facilities that is equivalent to what is required of our local developers.

- 12.** *Are the colours used heritage appropriate?* For a Victorian era building an appropriate dominant colour is Lime Whjite (Traditional colour 37131) and appropriate secondary

colour is Biscuit (X42 standard), as per Council’s heritage colour palette. The dominant surfaces painting was recently completed while the project manager was on leave, and is not the required hue. This is being rectified by the contractor.

**CONCLUSION:**

- 13. Further workshop(s) and subsequently decision reports will be scheduled to enable Council decisions to finalise the project within the available grant funding.

**COUNCIL IMPLICATIONS**

**14. Community Engagement/Communication**

Council has undertaken consultation regarding the future use of the Courthouse (see attachment 1).

A project webpage is maintained to keep the community informed on the project:  
<https://www.uralla.nsw.gov.au/Council-Services/Major-Projects/Uralla-Court-House-Adaptive-Reuse>

**15. Policy and Regulation**

The works are permitted without consent under the provisions Clause 2.89 of State Environmental Planning Policy (Transport and Infrastructure) 2021.

**16. Financial/Long Term Financial Plan**

Undertaking renewal projects using grant funding impacts positively on the long term financial plan.

Item	Budget
Roof and exterior	\$500,000
Electrical infrastructure	\$100,000
Interior refurbishment (paint, floor coverings, amenities, kitchenette)	\$195,000
Project Management	\$50,000
Contingency	\$80,000
TOTAL:	\$925,000

Executive advice to a Notice of Motion at the March 2021 Council meeting noted that if the proposed work associated with the grant application is carried out (approximately \$697,000), it would likely impact the financial result of Council in the first year by \$595,000 (maintenance) plus additional annual depreciation of \$3,083. Given that the grant would be considered operational as to \$595,000, the overall impact upon the financial result before capital grants, in the first year, would be \$Nil.

**17. Asset management/Asset Management Strategy**

The Courthouse management plan will be amended to reflect the works undertaken.

**18. Workforce/Workforce Management Strategy**

Nil

**19. Legal and Risk Management**

Provision of access for people with disability assists in minimising litigation risk to Council.

Delivery in the required timeframe – *Medium risk unless scope of works is not finalised by 31 August.*

Not delivered within budget – *Low Risk.*

**20. Performance Measures**

The refurbishment is required to be complete by 30 June 2023.

A decision on the likely use and therefore fit out is needed to progress works.

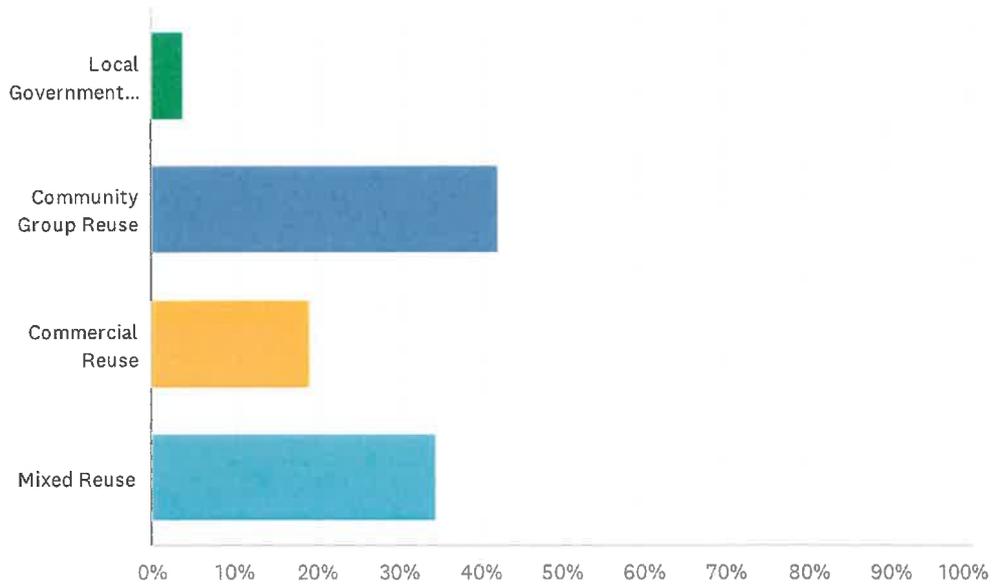
**21. Project Management**

Undertaken by Council staff.

# 15.2 #1 Attachment

## Q1 Which is your first choice for the potential reuse of the Uralla Old Court House?

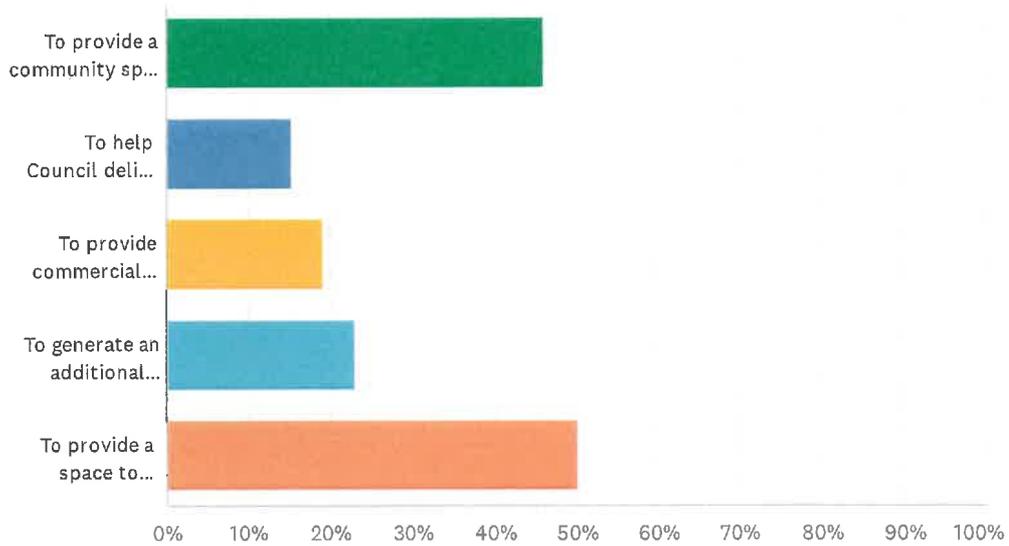
Answered: 52 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Local Government Reuse	3.85%	2
Community Group Reuse	42.31%	22
Commercial Reuse	19.23%	10
Mixed Reuse	34.62%	18
TOTAL		52

## Q2 What are the most important considerations for the adaptive reuse of the Uralla Old Court House? Please select up to two.

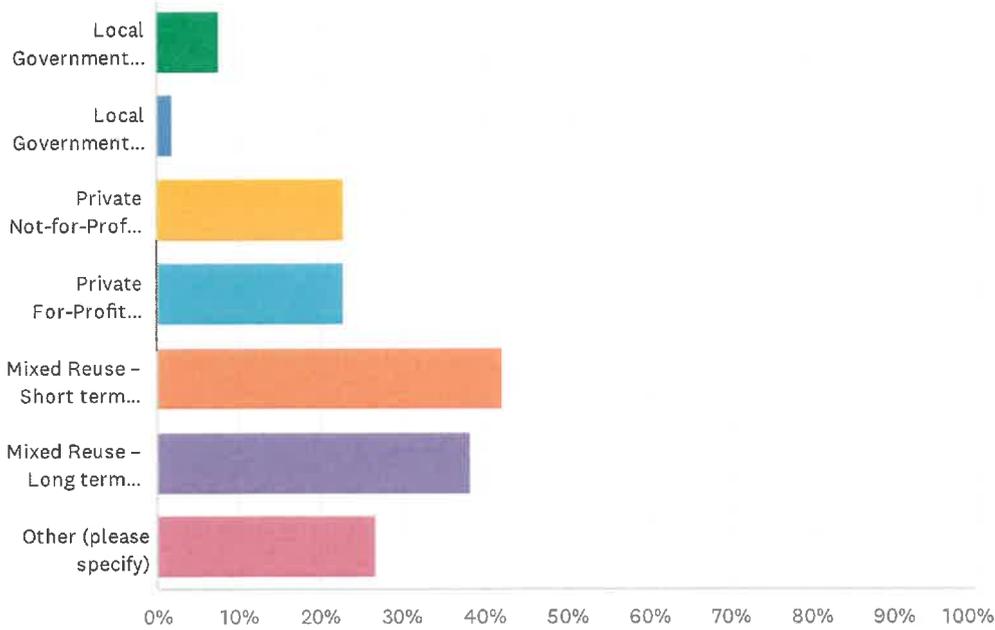
Answered: 52 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
To provide a community space for community/non-profit groups	46.15%	24
To help Council deliver a better and more efficient service to the community	15.38%	8
To provide commercial space for lease to for-profit ventures	19.23%	10
To generate an additional income stream to pass savings on to the ratepayer	23.08%	12
To provide a space to deliver a new service to the community	50.00%	26
Total Respondents: 52		

### Q3 What do you think the Uralla Old Court House should be re-purposed as? Please select all that apply.

Answered: 52 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Local Government Reuse – Council offices	7.69%	4
Local Government Reuse – Council Chambers	1.92%	1
Private Not-for-Profit Reuse – Long term hire/lease space	23.08%	12
Private For-Profit Reuse – Long term hire/lease space	23.08%	12
Mixed Reuse – Short term hire/event space	42.31%	22
Mixed Reuse – Long term hire/lease space	38.46%	20
Other (please specify)	26.92%	14
Total Respondents: 52		

#	OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY)	DATE
1	I thoroughly support Uralla Arts Council proposal for a community theatre.	10/24/2021 10:48 AM
2	Arts council application	10/23/2021 3:43 PM
3	Community arts reuse	10/20/2021 6:40 PM
4	Community Use	10/19/2021 12:33 PM
5	Theatre / Performance/ Entertainment venue	10/14/2021 7:46 PM
6	Community Performing Arts venue	10/12/2021 10:36 AM
7	theatre/performances for the community	10/10/2021 8:41 PM
8	Theatre	10/10/2021 6:46 PM
9	Use for theatre, the arts and community events, classes, workshops	10/6/2021 7:36 PM

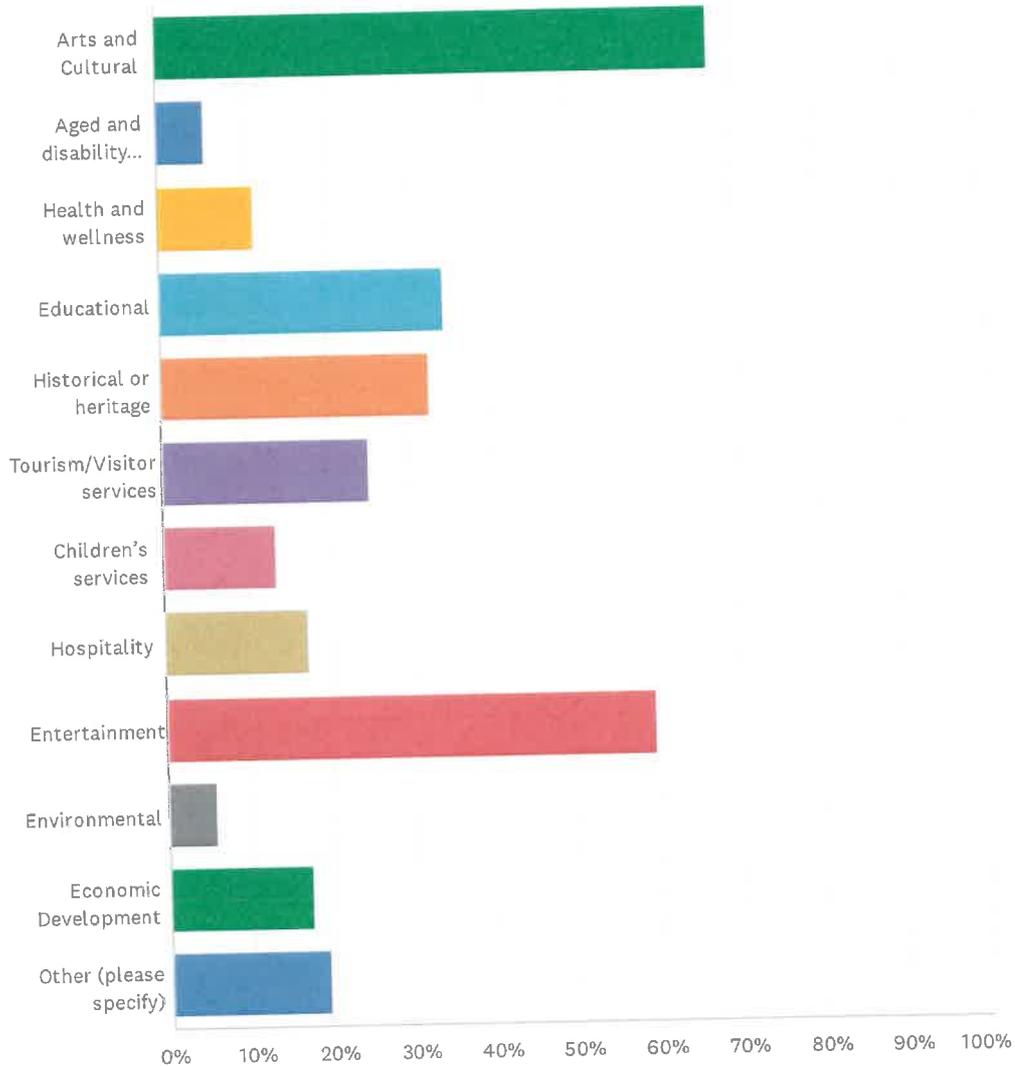
## Uralla Old Court House Adaptive Reuse Survey

SurveyMonkey

10	Live theatre/performance space - managed by the Uralla Arts Council.	10/6/2021 11:32 AM
11	Definitely not for Council use!	10/3/2021 4:17 PM
12	Ambulance station, or a cinema,	9/28/2021 11:18 AM
13	Mixed use/not for profit use/Minimal rental charges	9/27/2021 1:53 PM
14	a	9/27/2021 9:19 AM

### Q4 Do you have a preference for the type of service(s) provided at the Uralla Old Court House in the future? Please select all that apply.

Answered: 52 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Arts and Cultural	67.31%	35
Aged and disability services	5.77%	3
Health and wellness	11.54%	6
Educational	34.62%	18
Historical or heritage	32.69%	17
Tourism/Visitor services	25.00%	13
Children's services	13.46%	7
Hospitality	17.31%	9
Entertainment	59.62%	31
Environmental	5.77%	3
Economic Development	17.31%	9
Other (please specify)	19.23%	10
Total Respondents: 52		

#	OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY)	DATE
1	Services/activities running from the Court House could be multi-purposeful. Retaining and protecting the historic features/elements inherent in the building can be made to dovetail with the cultural/entertainment purpose and can contribute to the local council's revenue.	10/25/2021 6:54 PM
2	All of the above	10/20/2021 1:45 PM
3	none	10/11/2021 12:30 PM
4	Leased for commercial offices	10/11/2021 9:48 AM
5	theatre/performance space	10/10/2021 3:57 PM
6	Uralla has a long history of being home to many artists. The Uralla Arts Council has, for many years, been wanting to find a space for performance. I fully support the proposal by the Uralla Arts Council for the old courthouse to be repurposed as a live theatre venue, able to also be used for other arts events such as movies (e.g. the community run Star Cinema in Bendigo), curated arts exhibitions, and live music.	10/6/2021 11:32 AM
7	Used for community not musical or music as Armidale has plenty let's give something that all can use as cinema can be enjoyed by young and elderly ambulance station would benefit all Uralla also	9/28/2021 11:18 AM
8	Youth	9/27/2021 1:28 PM
9	a	9/27/2021 9:19 AM
10	Training facility for council staff	9/27/2021 12:36 AM

## Q5 Please provide any other comments or suggestions on the future use of the Uralla Old Court House.

Answered: 29 Skipped: 23

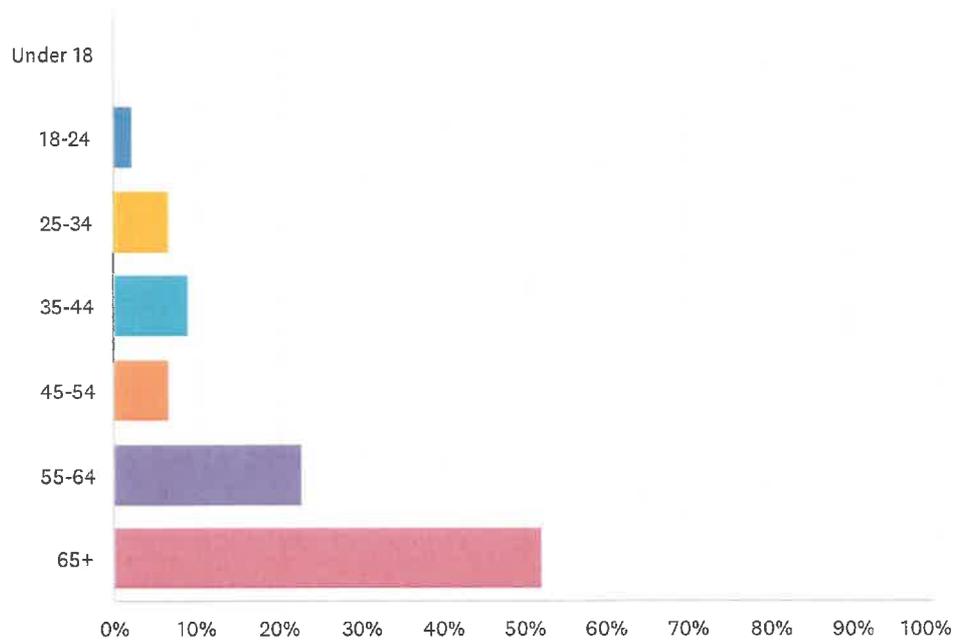
#	RESPONSES	DATE
1	This building is of significant historic significance which requires consideration in establishing future types of activities. As the building is an integral part of a string of historic government properties, serving the people of Uralla and surrounding areas (police station and lock ups, station master, post office services), it's presence and environment are poignantly focussed on the community. Retaining it's character, heritage and social servitude is best shown by the delivery of community services, such as events facilitated by Uralla Arts, other events involving Uralla's vibrant artist community, performing arts, theatre, music events etc.	10/25/2021 6:54 PM
2	Uralla needs a dedicated performance space. I recall when there was a lot of theatre performed in Uralla by The Uralla Players with Mrs O'Malley's Music Hall. There are currently many people living in Uralla with theatre & performance skills & expertise.	10/24/2021 10:48 AM
3	The Old Court House would make a fantastic venue for a Community Theatre including plays,music events etc	10/19/2021 12:33 PM
4	This building would make an ideal venue for performance/ entertainment and social setting for the Uralla community and beyond. Plans to this end have been viewed and appear to be an ideal purpose for this historic building.	10/14/2021 7:46 PM
5	A contribution based lease/hire alternative for the use of community not-for-profits - either in the 'care' of one to manage or a consortium of local nfps	10/14/2021 12:03 PM
6	Create a high quality COOKING SCHOOL with a noted person such as DONNA HAY that would attract pupils from International and Australian cities. It would train Chefs and restaurant staff, promote local produce, and create Uralla as a 'food centre' and train high quality staff and create employment opportunities.	10/13/2021 2:34 PM
7	As there are currently no dedicated performance spaces that can be hired out in the community, I strongly endorse the push for this beautiful building to be reused for this essential purpose.	10/12/2021 10:36 AM
8	No preference - just renovate in way which provides commercial diversity eg create a commercial kitchen; function/ event rooms; limited office space; toilets; lease which passes savings to ratepayer and leased to an entity which provides a service and does not just become private offices ; eg depending on space, functions such as reception hire; gallery use; exercise class for seniors, cafe/gallery etc. Perhaps 3-5 year leases?	10/11/2021 11:28 AM
9	A purposed venue for live theatre, music, entertainment etc. for locally produced and visiting events would enhance opportunities for locals and tourists alike	10/11/2021 9:49 AM
10	I do not agree that expenditure of almost \$ 1 million should be spent on a not for profit venture in such a small community as Uralla.	10/11/2021 9:48 AM
11	I have been involved in the Uralla Arts Council proposal for the provision of the Uralla Court House Theatre. Uralla has NO adequate Performing Arts space, which is why touring companies generally don't include Uralla on their itinerary. A Court House is in essence a theatre, with excellent acoustics in a big space, so a conversion to a modern theatrette is comparatively easy. There is NO need for a kitchen, as catering for events can be delivered by any of the local cafes/pubs/clubs....a fairly typical system, even in professional theatres. A bar is, of course, essential, as is adequate and attractive foyer space, but this can be operated by community not-for-profit organisations. The Court House Theatre will be a stunning multi-purpose facility for the community, as well as generating income for Council by way of user-pays hire fees. We could well build on the Thunderbolt legend by Uralla Arts' screenings of the two Thunderbolt movies, 1908 and 1953 on a regular basis. It may even be possible to stage a locally produced theatre production of "Thunderbolt... Life and Legend". It will also provide a classy modern interior, set in an imposing historic building, for Council VIP events, public meetings, conventions, and so forth. I will send Council a more detailed letter of support for our own Uralla Court House Theatre.	10/10/2021 10:33 AM
12	A theatre space for live music and theatre would be fabulous.	10/7/2021 2:53 PM

13	I DO NOT want the Old Court House to be divided up into government/council offices that would restrict the community from gaining entry. I feel that it needs to be opened up so that anyone in or outside the Uralla community can have ease off access and be able to appreciate the wonderful old building. Performances, Antique Fair, Art Shows and other cultural and educational would all suit.	10/6/2021 2:50 PM
14	I love the idea of the courthouse being used as an entertainment space	10/6/2021 12:20 PM
15	A home for the Arts in Uralla would be a wonderful addition to our creative town. It would be an another tourist attraction to draw art-loving tourists to our town. People, myself included, do travel and stay at places to experience theatre. With a dedicated performance space Uralla will be able to both host touring theatre and support the development of local theatre.	10/6/2021 11:32 AM
16	Hopefully the closed in front side verandah will be removed and court house facade restored to original appearance	10/3/2021 4:17 PM
17	Please refer to separate letter sent by Uralla Arts Council	10/3/2021 7:31 AM
18	If not for Council offices. I think it would be good to use as a theatre, movie theatre, performance space	10/1/2021 11:38 AM
19	An opportunity to drive revenue for council. Use the funding wisely.	9/28/2021 4:02 PM
20	It doesn't really matter which type of organisation uses the space as long as it is utilised and not sitting vacant.	9/28/2021 11:41 AM
21	Without knowing the layout and size of the building it is difficult to make recommendations	9/28/2021 7:47 AM
22	A theatre would be ideal either for performance or movies	9/27/2021 9:22 PM
23	Art theatre	9/27/2021 7:40 PM
24	Art gallery/space for dramatic productions	9/27/2021 1:53 PM
25	First nations people should be surveyed separately, as this project may need to "say sorry"	9/27/2021 1:28 PM
26	I like the idea of a performance venue and would prefer it was multi faceted and used for different purposes at different times. But I also think that we need something for youth. We have plenty for primary school kids (playgrounds), and for adults (cafes, pubs, craft & exercise groups), aged care groups (in the community centre). We need something for the 12 years and above to do. Perhaps a youth centre where they could participate in hanging out, playing video and computer games (don't cringe on this one, they can socialise and play games), a bit of youth theatre, maybe some indoor sport, or just a youth social club. It could be incorporated as part of a multi purpose performance venue	9/27/2021 11:48 AM
27	a	9/27/2021 9:19 AM
28	How good for Uralla to have their own cinema?	9/25/2021 10:20 PM
29	This is a unique opportunity but I worry about oversimplifying issues and building community expectations by running consultation by survey monkey without detailed papers to reference. I am also concerned that non compulsory contact details may enable people to put in multiple responses and thereby skew numbers. I am very conscious that the answers I have provided may not be commercially viable. However, I would like to say that I strongly oppose use of this building for council meeting and office space. With the population of Uralla in decline, at some point council staff number should be capped.	9/24/2021 2:08 PM

*Pages 9-10 include personal data that are marked as confidential as per submission requests  
not provided in this document*

### Q7 What is your age group? (optional)

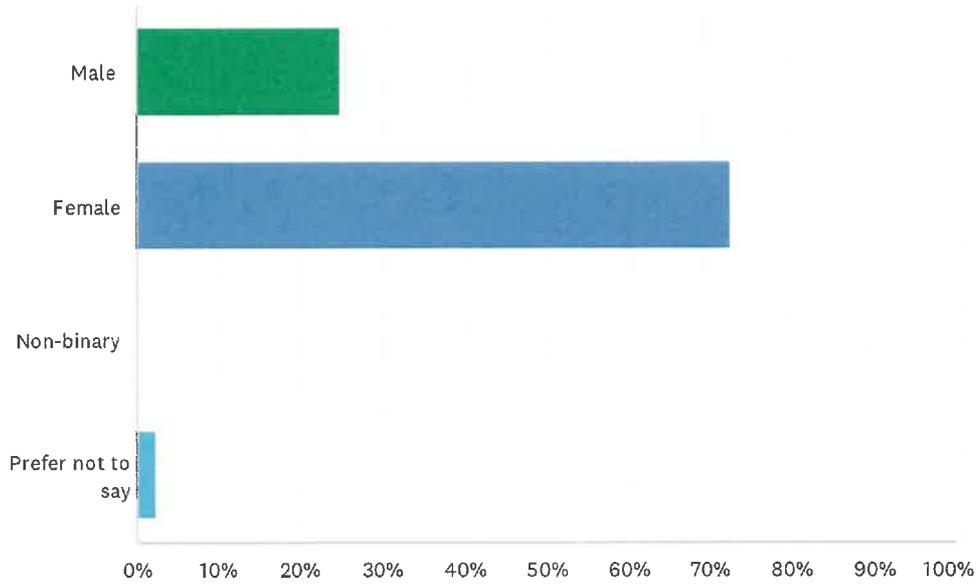
Answered: 44 Skipped: 8



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Under 18	0.00%	0
18-24	2.27%	1
25-34	6.82%	3
35-44	9.09%	4
45-54	6.82%	3
55-64	22.73%	10
65+	52.27%	23
TOTAL		44

### Q8 What gender do you identify as? (optional)

Answered: 44 Skipped: 8

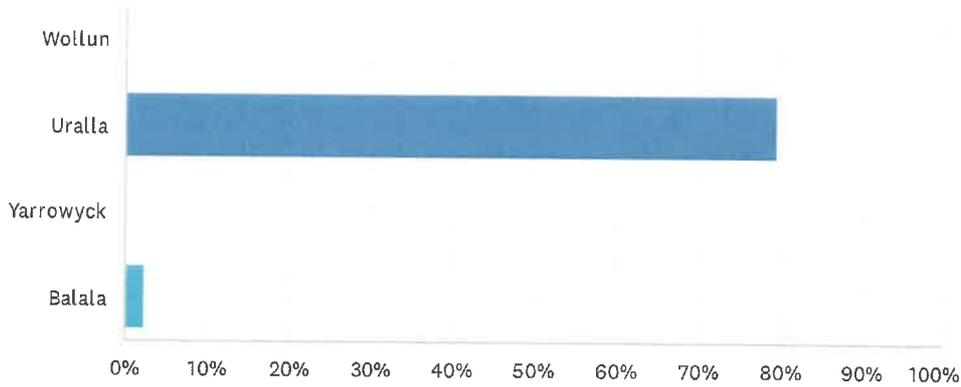


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Male	25.00%	11
Female	72.73%	32
Non-binary	0.00%	0
Prefer not to say	2.27%	1
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>44</b>

### Q9 In which Locality do you reside? (optional)

Answered: 44 Skipped: 8

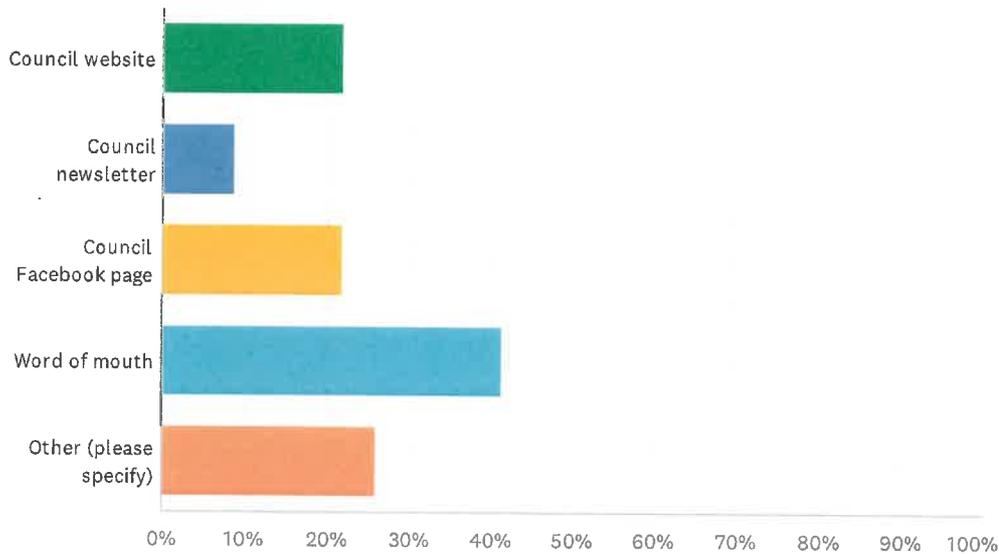




ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Abington	0.00% 0
Arding	0.00% 0
Bakers Creek	0.00% 0
Boorolong	0.00% 0
Briarbrook	0.00% 0
Bundarra	0.00% 0
Camerons Creek	0.00% 0
Dangarsleigh	0.00% 0
Dumaresq	0.00% 0
Gostwyck	2.27% 1
Invergowrie	4.55% 2
Kentucky	0.00% 0
Kentucky South	2.27% 1
Kingstown	0.00% 0
Mihi	0.00% 0
Rocky River	4.55% 2
Salisbury Plains	2.27% 1
Saumarez	0.00% 0
Saumarez Ponds	2.27% 1
Torryburn	0.00% 0
Wollun	0.00% 0
Uralla	79.55% 35
Yarrowyck	0.00% 0
Balala	2.27% 1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>44</b>

### Q10 How did you hear about this survey? (optional)

Answered: 46 Skipped: 6



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Council website	21.74%	10
Council newsletter	8.70%	4
Council Facebook page	21.74%	10
Word of mouth	41.30%	19
Other (please specify)	26.09%	12
Total Respondents: 46		

#	OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY)	DATE
1	Local Wordsworth edition.	10/25/2021 6:56 PM
2	Wordsworth	10/20/2021 6:40 PM
3	Uralla Arts & Uralla Historical Society	10/14/2021 12:04 PM
4	McCrossin's Mill President	10/13/2021 2:36 PM
5	email	10/11/2021 9:49 AM
6	Uralla Wordsworth	10/10/2021 3:58 PM
7	Adam Marshall's Newsletter	10/10/2021 10:35 AM
8	Community group	10/7/2021 2:54 PM
9	Uralla Arts group email	10/6/2021 7:37 PM
10	Uralla community facebook	9/27/2021 1:29 PM
11	Community Facebook page	9/27/2021 11:49 AM
12	Facebook	9/24/2021 5:23 PM

## **Matt Clarkson**

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**From:** Matt Clarkson  
**Sent:** Tuesday, 19 July 2022 1:09 PM  
**To:** Matt Clarkson  
**Subject:** FW: Uralla Court House

**Subject:** Uralla Court House

Ms Kate Jessep,  
General Manager,  
Uralla Shire Council.

Dear Kate

Re: Re-use of Uralla Court House

Thank you for inviting suggestions from the public about the future use of a restored Uralla Court House. I have completed the online survey, but I'm so passionate about this that I need to elaborate.

I wholeheartedly support the concept proposed by Uralla Arts Council that the building be converted to Uralla Court House Theatre.

Wow, what an asset for the whole community!

Uralla has no designated Live Performance/Cinema Space.

Here is our golden opportunity!

The funding is earmarked for "restoration" of the building, but that doesn't necessarily exclude "refurbishment" as well.

It would be wise to approach Adam Marshall to secure whatever further funding might be needed to bring this unique and exciting proposal to fruition.

The court house in western societies is, in essence, a Theatre, the judge and barristers (as leading players) in their costumes of wigs and collars and robes, strict protocols for procedure ( the script ), and an attentive audience ( public gallery) not allowed to interrupt, to boo, or to applaud while the drama is playing out.

The acoustics in these buildings is always excellent, to lend authority to the voices of the players, just as it does in cathedrals and concert halls and parliaments.

The sketches provided by Uralla Arts show imaginative new uses for the other rooms, i e, providing foyers, a bar, and courtyards, all now considered a significant part of the theatre/cinema experience.

I imagine there could be issues with the Burra Charter when it comes to removing the cedar Judge's bench, jury box, etc, and putting openings in interior walls. But the Charter does allow modifications to heritage buildings/places if it remains possible for the original fabric to be re-instated. Therefore it shouldn't really be an issue with this project. Simply store the redundant fixtures, forever most likely.....or at least until the heritage authorities change their minds.

So the installation of comfortable, modern, audience raked seating should be possible ( and is definitely most desirable), once all the extraneous stuff is removed to storage. The small stage is probably adequate for Uralla's needs.

The provision of a lighting grid and bio box is essential, as is equipment to project movies onto the wall; therefore no retractable screen is required.

It's great to see a space has been provided as a performers' dressing room, with access to the stage directly across the corridor.

This room might also serve as the headquarters of Uralla Arts, providing them with a "home" for committee meetings, and a sense of permanency and being valued.

The use of the outside areas fronting Maitland and Hill Sts as courtyards is imaginative, and a modern pitched roof above the toilet courtyards will creatively provide more spaces for audiences to relax with a drink....in the milder months. The inside foyer spaces will be abuzz in the winter!

Personally I was pleased to see that a kitchen was not deemed necessary, a considerable saving in the costs of refurbishment. We have excellent caterers in Uralla who can be contracted to deliver appetisers/canapes/ finger food to the Theatre. A kitchen in a confined space such as this will "stink the place out", and is neither appropriate nor necessary.

The design of the Bar will allow for this system of food catering.

The Uralla Court House Theatre will be at the centre of town, an easy walk for most, and away from the highway noise.

The new facility will appeal to touring theatre companies. Currently most don't consider Uralla when composing their itineraries because Uralla simply doesn't have an appropriate performance space.

A theatre in town will bring fresh vibrancy to our community, novel experiences, new excitement...and a whole new world for children.

The same may be said of the space being used as a Cinema.

What's more, and very significant, is that it will provide Council with an income stream from venue hire.

Often the suggestion is made that Uralla should be "milking" our good fortune in owning Thunderbolt. Imagine the drawcard of the screening of the two Thunderbolt movies..the 1908 silent version ( Australia's oldest surviving movie!), and the 1953 interpretation!

The script of the melodrama "Thunderbolt" is still in Uralla. Presented at Uralla's own "Mrs O'Malley's Magnificent Music Hall" in the 1980s, it attracted thousands of audience members to Uralla. I know the script for that play still exists, because I wrote and directed it.

It's tucked away in my bookshelf,... but quite restless!

That playscript could be customised for a local company of players to perform in a stylised way at The Court House Theatre. Some of the cast and crew from those early memorable productions are still in town, so we may well be able to enlist their expertise.

Visitors would come from far and wide to Uralla for a weekend to see a live performance of "Thunderbolt The Bushranger" at The Uralla Court House Theatre.

I can see it now. If you close your eyes for a moment, and imagine, then maybe you'll see it too. Go on....

I urge you to adopt Uralla Arts' excellent proposal.

With best wishes,

Sincerely,

Kent Mayo

## URALLA COURT HOUSE REFURBISHMENT

Dear Anthony

Just so you know why I have the temerity to be offering suggestions about your project . . .

Since deciding to settle in Uralla in 1973, attracted by its unappreciated heritage buildings, “preserved by neglect”, I have been the unofficial “Guardian” of Uralla’s built and artefactual heritage. There have been some memorable, and a few forgettable, dramas along the way, I can tell you!

I’ve been actively involved in the restoration of all three buildings in the McCrossin’s Precinct; the 1872 Flour Mill, the 1878 Stables/Store, and the 1881 Chaff Shed. All three, derelict in 1979, have been superbly restored and now have new lives.

In 2021, the entire McCrossin’s Precinct was listed on the NSW Heritage Register.

Since 1980, I have been responsible for the installation of quality permanent museum exhibitions at McCrossin’s Mill Museum.

In 2000, I mapped out Uralla’s Heritage Walk, and produced the design and text for the very popular accompanying booklet, “Find Charm in Uralla”, published by Uralla Council.

So, Anthony, I’ve been around a bit, endured “the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune”, and acquired a storehouse of, for what it’s worth, **local knowledge**. In the words of Macron: “I don’t think, I know!” or as he would say it: “Je ne pense pas, je sais!”

To add to my previous suggestions:

1. Good to see you intend to remove **the now redundant pews and benches**. The Burra Charter recommends “no”, but you’ve seen the way around that obviously. Those elegant pieces can be stored in the stables at the rear.
2. **Kitchen** is not necessary, nor desirable. A bain-marie or the square-prism variety can be part of the . . .
3. **Bar**. Forget re-using the old cedar counter. Store that away. Rather, design a modern functional bar that, as per the Uralla Arts Council sketch plan, can serve into the foyer and, via the existing French doors, out into the courtyard. Easy. Practical.
4. **Toilets**. I see a strange irony in demolishing the existing brick structures, then displaying a photograph of “what used to be there before we demolished” in the Court House. Why not convert the “northern” toilet to a uni-sex one, accessed from “The Green Room”, then the other two in the patrons’ “new” courtyard, to one female, the other male, then add a new “accessible” facility between them? .

You have to accept that one does not attend an event specifically to use the toilet. In fact, having to go to the loo is merely an inconvenience ( pardon the pun), but not when the toilets are only metres away, and undercover of . . .

5. **The Courtyard Roof.** A pitched roof, although offering a feeling of spaciousness poses too many problems. So, what's wrong with a **dramatic contrast** to the lofty ceilings inside the building? The Burra Charter certainly approves of something that's obviously not part of, or even replicating, the original fabric. Therefore, **your other idea of a skillion roof is the better option.** You can still include sections of transparent roofing material for a view of the stars or the sunshine, and patrons will enjoy the intimacy of the lower roof, extending over the whole area. With brightly coloured steel rafters, especially if they have that curved section over the existing toilet roofs, you'll create a really stunning space and, what's more, a talking point for patrons enjoying a wine or on their way to the loos! Those steel rafters can be fabricated in Uralla by "Uralla Metal", another plus.
6. The alfresco areas facing Hill Street and Maitland Street are quite extensive. Those scrubby-looking shrubs were planted after the big elm tree was removed. They can go, as can that "olde worlde" 1970s lamp post, installed with the best of intentions, no doubt! A modern lamp post might replace it, or perhaps one like the "new" lights in the main street, installed during the Creative Village Project 1995-2005. I know where there's a spare one of those. . . someone thought it'd be a good idea to plonk one near the Memorial Gates at Alma Park, where it isn't a good idea at all. Originally, there were pine trees outside the Court House, but that's not appropriate. Maybe just one shade tree right on the corner might do the trick, to balance the Golden Elm already there, a Golden or Claret Ash, perhaps?.
7. The little verandah originally had decorative cast iron brackets atop the posts. The original patterns for these are probably still at The Old Foundry, so they can be recast.
8. **Fencing.** I hope the budget allows for a picket fence, as listed in the proposed works at the very beginning. And a reminder that I have the original 1885 gate posts, to provide the builder with the correct profile.
9. **Performing Arts Space.** Many of us in the community realise that this would be the most desirable use of the Court House. However, the current funding probably could not cover the costs of a theatre fit-out. But what you've presented doesn't preclude that as a next step. Yet, your preliminary plans will allow the place to be used for some sort of community activity . . . film nights, yoga classes, touring musicians, lectures, drama classes, choir practice, pilates, you name it . . .

With very best wishes,  
and high hopes for a great new Court House.

Kent Mayo

## URALLA COURT HOUSE RESTORATION

It is crucial that Council **engage the services of its Heritage Advisor**, Mitch Mackay, before any work begins. Mr Mackay has provided Council with a report on the Court House some years ago, and **his knowledge is invaluable**.

The **Burra Charter** sets strict guidelines for treatment of heritage sites and buildings, such as our 1885 Court House, which Council is obliged to heed.

The relevant Articles of the Burra Charter are provided here:

### BURRA CHARTER

Article 4: Conservation should make sure of **all the knowledge, skills and disciplines** which can contribute to the study and care of the place.

Article 10: Contents and fixtures which contribute to **the cultural significance of that place** should be retained at that place. Their removal is unacceptable except ... etc. **for cultural reasons**.

Article 21: Adaptation is only acceptable when there is minimal impact on the **cultural significance**.

Article 22:

- 1) New work may be acceptable when it respects and **does not distort or obscure the actual significance, or detract ...**
- 2) New work should be **readily identifiable**.

Article 30: **Competent direction and supervision** should be maintained at all stages, and any changes should be implemented **by people with appropriate knowledge and skills**.

Of course there is leeway to interpret these “rules” to a minor degree, but the Articles must **not** be ignored by Council Officers.

Uralla Arts Council presented a quite detailed concept for the conversion of the Court House to a one hundred seat theatre/cinema ... “a performance space” in current jargon.

I’ve heard Council is keen to use the place as “public space” which is a step in the right direction.

However Uralla has a plethora of public meeting spaces ... the Community Centre close by, the RSL Memorial Hall, the Bowling Club, Golf Club, McCrossin’s Mill, and Council Chambers.

In the recent past, all of these venues have been adequate for public meetings of one sort or another.

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What Uralla lacks is a defined **Performing Arts Space**, which is really disadvantageous to a community which now has a worthy reputation as “a **cultural tourism magnet**”.

Similarly small towns such as Bingara and Barraba have excellent theatre facilities attracting high quality touring performers and theatre productions, enhancing **the quality of life** for their communities.

And Uralla? The Central School Hall, McCrossin's Mill, and the Bowling Club. Surely we can do better than that?!

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Interestingly, the preliminary "plans" on Council's website suggest that Council has, so far, modelled its projections on the submission by Uralla Arts Council, with provision for a "hall", "green room", "foyer" and "bar", etc.

This is most encouraging, but it can do with some more imaginative consideration and development.

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### FEASIBILITY OF AN INTIMATE THEATRE

Given that the idea of a 100 seater might be overly-optimistic, let's aim for a 60 seater, which is about the maximum audience figure for any show in Uralla, at any venue. Performers can offer a matinee and an evening performance, an arrangement that'll suit the old folks and families.

Given that the standard space required per seated patron is .55 of a square metre, an architect's CAD should easily configure that in the Courthouse room, allowing for a flat-floor or 400mm high stage, and raked audience seating.

The stage would have to be where it is indicated in the sketch plan, but with the chimney removed, to allow for performers' entry from and exit to the hallway. The air-con can be installed elsewhere.

With that configuration it would be rather like a "thrust stage", or if you like, "theatre in the round", only with three sides, rather appealing in that intimate space.

PERHAPS ...

With the judge's Bench removed, the stage could be set against the "northern" wall, with access and egress for performers by one door only. Rather awkward.

It would however allow a more traditional block of seating.

**New theatre seats** can be funded by "**sponsorship**", as at the TAS Theatre and the newly refurbished "Armidale Play House", the name of the sponsoring family/individual attached to each seat.

Even at a per each cost of, say, \$500, the provision of classy new seating shouldn't be a problem.

With either space configuration the **Bio-Box** could be set up on the "roof" over the main entrance doors. There's a bench seat up there now, purpose unknown!

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SMALL STAGE FOR "THEATRE IN THE ROUND".

Will not attract touring performers. Musician/bands will say "no thank you", only less politely.

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## **JUDGE'S BENCH, JURY BOX, PUBLIC GALLERY BALUSTRADE.**

These lovely cedar pieces can be removed and stored in the "stables" at rear? Technically, by Burra Charter rules, no. But we can justify it by citing "for cultural reasons" i.e. we can't encourage Performing Arts culture with those now redundant pieces in the way.

## **FOYERS**

Uralla Arts Council's sketch plan shows an opening in an interior wall to allow patrons one bigger foyer space.

The Burra Charter allows for this sort of modification, **because it can be reversed** ... i.e. bricked back up should the need arise, which obviously isn't likely. But they're the rules!

I have the stunning collections of cast portrait/caricatures done by local artist Fay Porter for Uralla's "Mrs O'Malley's Magnificent Music Hall" (1976-1988).

A selection of these would provide a really evocative touch to the décor of the foyer/s.

## **BAR**

The sketch shows the Bar inside a pair of existing French doors opening out onto the courtyards, the bigger space make possible by putting an opening in the dividing wall. This would not be an issue as it is outside the Court House building proper.

This bar could be the original cedar counter already in the "office" room, simply repositioned. That'd be a talking point!

The small bar outside the doors can be of modern design, allowing bar staff to serve indoors and out into the courtyards from the one serving point. Easy.

## **KITCHEN**

Not necessary for events at the Court House Theatre, when all that would be served are canapes, etc. Maybe a bain-marie would be needed, maybe not. The food could be available at the bar, ideally, as there'll be no kegs clogging up the space, but there will be a fridge.

Some patrons at the New England Art Museum and indeed the Art Gallery of NSW have complained about the nauseating smells of exotic hot food in those places.

At least Sydney's MCA had the sense to put all that stuff up on the roof!

## **COURT HOUSE TOILETS**

Ideally the existing brick toilets should be retained, adapted for uni-sex use. A new wheelchair accessible facility will have to be installed, a modern design quite appropriate in that courtyard space.

## **COURT YARD DOORWAYS**

Ideally filled in with a glass panel, but probably one will be needed for an emergency exit.

## **COURT YARD ROOF**

The 3-D image on Council's website offer a pitched roof, aligned with the original roofs.

This is probably not the best solution, the new imitating the old.

Far better in practical terms would be a corrugated iron skillion roof over the whole court yard/s, the problem then being that there is not much fall from the height of the Court House Offices' roof guttering to the top of the existing toilets and brick wall.

However the architect can be daringly creative here, with the skillion covering to half way, say, then a flat-steel "dish drain" style gutter draining to a rainwater tank outside at the rear, then a dramatic curved roof over the toilet roofs to fasten onto the brick boundary wall.

How spectacular, especially lit from inside, and what a talking point for patrons ... the contrast between "the new" and 1885 structure!!

It's a shame I can't sketch it for you in this documents!

### VERANDAHS

The Court House "portico" and the newly exposed original verandah outside the original office will simply need a bench seat or two and some classy, modern bar furniture to provide a delightful space for a pre-show, interval, and after show drink and chat.

### AL FRESCO

The site is blessed by the extensive grassed areas at the Hill Street frontage and the Maitland Street side.

The elm tree, although splendid, may have to be removed. There was another one of those until about thirty years ago. The roots of that one had invaded the huge granite footings of that "western" wall, creating a crack all the way up the brick wall.

Maybe more appropriate shade trees closer to the boundary will compensate for the loss of the elm.

### FENCE

It's good that the original picket fence is to be replicated. That will be an expensive exercise, because Bunnings pickets may look really shonky at this prime heritage site. Anyway, the pickets should replicate the originals, visible on the photograph on Council's website, thanks to Mitch Mackay.

I have the **original gate-posts** from the carriage way, so whoever builds the replica fence can at least inspect these to get the proper profiles.

### COLOUR SCHEMES

It's most important to get these right, interior and exterior and this is where the advice of the Heritage Advisor is essential.

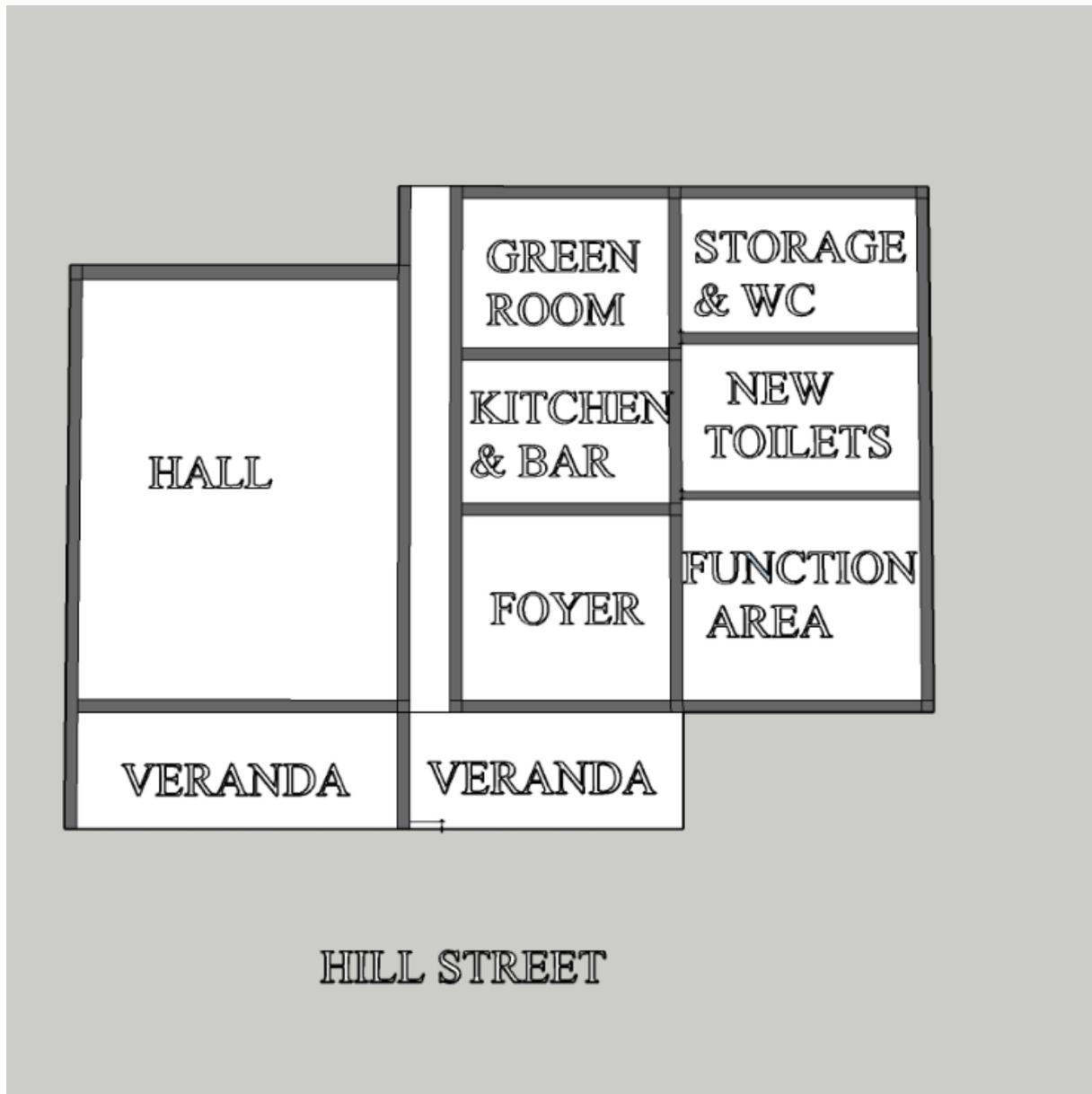
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Kent Mayo. UTEC, Uralla Historical Society, with the support of

Bob Anderson. Uralla Arts Council, UTEC.

April 14, 2022





## URALLA COURTHOUSE REFURBISHMENT

ARCHITECTURAL ADVICE FOR URALLA COUNCIL

ADG ARCHITECTS

3<sup>RD</sup> MAY 2022

### Introduction

Uralla Council have requested ADG Architects to provide advice on the proposed works to the courtyard and Main Courtroom.

1. Which of the provided mock-ups is most sympathetic to the building and it's adaptive reuse,



### Option 1

A Pitched roof indicated in the image would be sympathetic to the existing roof form.

There is an opportunity to construct half of the roof with a transparent material that is over the gathering space to not only keep the form of the new roof etc but allow natural light into that space.

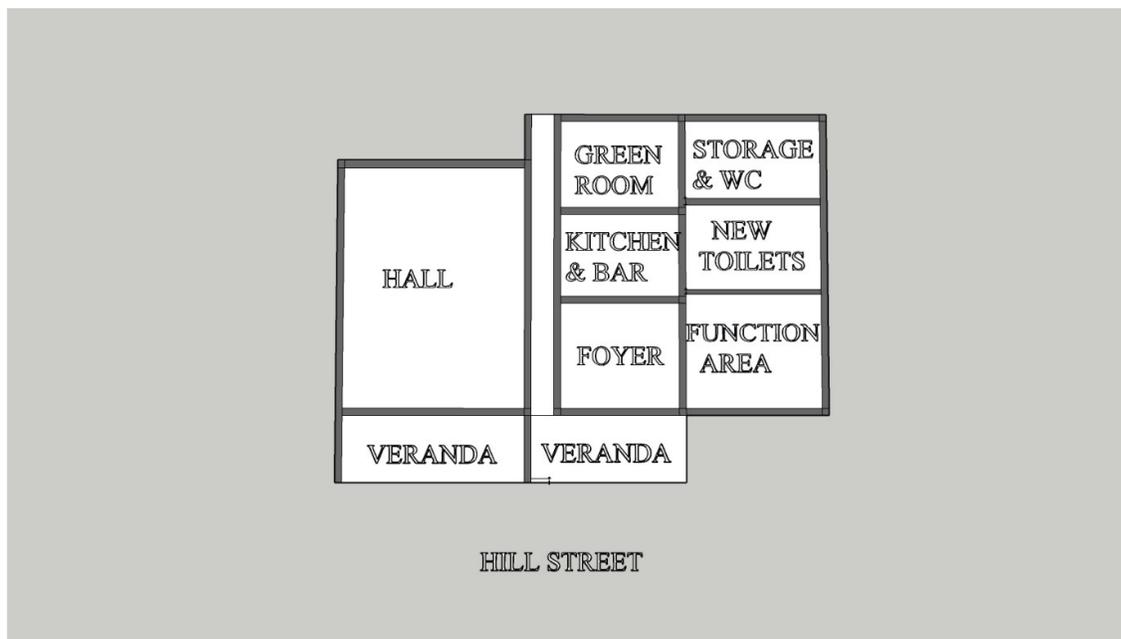


**Option 2**

The above skillion low roof would be the cheapest option and will cause the least issues in regards to rain water removal/drainage and guttering etc.

A prominent building needs a prominent response. The walled outdoor space would have a better internal feel with a higher roof as per the image provided attached. With this option there is an opportunity for natural light/ high ceilings/ period correct detailing and would be spatially sympathetic to the high ceilings and public nature of the existing courthouse

- 2. *Whether or not removing the two southern toilets and replacing the middle one with new universal access toilets would have a substantial impact on the significance of the building.*



Removing the two southern toilets and replacing the middle one with new universal access toilets would have minimal impact on the significance of the building and current accessible WC requirements would require the existing WC to be removed and replaced.

Is there a possibility of keeping some structure of the existing toilet so as to be sympathetic to its significance and its original use, repurposed to storage/seating/BBQ etc or function that is useful and forming part of the courtyard space.

A good photographic record of the courtyard area and its outbuildings before removal would be then displayed in the courthouse

3. *Whether or not roofing the outdoor area for adaptive reuse would have a substantial impact on the significance of the building.*

This would not have a substantial impact on the significance of the building. See comments above

4. *the removal of the non-period correct courtroom fixings*

Removing the non-period correct courtroom fixings to enable the room to be used for community use, will have minimal impact on the heritage value of the courthouse/court room.

The room size is approximately 80sqm therefore retention of the pews and benches etc. would dramatically restrict any future use.

It will enhance the space by allowing visitors to use the court room and view historic photographic records on the walls. It will importantly represent the requirements of the grant given to refurbish for community use.

Anthony Kelly B.Arch RAlA

Principal Architect Reg:6999

[anthony@adgarchitects.com.au](mailto:anthony@adgarchitects.com.au)



ph | Gosford, NSW - 02 43 125 110 fax | 02 43 123 113

Riverside Park Office Tower

Suite 1.4 69 Central Coast Highway West Gosford, 2250, PO Box 457, Gosford NSW

[www.adgarchitects.com.au](http://www.adgarchitects.com.au)