DESIGN 5

A R C H I T E C T S

Yvette Carr
Ethos Urban
Director – Planning

ycarr@ethosurban.com

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Dear Yvette

REDFERN TELEPHONE EXCHANGE
103 – 109 GEORGE STREET, REDFERN

MODIFICATION OF HERITAGE LISTING – ITEM NO. I1318

Further to our recent correspondence, we write to provide formal heritage advice with regard to the current local heritage listing for 103-109 George Street, Redfern (subject property). We recommend that the subject property be removed from the heritage listing on the Local Environmental Plan.

As you are aware, the property at 103–109 George Street (subject site) is listed on Schedule 5, Part 1 of the City of Sydney Local Environmental Plan 2012 as follows:

- **Redfern Telephone Exchange, including interior, 103–109 George Street, Redfern. Lot 2 DP 776807. Item no. I1318**

As per the above, the relevant listing (I1318) applies to Lot 2 DP 776807, which was the former reference for Lots 201 (103-109 George Street, Redfern) and 202 (117A Redfern Street, Redfern) before the site was subdivided in 2013 (D/2012/1946).

Design 5 Architects inspected the subject property and the neighbouring site at 117A Redfern Street on 11 November 2024.

It is my assessment as a suitably qualified heritage architect that the modification of the LEP heritage listing I1318 to exclude the property at 103-109 George Street, Redfern (Lot 202) can be supported.

We refer to the following brief report setting out reasons and evidence to modify the listing.

Please do not hesitate to contact me should you require additional information.

Yours sincerely,

Robert Gasparini
for DESIGN 5 - Architects Pty Ltd

REDFERN TELEPHONE EXCHANGE
103 – 109 GEORGE STREET, REDFERN

HERITAGE REVIEW

1. THE SITE

The subject site includes Lot 201 (103-109 George Street, Redfern) and Lot 202 (117A Redfern Street, Redfern), to which the LEP heritage listing (I1318) applies. The location of these properties is shown on the aerials below:

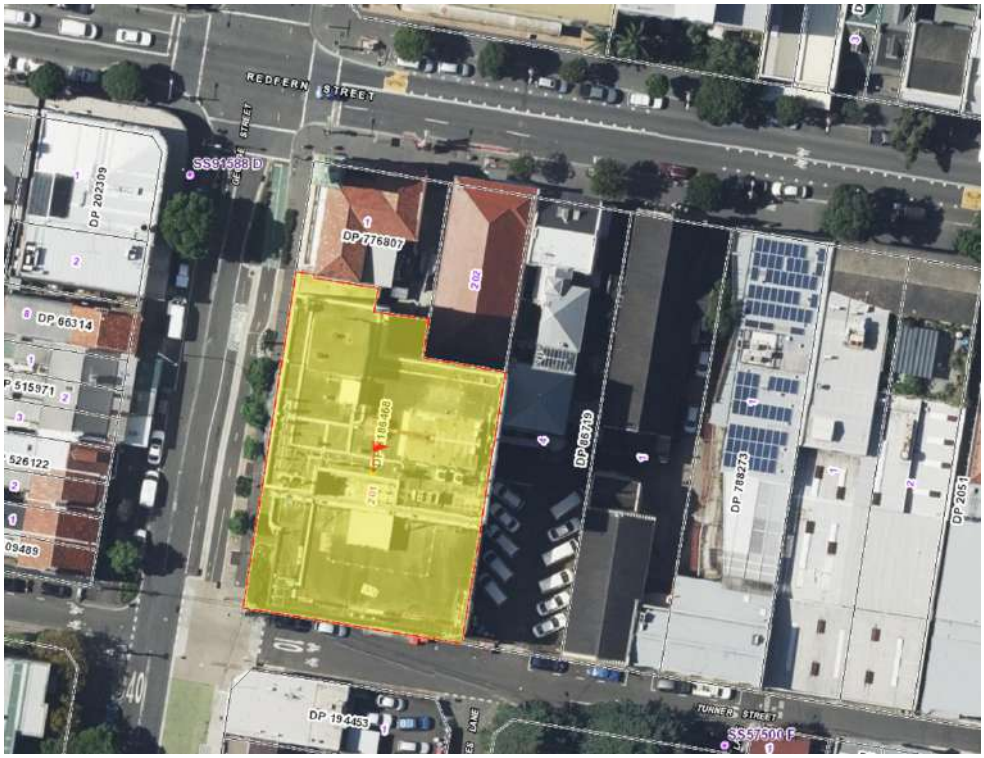

Figure 1: Location of Lot 201, 103-109 George Street, Redfern. *(Source: Six Maps)*

Figure 2: Location of Lot 202 117A Redfern Street, Redfern. *(Source: Six Maps)*

Lot 201 comprises an area of 1260m2 with frontages to George Street and Turner Street. It contains two telephone exchange buildings – a seven-storey brick and concrete building facing George Street, constructed in 1957, and a three-storey brick and concrete building on the corner of George and Turner Streets, built in c1974. Both buildings are currently still in operation for telecommunication uses. These buildings have no known heritage significance.

Lot 202 comprises an area of 277m2 with a frontage to Redfern Street. It contains the original two-storey brick telephone exchange building built in 1913 which stands alone. The building was decommissioned with the opening of the third exchange building in 1974. This building does have heritage significance.

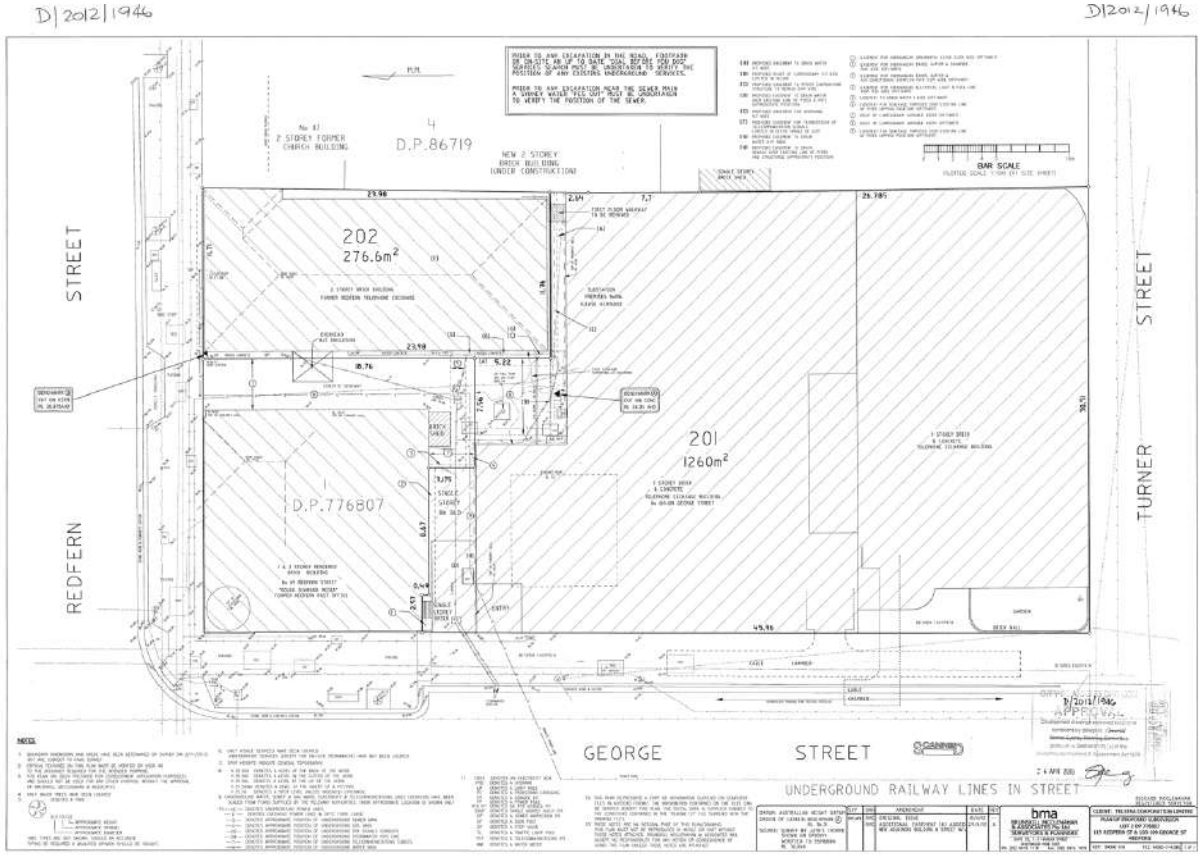

Figure 3: Survey included in the 2013 DA to subdivide the subject site into two lots. (Source: City of Sydney DA Tracker)

Figure 4: Photo taken from the corner of George and Turner Street showing the 1957 telephone exchange building on the left and the 1974 building on the right.

Figure 5: Photo taken from Turner Street showing the 1974 telephone exchange building and the neighbouring St Vincents church building to the right rear.

Figure 6: Photo taken from Redfern Street showing the original 1913 telephone exchange building in the centre, the neighbouring St Vincents Church building to the left and the Redfern Post Office building on the right.

Figure 7: Photo taken from the corner of Redfern and George Street showing the Redfern Post Office building in the centre, the original 1913 telephone exchange building on the left and the 1957 telephone exchange building on the right.

2. HERITAGE LISTING

The subject site is a listed item of local significance in the City of Sydney LEP heritage register – I1318. The listing applies to Lot 2 DP 776807 – the former reference for Lots 201 (103-109 George Street, Redfern) and 202 (117A Redfern Street, Redfern) before the site was subdivided in 2013 (D/2012/1946).

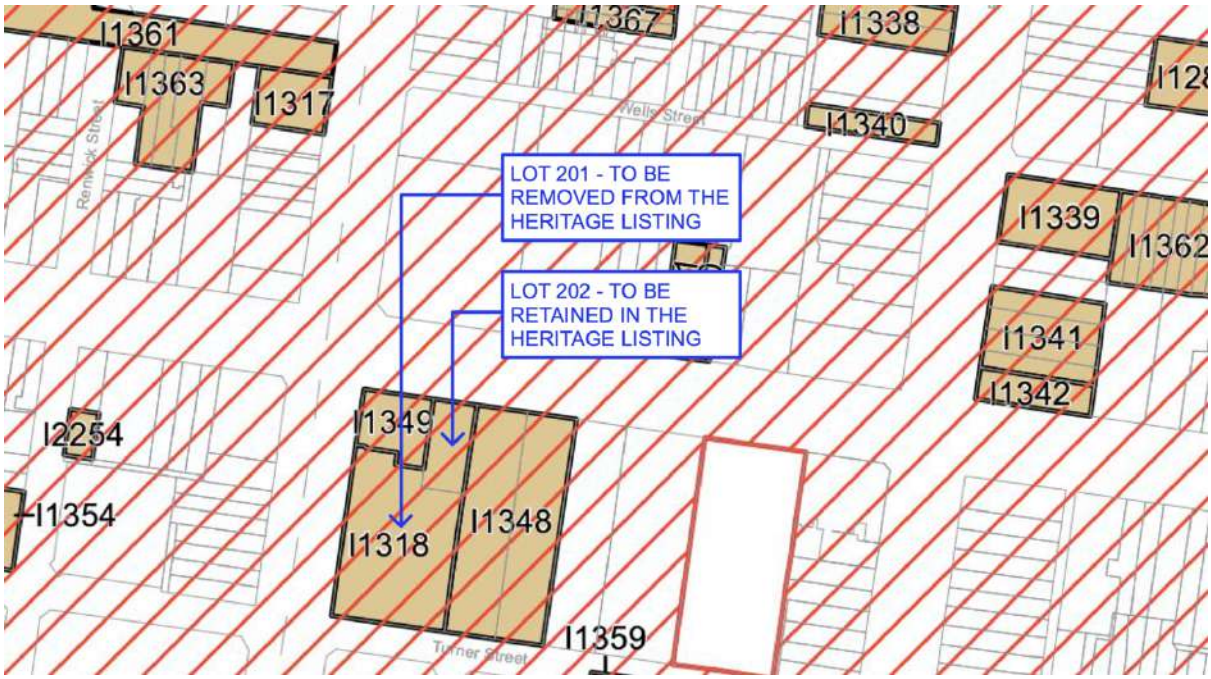

Figure 8: Extract of the City of Sydney LEP (2012) showing the area the heritage listing covers.

The cultural significance of the site has been assessed in the heritage register as follows:

> ***Statement of Significance***
>
> *The former Redfern Telephone Exchange building is significant for its historic association with telecommunications as well as its individual aesthetic qualities and contribution to an important civic group. Completed in 1913, it was one of the earliest of eight main exchanges in Sydney and was the centre of communications for the local community for over sixty years. It continued the exchange services initially provided by the Redfern Post Office. It provides an insight into the development of telecommunications throughout NSW. It also provides an insight into the development of Redfern and the Sydney area and evokes a sense of place for the community. The former Redfern Telephone Exchange is a fine example of public architecture designed in the Italianate architectural style during the late Federation period to complement and visually link to the adjacent Post Office. It is a prominent building in an important civic group which includes the Redfern Post Office (identified as having State*

heritage significance), the adjacent St Vincent de Paul Catholic Church group and the Court House. It is representative of the work by the NSW Government Architect, Walter Liberty Vernon.

The historical narrative of the telephone exchange in Redfern begins with the Redfern Post Office, constructed in 1883, which was modified to include a new telephone exchange room in 1904. The small exchange room was supplanted by the opening of a dedicated Redfern Telephone Exchange building adjacent to the Post Office in 1913 to meet growing demands. The subsequent construction of the 1957 telephone exchange building on the same site was to supplement operations within the original building, which had reached capacity. The original 1913 building was decommissioned in 1974 following the opening of the third telephone exchange building.

The subject site was formerly part of a larger site that comprised of the Redfern Post Office and the three telephone exchange buildings. In 1988 the site was subdivided into two lots – one containing the post office and the other the three telephone exchange buildings. Redfern Post Office is an item of State Heritage significance – I1349. The subject site was further subdivided in 2013 into two lots – one containing the original 1913 telephone exchange building and the other containing the later two exchange buildings. The site was gazetted on the heritage register in 2012, prior to the subdivision.

The subject site was granted statutory heritage protection for the historical and aesthetic significance of the original 1913 building and its rarity as an early purpose-built telecommunication facility. There is no known heritage significance of the later 1957 and 1974 exchange buildings. Furthermore, the two later buildings comprising Lot 201 are deemed to be 'detracting' as assessed in the City of Sydney DCP 2012 Buildings Contributions Map (Sheet 016).

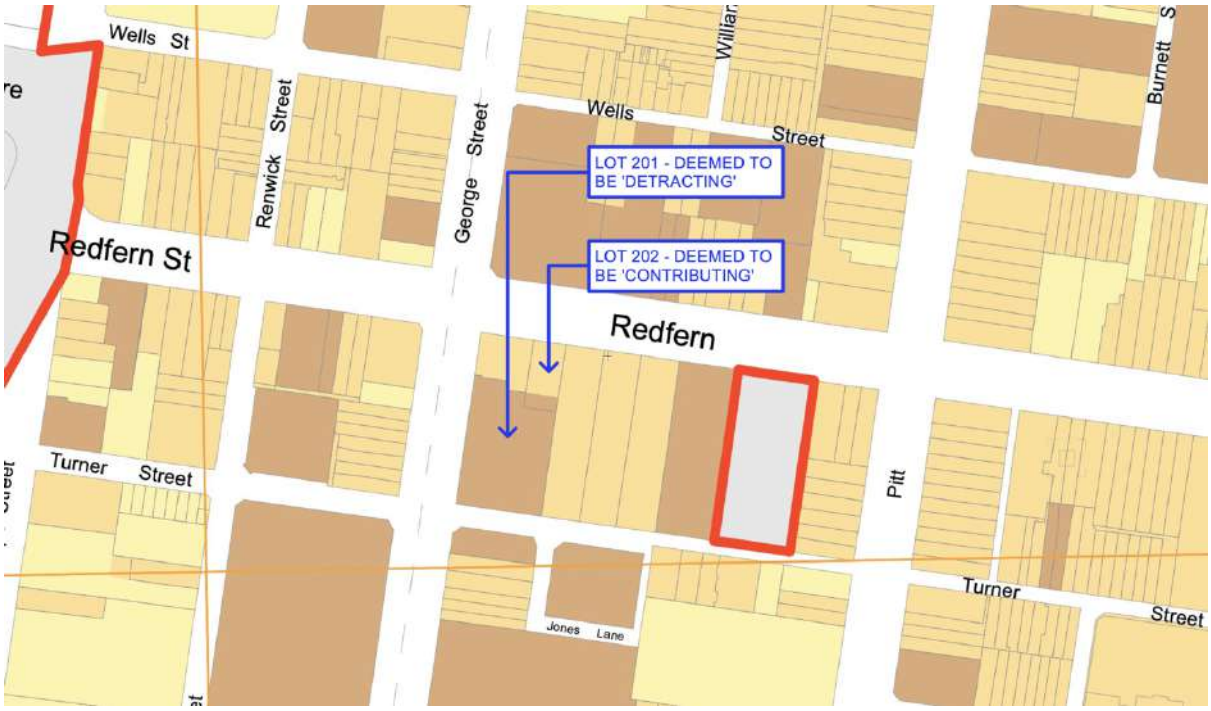

Figure 9: Extract of the City of Sydney DCP (2012) Buildings Contributions Map (Sheet 016) showing the original 1913 Redfern Telephone Exchange building as 'contributing' and the later exchange buildings as 'detracting'.

2. CONCLUSION

For the reasons detailed in this report, it is recommended that the heritage listing **Item no. I1318,** be modified to include only **Lot 202, at 117A Redfern Street, Redfern**.

The listing should remove reference to Lot 201, 103–109 George Street, Redfern, as this property has no heritage significance that would justify a local listing.

Modification of the listing will remove confusion and unnecessary restrictions on the property at 103-109 George Street. The modified listing will better acknowledge the original 1913 Redfern Telephone Exchange as set out in the Statement of Significance.