



# ENCLOSURE

## LAWSON COMMUNITY HALL

(Lawson Mechanic's Institute – Report  
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Studio)

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LAWSON MECHANIC'S INSTITUTE

## New Sketch Plan OPTIONS

with porch removed

January 2008

## 1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Lawson Mechanics Institute has been the subject of much consideration and study over many years. A new option for the hall to remove in-situ with only the (later) front porch removed to the Great Western Highway has only recently become possible. Hence this report assesses the heritage criteria, disabled access considerations, regulatory issues (not definitively), carparking options 1 – 3 (on the lot and/or with adjacent purchase), before addressing three new Options (A, B, C) with attendant costs, advantages and disadvantages to assist council in its consideration of the halls possible future.



**FIGURE 1: Location plan** showing previous RTA highway widening and land acquisition (and possible new alignment in dashed red)

## 2.0 INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

The Lawson's Mechanics Institute (No 284 Great Western Highway: part Lot 17, Section 1, DP. 758605, Lawson) was built by public subscription in 1903. It was renamed in 1911 as the Lawson Literary Institute in 1911, reflecting a change in appeal. Since 1991 the building has been known as Community Centre /Mid-Mountains Youth Centre. It has been vacant since 2004, awaiting resolution of its fate or future. In 1989 the frontage was acquired by the Department of Main Roads (RTA) for the widening of the Highway.

In recent years a series of studies were commissioned by Blue Mountains City Council regarding its history and heritage<sup>1</sup>, design options<sup>2</sup>, possibility of moving the hall<sup>3</sup>, and likely costs<sup>4</sup>, all as part of consideration of all possibilities for a Plan of Management (PoM)<sup>5</sup>.

Council's August 2007 Plan of Management comprehensively considered the past present and future of the Hall (1903, plus later additions). **The Vision** for management of the land was stated as:

*To honour the history of the land and in partnership with the community and other levels of government provide facilities and services to meet the current and future needs of the community of the Blue Mountains.*

After considering the land and buildings (Part 2), the policy framework (Part 3), Management direction (Part 4) Management purpose (Part 5), and means of achieving targets plus assessing performance (Part 6), the PoM offered five Options within the Appendix. These were (in brief, with projected costs):

PoM <b>OPTION 1:</b>	<u>Demolish hall</u> , extend and seal carpark, demolish RFS (2010) and move RFS to new station elsewhere (alongside Police Station and Fire Brigade), and use existing RFS building for a Youth Centre....	\$670,000
PoM <b>OPTION 2:</b>	Remove front of hall (RTA), <u>upgrade remainder</u> for Youth Centre (public hall for 90), seal car park, demolish RFS building (2010) and build new RFS elsewhere (alongside Police Station and Fire Brigade)...	\$1,125,000 to 1,450,000
PoM <b>OPTION 3:</b>	Remove front of hall (RTA), <u>use remainder</u> for Youth Centre as is (no improvements), seal car park, and build new RFS elsewhere (alongside Police Station and Fire Brigade)...	\$800,000
PoM <b>OPTION 4:</b>	<u>Demolish hall</u> , demolish RFS (2010) and move RFS to new station elsewhere (alongside Police Station and Fire Brigade), <u>sell the site</u> , <u>build a new Youth Centre elsewhere...</u>	\$1,205,000
PoM <b>OPTION 5:</b>	<u>Re-locate the existing masonry hall</u> , <u>demolish remainder</u> , extend and seal carpark, demolish RFS (2010) and move RFS to new station elsewhere (alongside Police Station and Fire Brigade)	\$2,049,000 +

The PoM recommended Option 1 as the most economic and viable option. Blue Mountains City Councillor's accepted this in late 2007. Consequently detailed heritage interpretation was sought prior to anticipated demolition.

However, following representations from the new State Member to the Minister for Roads in late 2007, the RTA undertook a review of the Highway design and found that it was in fact possible to retain the Lawson Mechanics Institute hall after all – with just the loss of the addition of the front highway porch (c.1930's?)<sup>7</sup>.

Hence this current Report was urgently commissioned to consider and cost the new options that arise from retaining the main hall intact – options that had been consistently discounted since 1989 (!). As a result, this firm was instructed at Christmas 2007 to consider afresh the design, usability and cost implications of new Options that include retaining the Hall (with or without the later additions), whilst addressing disabled access and heritage considerations.

Due to Council staff holiday arrangements, it has not been possible to verify likely Building Code of Australia (BCA) requirements, so reasonable assumptions have had to be made in what follows. Nevertheless, we must recommend that Council verify our assumptions at earliest opportunity and before committing to any particular course of action that relies on the implementation of our assumptions.

### 3.0 HERITAGE CONSIDERATIONS

We note that the hall enjoys local heritage listing – Blue Mountains Heritage Inventory Listing, *SHI* Number 1170399. This is based upon *Historic Evolution, Historic Associations, Aesthetic and Social* values (NBRIS, p. 27). In considering these values and the contribution of the parts, the *Heritage Assessment Report* (June 2004, Noel Bell Ridley Smith) detailed its assessment response based on NSW Heritage Office criteria (pp.21-23 reproduced below) - based also on the assumption of partial demolition or more:

**Criterion (a) Historic Evolution**

An item is important in the course or pattern of the cultural history of the local area.

*The Lawson Mechanics Institute, has a central position in the 20<sup>th</sup> century evolution of the village of Lawson. Together with the railway station, the hotel and the major churches, the Mechanics Institute was an important and focal institution in the social fabric of the town. This is clearly shown by the many references in local press articles about functions and occasions of local significance that occurred there throughout the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The building itself provided facilities for library, meeting hall and recreation that was supported and sustained by local community activity.*

*The building is evidence of an education movement in NSW that saw the establishment of Schools of art and Mechanics institutes throughout the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The*

*highest levels of activity associated with the place occurred in the mid century when tourism to the area was at its peak and before the social and cultural changes brought about by social mobility, widespread car ownership and the introduction of television. The evolutionary character is now evidenced by the use of the facilities as a local youth facility. The Lawson Mechanics Institute has local cultural heritage significance for this criterion as evidence of the physical and cultural evolution of the town.*

**Criterion (b) Historic Associations**

An item is important for the strong or special associations with historical events or the life and works of individuals or groups of importance to the local area.

*The Lawson Mechanics Institute is evidence of associations with a number of persons and groups that were influential in the development of the local area. Because of its strong community base the influence of local community members as trustees and office bearers of the institution is evident. The place has also been the location of many significant local events, particularly in the period before the Second World War. These are documented in numerous newspaper articles and have some level of local significance in the overall history of the village. The associations are not physically represented on the site but are documented in other sources. The hall building is also associated with the reconstruction of the Lawson Railway station with the bricks from the former station platform being incorporated into the existing building fabric.*

*The Lawson Mechanics Institute has local cultural heritage significance for this criterion as evidence of the association with many prominent members of the local community and with many local activities and events that were significant to the local community.*

**Criterion (c) Aesthetic / Technical achievement**

An item is significant in demonstrating aesthetic characteristics and or a high degree of creative or technical achievement.

*The design and construction of the Lawson Mechanics institute is relatively unremarkable on a comparative assessment with other similar buildings throughout the country. The design of the main northern façade and the later porch addition is somewhat 'old fashioned' for the period in which it was erected and demonstrates only a superficial understanding of architectural design principles. Nevertheless the presentation to the Great Western highway has considerable visual presence and acts to identify a gateway to the village proper. This effect is increased by the projecting form of the later porch.*

*While the place does not reflect a high degree of creative or technical achievement, being representative rather than outstanding as an example of its type, it makes a considerable positive contribution to the immediate context and is locally significant for this landmark value.*

**Criterion (d) Social Values**

An item has strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group in the local area for social or cultural reasons.

*The Lawson Mechanics Institute has been intimately related to local community use and interest since it was first constructed. The place is generally recognized as an important element of the physical and social fabric of the town by many residents. Active concern for the welfare and future of the place has also been expressed over a number of decades by a smaller number of active residents concerned for the continued presence of the building on the site and the continued use of the site and its facilities for community purposes. The building is obviously an important element in the local community's sense of place and is established by at least some of the community and by special interest groups within the community for its cultural heritage values as much as for its utility.*

*Despite no empirical evidence as to the strength of community concern, it appears that the place has significance under this value for the community as a whole and for the special interest groups in particular.*

**Criterion (e) Research Potential**

An item has potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of the area's cultural history.

*The Lawson Mechanics Institute building has little potential to provide information that is not available elsewhere and is not significant for this value.*

**Criterion (f) Rarity Values**

An item possesses uncommon or rare aspects of the area's cultural history.

*The Lawson Mechanics Institute building is not rare being one of several similar halls used for community purposes in the Mid Mountains area. The building provides no specific evidence of the specific 'Mechanics Institute' or 'Literary Institute' uses that gave rise to its erection and early use in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.*

**Criterion (g) Representativeness**

An item is important in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural places.

*The Lawson Mechanics Institute is representative and typical of local community use buildings and the Inter War way of life associated with its previous use patterns. The building was one of several on the Blue Mountains that were erected about the same time to serve the different communities*

Hence the significance of the building and setting were summarized in to a Statement of Heritage Significance as follows (NBRIS, p23):

**STATEMENT OF HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE**

*The Lawson School of Arts has considerable local cultural heritage significance for its historical role in the education, entertainment and social life of Lawson village, particularly in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, for its social role in the continuing community life of Lawson and as a representative example of a Mechanic's Institute building that demonstrates a way of life prevalent throughout NSW in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The early section of the building including the later porch, also has some local significance for its prominent contribution to the streetscape of the Lawson Village Core.*

**Graded areas of Significance**

*The original hall fabric has the highest level of significance.*

*The later stage and toilets and the northern porch have moderate significance*

*The Inter War additions at the rear of the hall have some significance.*

*The eastern verandah addition has little significance.*

*The Rural Fire Service buildings have no significance.*

The issue that arises due to the new possibility of retaining the original façade, is two-fold:

- the importance of the northern Porch (additions, c 1930) – should it be relocated?
- retention or otherwise of other fabric, notably the side verandah, rear halls and the like – with building usage implications.

**3.1 Northern porch (c.1930's)**

The Porch /Portico was an addition to the original building. The 1905 photograph (Figure 2 below) illustrates the original front (northern) steps and the two sets of side steps as egress from the Hall (with wall markings still extant below the eastern verandah). The photograph shows rendered brick side 'parapet' handrails to all locations, along with several fence and gate types, all facing the road.



**FIGURE 2: Original façade c.1905** (BM Historical Society, reproduced in NBRIS, p. 12)

The northern porch was deemed to have ‘moderate’ significance, due primarily to aesthetic and historic significance, illustrating the changing ‘front door’ requirements when facing the Highway (ie. shelter required by the 1930’s). It makes a strong visual statement.

The flat-roofed porch has similar rendered string-course and recessed-panel detailing as the main façade, with arch entry. Of necessity the flat roof must cut into the original façade and rendered pilasters. The round downpipe (un-desirably) discharges water around the base of the building. The rendered brickwork is currently in reasonable repair. The timber-framed -panelled windows with old ‘Kosciusko’ pattern glass are worn with some (vandalism) breakages - but are restorable. The concrete steps (6 off plus threshold step) arrive too directly at the front doors to meet current BCA requirements (landing required at least the width of the door swing). There is little to suggest that these steps are ‘original’ or significant in themselves. There is no realistic question of the porch being moved complete, but it could be dismantled and rebuilt using original bricks, doors and windows, with new steps (to currently conforming pattern?) and (presumably) new roofing to match existing.

Hence we conclude – as did the NBRIS report – that ‘*reconstruction and adaption of the porch...is also preferred if it is feasible in relation to new levels and proposed use.*’ The issue that now arises is should it be... and where...?

The heritage argument for relocation of the porch is slim. The NBRIS report suggested that ‘*retention of the porch is not essential*’ (p. 2). To demolish the fabric and reconstruct to new location is ‘adaption’ even when using wherever possible existing recovered materials. This effectively may be just the windows and maybe some roofing. The rendered brickwork will be entirely rebuilt (even if existing bricks can be reused which remains doubtful) – as will the concrete steps.

Nevertheless, the community affection for the façade and porch is recognized. The Porch can be rebuilt to new (eastern) location – or replaced with new more contemporary construction. The design Options within this report allows for either approach. If Porch demolition be the final result, archival recording for future reference is recommended.



FIGURE 3: Highway view from the north-east



FIGURE 4: Highway view from the north-west

### 3.2 Original hall + 1909 additions

According to the heritage assessment '*The original hall fabric has the highest level of significance whilst the later stage and toilets...have moderate significance*'. The toilets on each side of the stage plus (presumably) the 'Supper Room' behind, plus Kitchen, provided some useful circulation and wing space from the 1930's. Certainly some of the future Options under consideration will affect these items.

### 3.3 Rear and side additions to the Hall

The 1930's skillion 'Verandah' additions to the eastern side is '*less considered*' and it has '*little significance*' according the heritage assessment (NBRS, p. 20). Its likely that the Verandah (33' x 9') was added c.1932 following a loan to renovate the facilities was made available (p.15). The Verandah was poorly built with sloping floor and drainage holes at perimeter, suggesting that maybe it was unroofed initially. Certainly a broad bank of concrete stairs facing north was built as egress, removing the two original side step shown in the 1905 image above.

The rear hall additions of the Inter-war years were deemed to have '*some significance*' by NBRS. These are timber-framed with weatherboard cladding and internal linings that may include asbestos-cement (not yet investigated). It is built on a brick base and has lower-pitched corrugated metal roof.

### 3.4 Rural Fire Service buildings at rear

This building c.1960 has no heritage or constructional significance. Should Council relocate the RFS elsewhere, there is no impediment for its demolition to allow room for a carpark (see Carpark Options). Alternatively, as illustrated within the *Plan of Management*, it is capable of adaption as a future Youth Centre, separately from the Mechanics Institute building.



FIGURE 5: Eastern façade – rear portion



FIGURE 6: Eastern façade – front portion - verandah



FIGURE 7: View north alongside RFS building



FIGURE 8: Rear of Mechanics Institute, 1930's additions

It should be noted from the Heritage report that *'The Aesthetic values are largely related to the existing façade to the Great Western Highway... Reconstruction of the detail of the existing façade... is an acceptable option for the retention of the aesthetic values of the place and will meet the desire of some members of the community for its retention.'* But the report points out that such an action has limited heritage value and does not address the other deficiencies of amenity, health and safety, access issues – which are canvassed in this Report.

The Heritage report also stated that Social values are best retained by preserving the existing community use of the land for the original and current uses.

The Heritage report's conclusion is clear regarding the previous demolition of the front of the Hall and porch. *'In the event of a substantially new facility being erected on the subject site, it should not mimic the architectural character of the existing building unless it incorporates a substantial portion of the original structure.'* (p.28)

#### 4.0 DISABLED ACCESS

Disabled access is mandated through the Council's LEP /DCP 2005 and the (federal) *Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 1992* requirements for all public access buildings. This legislation puts different onus on requirements to that of the BCA. These regulatory documents may not always be in agreement. The key difference is that whilst the Council LEP/DCP plus BCA requirements are specific in calling up *AS 1428 Design for access and mobility* in its four parts, the *DDA* requirements make it unlawful to discriminate against people and encourages independence, equality and functionality, without defining how. Hence it is 'complaint-based' legislation that can be initiated if a person feels that they are

discriminated against – even if all the objective measures are in place. But with Mountains topography and existing buildings, full and complete compliance is not always possible.

At issue here is the difficulty in obtaining disabled access on the 'low' (east) side to the proposed new front doors - when easier on-grade access is available to the west – but technically a 'back-door'. As the proposed new Entry and Foyer can only project minimally to the east (property width limitations) it means that a walkway will likely become the main means of entry for all from the carpark at the rear. Steps can be provided (depending upon Option selected) but are likely to be little used by comparison.

The walkway from the carpark adjacent to the building requires a small retaining wall. Ideally the existing (low) eastern windows should be eliminated as they would still be within immediate view and reach of passers by. It should be noted that any new (or existing, re-located) Porch and Hall access will overlook future development on the adjacent lower land – RTA owned and currently vacant.

Full disabled access is not possible for the minimal Option 1. Disabled access has been designed into the Options 2 and 3 to meet all regulatory and social obligations.

Option-specific responses for disabled access is as follows:

**OPTION A:** Walkway to front door and main (public) level, disabled WC off Foyer. Access to the upper level is only made via the western doors by circulating around the building (not desirable). Disabled platform lift could be provided from hall floor to stage level but this is both obtrusive and expensive.

**OPTION B:** By raising the floor within the Hall, the whole building enjoys one floor level and full wheelchair access throughout. The disabled toilet is now located off the Foyer. Arguably, this is the preferred Option for 'barrier-free' design for the lesser abled.

**OPTION C:** This design has a disabled bathroom and platform lift directly off the Foyer to permit easy access throughout the building, including backstage and dressing rooms. Hence it is fully accessible whilst retaining the traditional (height) separation of main floor and stage (3' or 915 mm).

## 5.0 BCA REGULATORY VERIFICATION

Of immediate relevance is whether the Lawson Mechanics Institute as a '*community hall*' is to become licensed as '*a place of public entertainment*' (PoPE). Depending upon decision on this matter, different urgency arises upon regulatory requirements and staging of expenditure.

Certainly it is a (BCA) Class 9b single storey building, with 'Type C' construction requirements. A preliminary reading of relevant BCA clauses as well as preliminary Council advice suggests the following additional requirements for this facility:

- Storage areas FRL 60/60/60,
- Backstage to be separated from stage by FRL 60/60/60 construction,
- Two means of egress from stage other than through the proscenium,
- Exits to open in the direction of egress with panic bars to the doors,
- Landings must be at least the width of the doors,
- Curtain (stage) to be treated to have smoke developed indices to Specification C1.11,
- Emergency lights and illuminated Exit signs,
- Fire hose reel relocated, portable fire extinguisher,
- Smoke and heat vent(s) over the stage,
- Hearing augmentation within the hall,
- Full disabled access to the front door and throughout,
- Tactile indicators for the visually impaired,
- Egress wider and away from the required entry width(s)
- Fire Resistance Levels must be met for walls near boundaries and between stage/backstage and auditorium,

Some of these matters are discussed further below. All matters have cost implications, depending upon which combination is required.

We note that the Lot is not designated bushfire prone land and thus is exempt from the requirements of the Rural Fires Act 1997.



**FIGURE 9: View from the stage (looking north) across the existing hall.**

## **6.0 CARPARKING**

Council regulates carparking provision through its LEP and DCP 2005, with further reference to AS 2890.1. The imposition of standard regulatory requirements compared to reliance upon 'existing use rights' is yet to be established. Nevertheless, we look at the issues and possible provision hereunder as part of the mix of Options for considerations.

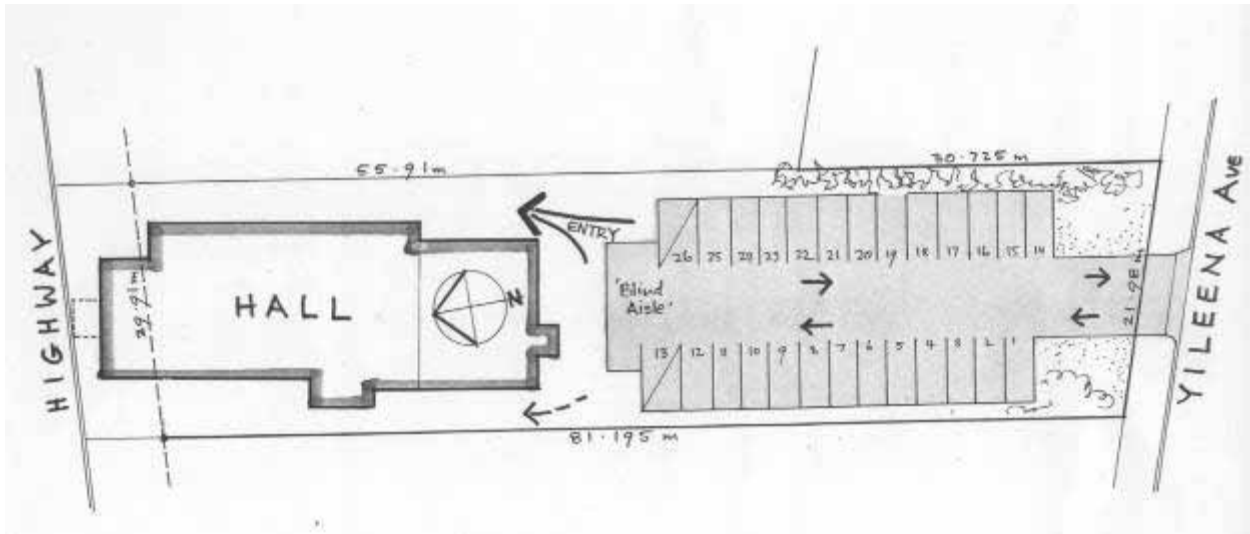
Council's 'Better Living DCP' for 'Places of assembly' (Table 3, D9, p.11) calls up 1 space per 4 seats or one space per 10 m<sup>2</sup> gross floor area, whichever is the greater. Hence with the existing Hall and additions this is around 475 m<sup>2</sup>. But at present only the main hall stage, verandah etc could/would be considered a 'Public Hall' (around 350 m<sup>2</sup>) – 35 spaces. The remainder has been used as a Youth Centre, which requires carparking facilities at the rate of 1 space per 40 m<sup>2</sup> as a 'Public building' (ie. 3.1 spaces). Hence on this basis, up to 38 marked carparking spaces could be required. But the counter argument is 'existing use rights' – with very little on-site carparking based on historic use, proximity to public transport, nature of users, infrequent use, etc.

To this must be added space for loading and unloading and include disabled access carparking (D.9.12.3) - effectively one, or preferably two, spaces. Sealed driveway access, landscaping, illumination, stormwater drainage and the like must be provided. Gradients must be minimized, a matter which is easily addressed on this site. Obtaining 38 or so carparking spaces on the existing site is impossible – which would be predicated upon the removal of the Rural Fire Service building.

### **6.1 On-site carpark where RFS building stands**

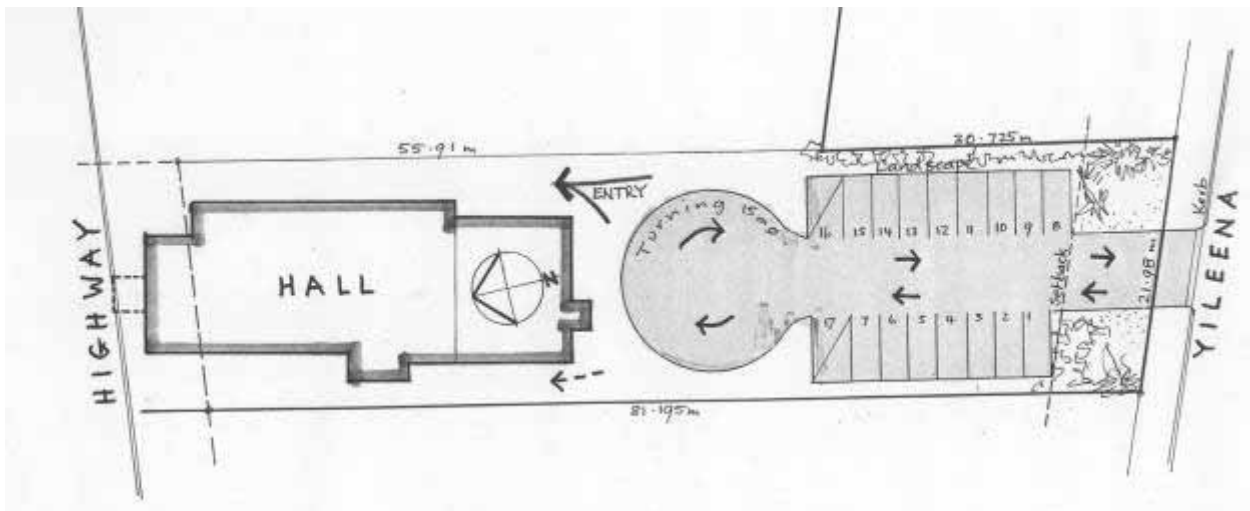
We understand that the RFS could be relocated in future years (*PoM*, 2010). If and when this occurs the present very utilitarian building could be demolished for carparking. If this was to occur, the Figures below illustrate possible arrangements should the existing 1930's rear additions to the Hall remain.

Should these Hall additions be removed (Leaving just the core Hall), then around 8 – 10 additional stalls could be constructed, but the un-acceptability of the blind aisle would likely become pronounced.



**FIGURE 10: Carpark Option 1**

Option 1 above is less than ideal due to the 'blind aisle' at the end. In principle the number of spaces with blind aisles should be minimized, especially if there are mass vehicular movements at one time (ie. end of a performance). Nevertheless, it is physically possible as the Lot width gives greater than minimum road access width, room for landscaping, etc.

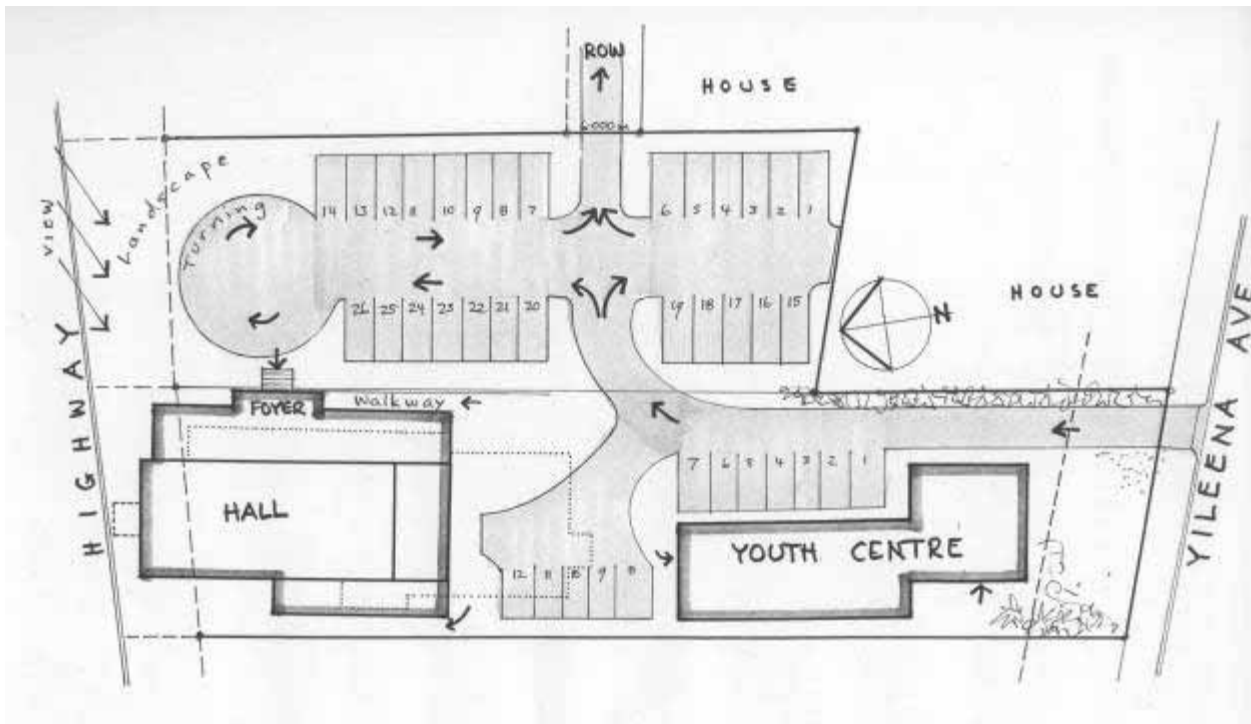


**FIGURE 11: Carpark Option 2**

Option 2 above gives clear access and turning, but would doubtless be considered wasteful in space. Whilst costing similarly to the first Option, provision of the turning circle loses around 10 carparking stalls.

### 6.2 Carpark on adjacent (RTA) Lot

The above carparking arrangements could be seen as less than ideal. The following Option provides considerably more carparking and better circulation – connecting up with the Right-of-Way constructed recently by the RTA for the subject Lot. This ROW was created to permit vehicular access at the rear of 'Tahlia', the Church and adjacent lots when Highway access becomes impossible very soon. As drawn, we obtain the requisite number of carpark stalls with better circulation, plus visual reinforcement of the importance of the proposed new entry from the highway. It requires Council to acquire this Lot – which would become a necessity with any of the following building design Options that are too close to the property boundary (setback considerations).



**FIGURE 12: Carpark Option 3**

If Council was minded to follow this possibility, it has the further advantage of permitting retention of the RFS building in the short-term (with increased usability /vehicular access), with later conversion to the Youth Centre as accepted in the Plan of Management consideration. It has clearer vehicular circulation and permits conversion of the Mechanics Institute to a better (sole) function. The cost consequences of this are pursued in later section of this Report.

## 7.0 FACILITIES AND USAGE

For Options other than the most minimal, regulations state (NSW H101.3) there must be a (new) **Foyer** at the rate of 0.25m<sup>2</sup>/person. That is a minimum of 37 m<sup>2</sup> for 148 m<sup>2</sup> of hall ('auditorium'). Should the support walls below the 'bio-box' be removed, then hall floor area is 154 m<sup>2</sup> requiring 38.5 m<sup>2</sup> of foyer.

**The current stage** is 40m<sup>2</sup> less steps, say 37 m<sup>2</sup>. Hence it is smaller than a 'small stage' of 50 m<sup>2</sup> and escapes the requirements for fire separation to backstage (NSW H101.5.4) yet, if it is not fire separated, is caught by (NSW H101.5.1) definitions where it is taken to form part of the stage. Hence FRL 60/60/60 is required.... Two ways of egress are required other than through the proscenium. To meet this whilst retaining stage usability, we suggest that the fire separation occurs at the backstage /dressing areas which also have their own fire exits.

**Toilets** (Table F2.3) for this patronage (76 males, 76 females) are required as follows:

- MALE: 1 WC; 1 urinal; 1 washbasin
- FEMALE: 3 WC's; 1 washbasin
- DISABLED: 1 unisex facility

**Dressing rooms** assume equal gender split and whilst less than 50 m<sup>2</sup> (NSW H101.15), should still have two directions of egress. Ideally they could each have their own WC compartment, hand-basin and shower – but no standard is specified. We have shown a unisex disabled WC and shower compartment to each room. If required, a disabled shower could also be added to the disabled WC with some additional space and small additional cost.

**Storerooms** generally required separation with a FRL 60/60/60 (NSW H101.16).

Where chairs are loose on a flat-floor auditorium as here, the chairs must be secured in groups of not less than four, or more than 16 (NSW H101.11.3).

**New external walls** must now meet Fire Resistance Levels when closer than 3 metres (ie. west and east) for some options.

**Provision for escape** (Part D1) are satisfied if the original entry Porch is rebuilt for doors to swing out, a landing, then steps and handrail that conform (ie. Table D2.13). Half the egress has to be other than through the entrance doors.

**Smoke exhausts** over the stage are likely required for all Options.

At issue is the extent of change desired for this Hall – and at what point of alteration /reinstatement triggers a fuller application of BCA requirements. Possibly this is less if it is regarded as a 'community facility' (Option A), rather than application under the legislation as a '*place of public entertainment*' (*PoPE*) for Option B and C.

## 8.0 DESIGN OPTION A: Minimal change

This basic Option changes only what is essential – and assumes that these minimal changes will not require complete upgrading everywhere. That is:

- Demolition (de-construction) of the porch and re-building to new eastern location (by RTA?),
- New (sound-proofed) infill construction (by RTA?) to doorway and minor render/paint repairs,
- Locate porch say 1200mm off existing wall, to allow (almost level) walkway from carpark,
- New disabled toilet within previous verandah store,
- Only minimal and essential upgrading to electrics, heating, smoke exhaust (?),
- Building is little more usable than at present.

### Advantages

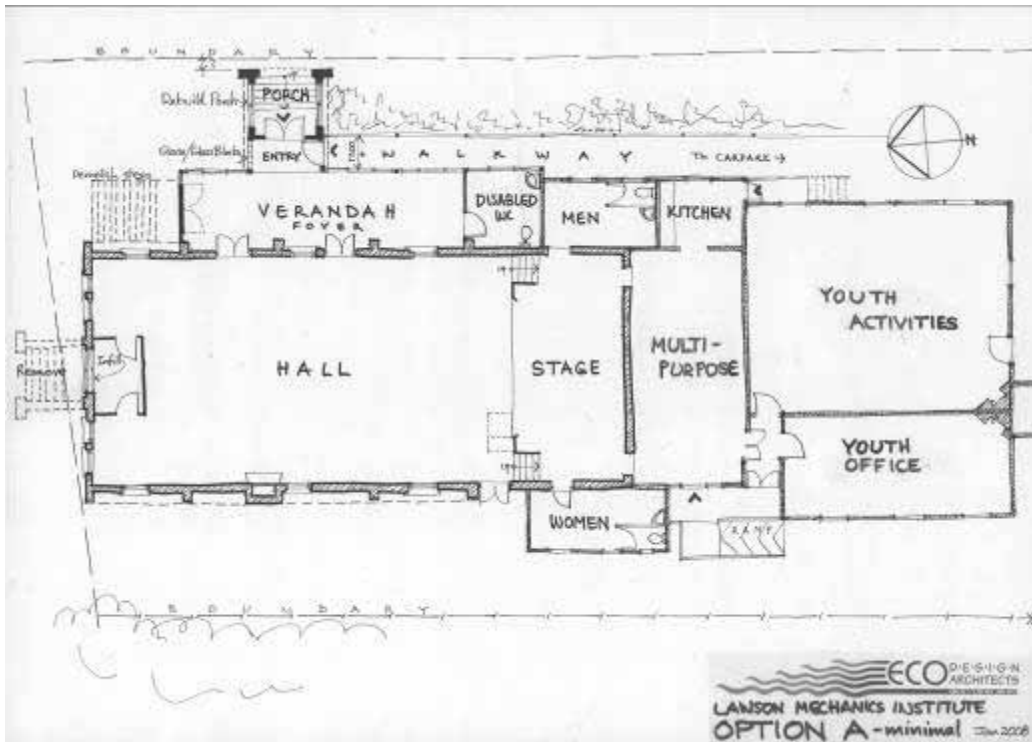
- Visible from new Highway alignment,
- Retains community memory of porch, still using it as the main entry (albeit in new location),
- Visually separated from Verandah (glass separation - contemporary) so no pretence it is exactly original,
- Connects (main) walkway entry with steps from carpark(?) – making one visually prominent entrance,
- Least expensive option – but barely usable (no real improvement),

### Disadvantages

- Whilst some fabric of the Porch is original, much isn't
- Arguably, false historicism,
- Depends upon boundary clearance – may need boundary adjustment (or more acquisition) from RTA of adjacent Lot,
- Existing poor quality fabric remains (eg. sub-standard verandah)
- Future burden of maintenance high,
- Vulnerable (flammable) construction to rear – unless re-clad etc,
- Facilities remain extremely basic – not readily usable by most groups (and no *PoPE* licensing),
- Disabled access to hall, but either outside (around building) connection to stage/upper level) or \$25,000 for wheelchair lift to stage and hence compromise on everyday usability /view of the stage,
- Assumes the minimal approach does not require full/partial application of contemporary building regulations (which in cost terms would push it towards Option B),
- Highway and railway noise a major inhibitor of comfortable use (even with acoustic upgrading)

**Likely costs (preliminary guidance)**

Carpark (several options) .....	say \$50,000 +	(assumes within existing Lot)
Walkway .....	Say \$30,000	
Porch demolition & rebuilding.....	Say \$80,000	(RTA ?)
Allowance new to old.....	Say \$10,000	
Sound protection measures.....	Say \$20,000	
Disabled toilet.....	Say \$10,000	
Minimal landscaping, fences .....	Say \$15,000	
Contingency .....	Say \$20,000	
<b>TOTAL .....</b>	<b>\$235,000</b>	<b>+ RFS building ?</b>



**FIGURE 13: Floor plan - Option A**



**FIGURE 14: Aerial view from the north-east**

## 9.0 DESIGN OPTION B: Upgraded Hall and Youth Centre

This 'mid-range' Option is presented to cost-effectively deal with multiple hall users whilst remaining within the existing Lot. Hence it involves somewhat of a compromise, but is nevertheless a most viable option – adapted slightly from Option 2 previously shown within the Plan of Management (p.42) adopted by Council. This re-presented option (now with full length of Hall) necessitates some change to toilets from that previously shown.

The work involved includes:

- Demolition (de-construction) of the porch and re-building to new eastern location (by RTA?),
- Demolition of the eastern Verandah and steps,
- Construction of new/existing entry porch, connected by walkway to carparking at rear,
- New (sound-proofed) infill construction (by RTA?) to doorway and minor render/paint repairs,
- New disabled toilet and male toilets within eastern additions,
- Female toilets (re)built within existing location,
- Complete upgrading to electrics, heating/ventilation, plumbing/drainage, hot water systems, smoke exhaust, etc,
- New kitchen and kitchenette,
- Improved insulation and construction generally.

### Advantages

- Makes the most of the existing building and user groups (less change),
- Kept entirely within its own Lot (with or without additional parking),
- Alterations less visible from Highway,
- Can be built with or without re-locating old Porch (using it again as the main entry),
- Allows for complete /partial renewal of services, fixtures and fittings,
- Can meet all applicable BCA regulations,
- Has more accessible bathrooms than 'A',
- Everything is disabled accessible and on one level,
- Can allow several user groups to function at one time,
- As there is no 'stage', this exempts the project from some regulations (and gives greater floor area),
- Mid-price option – depending upon extent of renovations and repairs (some \$ flexibility).

### Disadvantages

- Still involves significant rebuilding (although less than option C),
- Existing rear rooms not very secure or vandal-resistant (weatherboards) so maybe re-clad(?),
- Requires lifting of floor to main Hall (cost) with reduced ceiling height (not really a problem),
- Becomes a flat-floor hall (but stage 'flats' can make temporary stage either end),
- Highway and railway noise a major inhibitor of comfortable use (even with acoustic upgrading),
- Removes proscenium (with some heritage value)

### Likely costs (adapted from C S Barratt report, August 2007)

Carpark (several options) .....	say \$80,000 (assumes within existing Lot)
Walkway .....	\$20,000
New construction .....	\$200,000
Alterations .....	\$80,000
Fitout (Kitchen, Toilets, etc).....	\$50,000
Porch relocation (?) .....	\$60,000 (RTA?)
Minimal landscaping and fences .....	\$15,000
Professional and other fees .....	\$40,000
Contingency .....	\$30,000
<b>TOTAL .....</b>	<b>\$575,000</b>

**+ RFS building?**

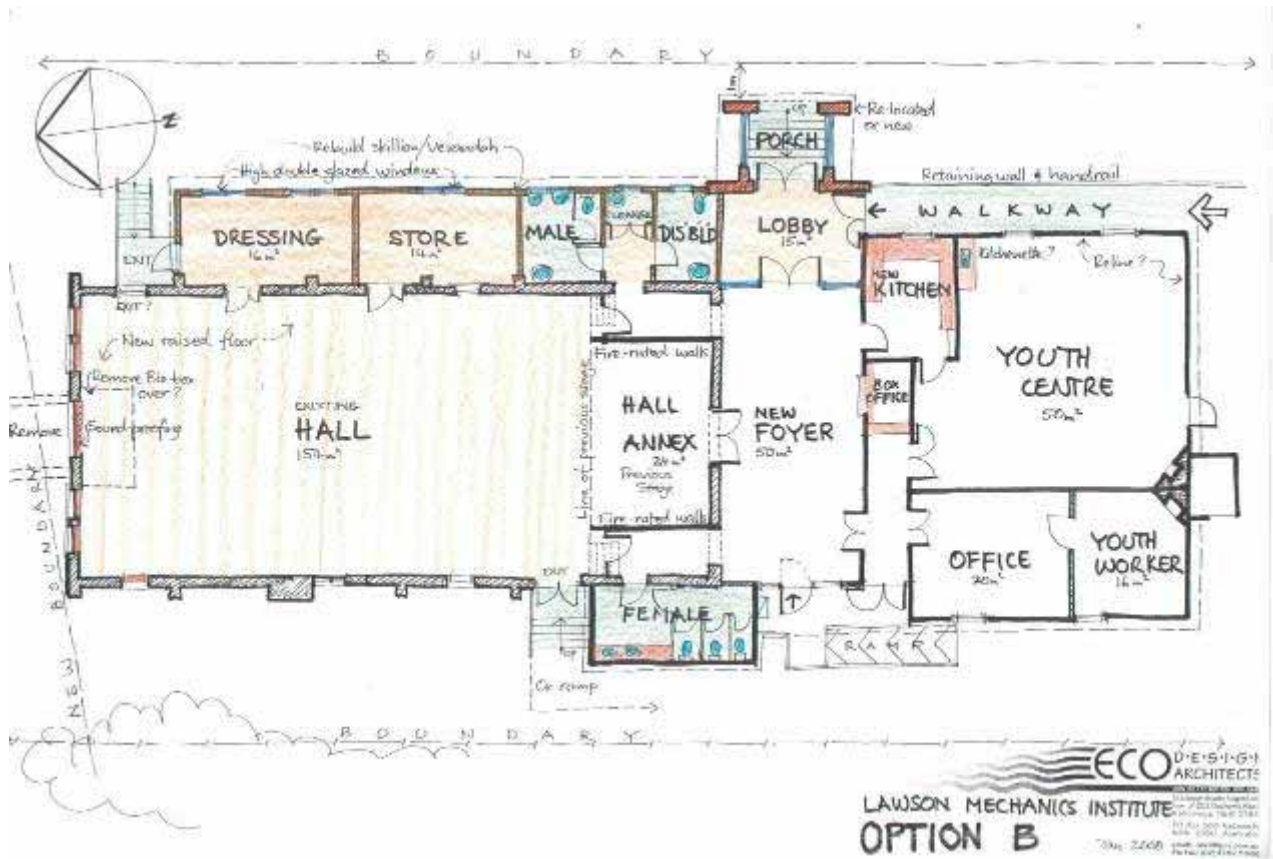


FIGURE 15: Floor Plan - Option B

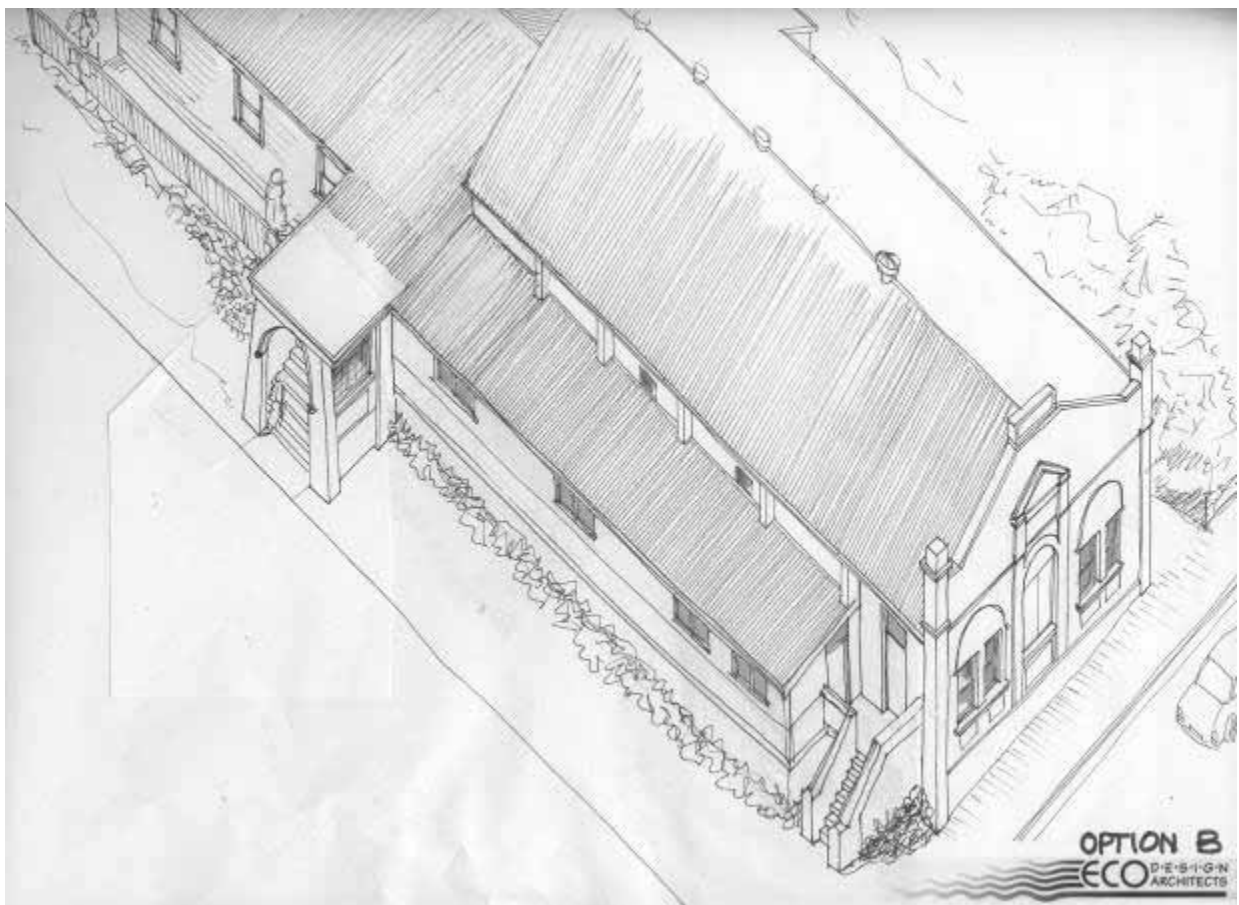


FIGURE 16: Aerial view from the north-east

## 10.0 DESIGN OPTION C: Public theatre

This is the most complete and expensive Option in that it provides everything necessary for a fully functioning public theatre, capable of licencing under *PoPE*. It also suggests that depending upon Council determination, the Youth Centre could be relocated into the RFS building as per previous decision (at additional cost). This design is similar to that provided when building relocation was mooted – but now accounts for the building remaining in its original position.

The proposal involves:

- Demolition and interpretation of the porch,
- New (sound-proofed) infill construction to doorway and minor render/paint repair to facade,
- Demolition of all additions to the original masonry hall (interpretation required?),
- New construction of around 220 m<sup>2</sup> for new foyer, toilets, disabled access, store, back-stage dressing rooms, toilets and green (utility) room,
- Substantial re-servicing of whole building including electrics, heating/ventilation, plumbing /drainage, hot water system, smoke exhaust, full safety provision, etc,
- Property acquisition (adjacent, east) for carpark and through route (egress via ROW)
- Building is completely usable as a small quality venue (although highway location always a noise disadvantage).

### Advantages

- Visible from new Highway alignment with new and distinctive appearance to the east (from Highway), but visual dominance of old Hall and main facade,
- Most usable Option (real improvement) as public facility /theatre,
- Meets all regulations necessary for *PoPE*,
- Provides full disabled access requirements throughout (both floor levels),
- Opportunity to make building more durable and vandal-resistant,
- Comfortable in use (although background outside noise inevitable),
- New quality fabric where necessary (minimal future maintenance costs),
- Secure building (less damage),
- If RFS building adapted for Youth Centre, then work can follow on this one,
- Arguably better to separate functions between two buildings, than all in one,
- More complete and workable carparking over the two lots.

### Disadvantages

- Additions substantial, therefore more costly,
- Depends upon boundary clearance (east) – and will doubtless require boundary adjustment (or entire Lot acquisition) from RTA, therefore additional cost,
- Highway and railway noise an inhibitor of comfortable use (even with acoustic upgrading)
- Cost of adjacent property acquisition.

### Likely costs (adapted from C S Barratt report, August 2007)

Carpark (several options) .....	say \$100,000 (including on adjacent Lot)
Land acquisition (adjacent) .....	say \$350,000
New construction .....	\$800,000
Landscaping and fencing .....	\$15,000
Professional and other fees .....	\$40,000
Contingency .....	\$30,000
<b>TOTAL .....</b>	<b>\$1,335,000</b>

**+ demolition of RFS building?**

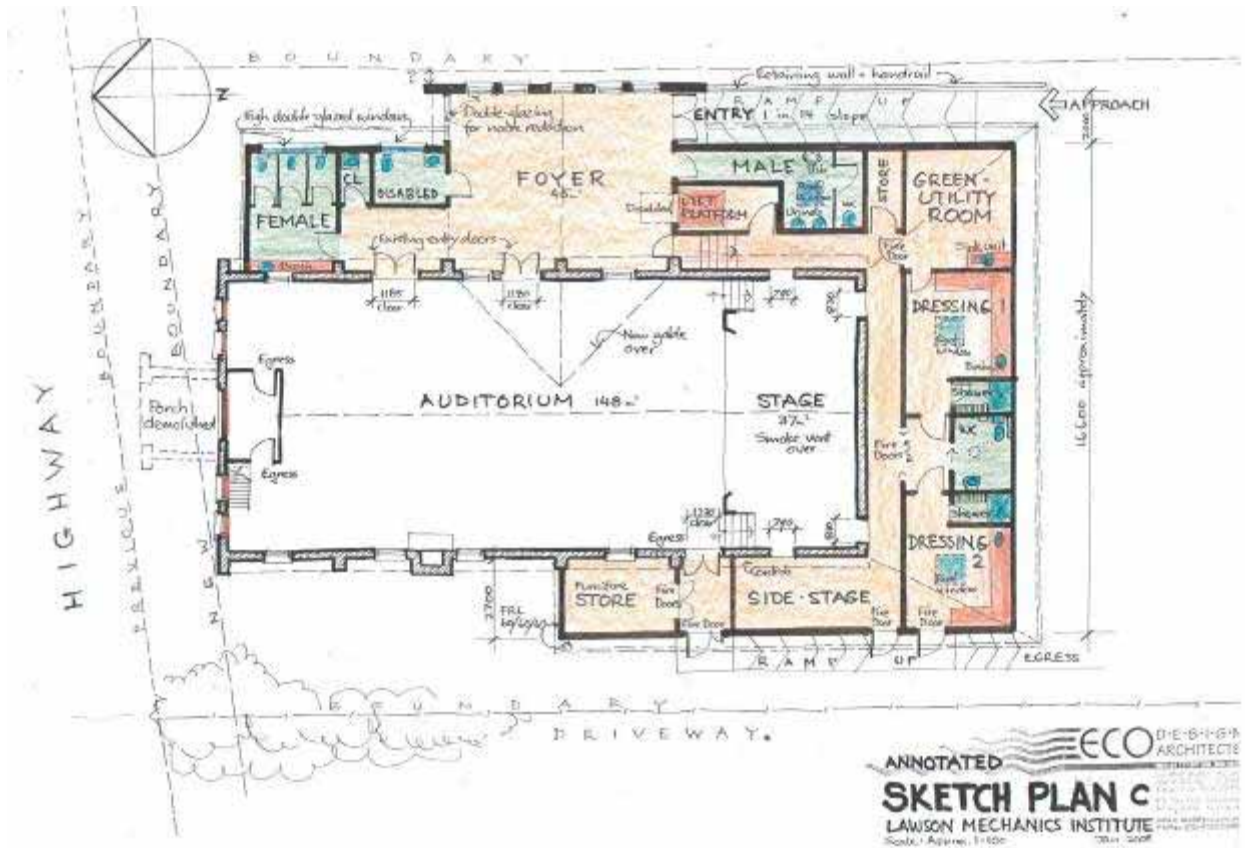


FIGURE 17: Floor plan - Option C



FIGURE 18: Aerial view from the north-east

## 11.0 CONCLUSIONS & SUMMARY

The debate about the retention /demolition /relocating /rebuilding the Lawson's Mechanic's Institute building has been long and contentious. We suggest its fair to say that virtually every conceivable option has now been presented, considered, costed and assessed. This report has covered the latest three Options based – for the first time – on retention of the Hall (and more). Only the (later 1930's) front Porch is shaved off the façade with the rest of the structure remaining. Two of the options show the existing Porch rebuilt on the eastern façade, should that prove more persuasive than new construction with contemporary design. Either is possible.

The key matters now on the table really center around preferred building usage (extent and quality of facilities); carparking preferences; use (or otherwise) of the present RFS building; and the amount of money that would need to be committed to this facility.

It must be remembered that whatever decision is made, the new highway proximity (closer than at present) will always present noise and discomfort issues for this facility. There will always be some structural and air-born noise interference that cannot be fully damped. Highway noise will always be more apparent than the hall at the Wentworth Falls School of Arts for example. The WF hall is further away from the highway intersection and uses the front portion as a partial sound barrier. This is not possible for the Lawson Mechanics Institute. Whilst acoustic upgrading will improve the situation, it can never become a hall with acoustic excellence.

### Summary

	<b>OPTION A</b> <i>Minimal change</i>	<b>OPTION B</b> <i>Hall upgrade + Youth Centre</i>	<b>OPTION C</b> <i>Licensed public theatre</i>
<b>CARPARK</b>	Nil...or Option A or B within existing Lot	Nil...or Option A or B within existing Lot	Option C
<b>LAND ACQUISITION ?</b>	Optional	Optional, but maybe boundary adjustment (\$30,000?)	Necessary to acquire adjacent Lot from RTA (350,000?)
<b>EXISTING FLOOR SPACE</b>	Yes, plus Entry 5 m <sup>2</sup>	Yes, plus new Lobby	Only hall (210 m <sup>2</sup> ) remains, the rest demolished
<b>ADDITIONS</b>	Entry and walkway (\$30,000)	70 m <sup>2</sup> rebuilt (eastern – verandah) + porch and walkway, (\$300,000)	Around 220 m <sup>2</sup> (\$800,000)
<b>EXISTING PORCH</b>	Re-located (RTA?)	Re-located (RTA?)	Demolished, heritage interpretation
<b>LIKELY BUILDING COSTS</b>	\$170,000	\$480,000	\$870,000
<b>LIKELY CARPARK COSTS</b> Including land acquisition	\$50,000	\$80,000 (+ \$30,000?)	\$450,000
<b>LANDSCAPING COSTS</b> including fencing	\$15,000	\$15,000	\$15,000
<b>LIKELY TOTAL COST</b>	<b>\$235,000</b>	<b>\$575,000</b>	<b>\$1,335,000</b>

## 12.0 REFERENCES

1. Noel Bell Ridley Smith & Partners Architects Pty Ltd, (June 2004) *Lawson Village Mechanic's Institute Hall*, McMahons Point, Sydney.
2. ECOdesign Architects (July 2007) *Lawson Mechanic's Institute, Sketch Plan & Report ... should the building be relocated*, Katoomba.
3. Mammoth Movers (nd, 2007) Adelaide.
4. C S Barratt, (2 August 2007) *Lawson Community Hall – Construction Costs*, Penrith.
5. Blue Mountains City Council, (August 2007) *Plan of Management for 284 Great Western Highway, Lawson*, Katoomba.
6. Noel Bell Ridley Smith & Partners Architects Pty Ltd.
7. RTA correspondence to Blue Mountains City Council, 12 December 2007.

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DISCLAIMER: This report is written in good faith for the use of Blue Mountains City Council only. It is based on a number of assumptions that are yet to be verified. Planning approval and building construction matters, plus timing and staging of projects inevitably affect construction costs. Therefore, further work is necessary before any of the above matters can be confirmed.