

# Adaptive Reuse Guidelines

For State Heritage Places  
in South Australia





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# Minister's Foreword



I am pleased to present the Adaptive Reuse Guidelines for State Heritage Places in South Australia.

South Australia has a rich variety of State Heritage listed places reflecting broad changes in culture and construction over the state's history. These places reveal what is special about South Australia, connecting locals and visitors to our way of life.

The South Australian Government recognises that the best way to preserve heritage places and to retain their value is to use and maintain them, whether this is through continued use for its original purpose, or adaptive reuse.

Adaptive reuse is the modification of a heritage place to a new use, while preserving its heritage value. In some cases this may be nothing more than a change in activities. However, in many situations buildings may require modifications to suit their new purpose. Importantly, State Heritage Places can be adapted to new uses and that adaptive reuse can sometimes be the best way to ensure a vibrant future for significant buildings. These places, when adaptively reused, provide opportunities for creating exceptional experiences that encourage locals to treasure their backyards and visitors to travel further, stay longer, spend more and share their tales of South Australia.

The South Australian Government's commitment to adaptive reuse encourages new initiatives to be explored, including provision of heritage advice, up-to-date information and funding support. This will ensure we can all engage with our heritage places in new ways with pride for their history and excitement about their future.

**David Speirs MP**  
**Minister for Environment and Water**



# Purpose

This document is intended to guide and support the adaptive reuse of State Heritage listed places and provide owners with advice on the regulatory requirements associated with adaptive reuse in South Australia.

“The best way to conserve a heritage building, structure or site, is to use it”

McHENRY ST



# Benefits and Opportunities of Adaptive Reuse

Adaptive reuse of State Heritage Places provides opportunities to undertake commercial activities in custom built and character-filled spaces.

The retention of heritage places also makes an important contribution to environmental, social and economic sustainability.

## Environmental

The reuse of old buildings can significantly reduce the energy that would normally be consumed during the demolition and construction of a new building. Adaptive reuse often involves further construction but the amount of energy required for additional works would be much less than the energy used to construct a new building of similar dimensions. Builders and developers save on energy involved in procuring new raw materials, manufacturing new supplies, and transporting all of these to the construction site.

## Social

Adaptive reuse can restore and repurpose an old building for a new use. State Heritage listed buildings can hold a cultural significance because of the memories the community associates with it. Adaptive reuse is a way of maintaining the links to the past and restoring culturally significant sites that would otherwise be left to decay or demolished to make room for new structures.

## Economic

The major economic benefit of adaptive reuse of heritage buildings is the cost saving associated with not having to demolish and construct a new building. Heritage buildings can contribute to sustainable economic development by providing important tourism destinations in urban and regional environments that attract people and investment by enhancing the amenity or 'liveability' of towns and cities. Adaptive reuse provides opportunities to assist local economies through employment and ensures that historic buildings continue to provide a sense of place for current and future generations.

Environmental benefits, combined with energy savings and the social advantage of recycling a valued heritage place make use or adaptive reuse of historic buildings an essential component of sustainable development.



# State Heritage Adaptive Reuse Case Studies

Examples of adaptive reuse of state heritage buildings, some of which are detailed in case studies can be found at <https://www.environment.sa.gov.au/topics/heritage/conserving-our-heritage/adaptive-reuse>



## Electra House

The 1901 Electra House was erected for the Citizens Life Assurance Company. The building boasted Australia's first electric lift and was home to the overseas telegraph cables connecting Australia to the rest of the world.

After a period of vacancy, the classically detailed edifice was successfully updated in 2015 to accommodate a function centre, including restaurants and bars over three levels.



## Bank of New South Wales & 2KW

The 1941 Bank of New South Wales office building was one of the city's tallest buildings for the period.

The building was refurbished in 2013. Many of the original modernist era details have been retained, including the original bank chamber which is now used as a restaurant. The original plant room has also been transformed into a bespoke rooftop bar.



## Colonial Mutual Life Building/ Mayfair Hotel

The 1936 Colonial Mutual Life Assurance Co. office is notable for its high quality neo-Romanesque detailing, adorned with lions, gargoyles and vultures!

The building was creatively transformed into a boutique hotel in 2015, incorporating accommodation, a basement restaurant and dramatic rooftop bar. Original 1930s features were retained where possible and an adjacent 1970s office building was also refaced as a 'jewel box' function centre.



## Treasury Buildings/ Adina Apartment Hotel

The Treasury building is an exemplar of colonial Italianate style architecture, erected 1839-1907. The building was converted into a five star Hotel in 2002, with hotel rooms installed within existing heritage spaces.

The successful adaptive reuse of the former Treasury building was recognised by UNESCO in 2003, and awarded the Asia-Pacific Heritage Award of Merit.







# The Burra Charter

The basic principles and procedures that guide the conservation of heritage places to a nationally accepted standard are set out in the *Australia ICOMOS Burra Charter, 2013* (the Burra Charter) which is an essential reference for work on a heritage site. The Burra Charter sets a standard of practice for those who provide advice, make decisions about, or undertake works to places of cultural significance, including owners, managers and custodians.

The Burra Charter has been adopted by the South Australian government as the best practice for managing South Australia's heritage places. A copy of the Charter can be accessed at the Australia ICOMOS website.

[australia.icomos.org/publications/burra-charter-practice-notes](http://australia.icomos.org/publications/burra-charter-practice-notes)

# Overcoming Obstacles to Adaptive Reuse

One of the main obstacles to adaptively reusing older buildings is the cost of bringing buildings up to modern standards, particularly in relation to fire, disability access and earthquake resistance. Other building design matters such as the provision of bathroom facilities and other modern requirements including access to natural light and ceiling height have also provided challenges for adaptation of older buildings to meet occupants expectations.

A new Ministerial Building Standard has recently been developed in South Australia to address these issues. The new building standard is intended to assist with the process of modernising buildings to meet current building standards and was introduced in July 2019 as part of the requirements set out in the *Planning, Development and Infrastructure Act 2016*. The Ministerial Building Standards documents can be accessed at:

[plan.sa.gov.au/resources/building/ministerial\\_building\\_standards](http://plan.sa.gov.au/resources/building/ministerial_building_standards)





# Process for Heritage-related Development

## The Regulatory Environment

Information relating to all State Heritage Listed places in South Australia is held on the [South Australian Heritage Register](#) which is maintained by the [South Australian Heritage Council](#). There are over 2,300 State Heritage Places currently entered on the Register.

Any proposed development of a State Heritage Place must be approved by the relevant planning authority (usually the local council) in accordance with the requirements of the [Planning, Development and Infrastructure Act 2016](#) (PDI Act). Development under the PDI Act includes activities such as demolition, removal, conversion, alteration or painting of, or addition to, the place, or any other work that could materially affect the heritage value of the place.

Any proposed development to a State Heritage Place is subject to the State Heritage Place overlay of the Planning and Design Code (the Code) which houses a single set of planning policies or rules for assessing development applications across South Australia. The Code replaces the individual planning policies that were previously held by individual councils and brings consistency to the way that State Heritage Places are addressed by planning authorities such as councils. You can [download the code here](#).

## Referral of Development Applications

Any development application affecting a State Heritage Place must be referred to Heritage South Australia (Heritage SA) for advice. Heritage Advisers assess the impact of proposed development on heritage values, and provide direction to local council or relevant authority. The Heritage Adviser may also assist applicants with design options, building materials and techniques sympathetic to the heritage values of the place.

Development proposals are assessed against the principles of the Burra Charter and the requirements of the *Heritage Places Act, 1993* with due regard to the identified heritage significance of the place.

## Activities Requiring Development Approval

Typically the types of work requiring development approval in relation to a State Heritage Place include:

- subdivision or boundary realignment
- a change of use or introducing an additional use
- alterations and additions
- new buildings or structures - including carports, pergolas, decks and sheds
- conservation, repair and remedial works – including masonry and plaster, re-pointing, underpinning, undersetting, salt damp repair, damp courses and crack repair
- excavation, demolition or relocation
- re-roofing, and replacing gutters or downpipes
- electrical wiring or plumbing in areas of heritage significance
- painting, including changes of exterior or interior colour schemes
- interior works affecting historic fabric
- air conditioning, solar panels, aerials, antennas and satellite dishes
- other external works such as signage, fencing, paving, tanks and tree removal.

If you are considering works to any State Heritage Place and are unsure what needs approval, it is recommended that you contact your Local Council Planning Officer for assistance in determining whether a development application is required.



# Getting the Right Advice

If you are considering conservation works or development that affects a State Heritage Place you are recommended to seek advice from an experienced heritage consultant. Free advice on conserving State Heritage Places is available from Heritage South Australia and for more detailed advice or documentation you will need to engage a heritage consultant or heritage architect. See our [Register of Heritage Trades and Consultants](#).

An experienced heritage consultant may provide advice and assistance with:

- planning, repairs, maintenance, colour schemes and conservation work, and finding suitably skilled contractors
- avoiding potentially costly mistakes that may compromise the heritage significance of the place and/or impact on its market value
- understanding technical advice from contractors and tradespeople, particularly in cases of conflicting advice
- planning alterations, additions and renovations that are sympathetic to the heritage significance of the place
- reinstating missing elements such as fences, landscaping and other lost features and fittings that contribute to the heritage significance of the place

Heritage South Australia also produces a range of publications containing [practical conservation advice](#) on issues such as painting, rising damp, cleaning stone masonry and creating a maintenance check list.

Heritage South Australia has a team of highly experienced heritage conservation architects who can help you. Early engagement means a quicker referral response time as a part of development approval requirements. We encourage owners to [contact](#) our conservation team to discuss their ideas and to use our [Register of Heritage Trades and Consultants](#) when planning any development or conservation work. Phone (08) 8124 4922 or email [DEW.StateHeritageDA@sa.gov.au](mailto:DEW.StateHeritageDA@sa.gov.au)

For more information on any aspect of development affecting State Heritage Places please contact the Conservation Team in Heritage South Australia on (08) 8124 4922 or email [DEW.StateHeritageDA@sa.gov.au](mailto:DEW.StateHeritageDA@sa.gov.au).





## Design Advice to Government Agencies

The [Office for Design and Architecture South Australia](#) (ODASA) led by the South Australian Government Architect has expertise in architecture, heritage, landscape architecture, urban design and urban planning. The Design for Government team within ODASA provides professional and independent advice to government agencies and private sector design teams undertaking building works to government owned assets, including to State Heritage Places. ODASA can provide advice on project team formation, early scope and brief preparation, document review and perform design risk assessments on behalf of government.

## Building Upgrade Finance Scheme

People wishing to adaptively reuse a State Heritage Place may be eligible for Building Upgrade Finance (BUF), available to building owners in the City of Adelaide; and Gawler, Light, Marion, Onkaparinga, Salisbury, Playford, Light, Yorke Peninsula, Murray Bridge, Alexandrina and Whyalla Councils.

Private sector finance providers provide access to capital to fund environmental and heritage works for non-residential buildings. Finance is secured against the land via a local council charge, with repayment made through the local council rates billing process and transferred to the financier by the local council.

Information about the Building Upgrade Finance Scheme is available on the Adelaide City Council website:

[cityofadelaide.com.au/about-council/grants-sponsorship-incentives/building-upgrade-finance/](http://cityofadelaide.com.au/about-council/grants-sponsorship-incentives/building-upgrade-finance/)

## Funding Assistance

### SA Heritage Conservation Grants

DEW periodically offers heritage grant funding for conservation works to State Heritage Places or within State Heritage Areas. Calls for applications are made widely and grants made on a dollar-for-dollar basis on a competitive basis.

A specific grant scheme is also available for Heritage Tourism projects. Information about SA Heritage Grants is available on the Heritage South Australia website:

[environment.sa.gov.au/topics/heritage/heritage-grants](http://environment.sa.gov.au/topics/heritage/heritage-grants)

### Government-Owned Heritage Grants

Adaptive reuse projects for Government-owned State Heritage Places may be eligible funding from the Government-Owned Heritage Fund. Documentation for the site related to its heritage value may be eligible for full funding (including Conservation Management Plans, Asset Surveys and Climate Risk Assessments). Financial assistance over several financial years can be negotiated. Visit the Heritage SA website for more information at:

[environment.sa.gov.au/topics/heritage/government-owned-heritage-fund](http://environment.sa.gov.au/topics/heritage/government-owned-heritage-fund)

### Other Grants

There are several other sources of funding that may be available for adaptive reuse projects. A list of grants available for use in heritage places is available at:

[environment.sa.gov.au/topics/heritage/heritage-grants](http://environment.sa.gov.au/topics/heritage/heritage-grants)

### Support for development proposals involving State Heritage Areas/Places

Heritage SA General enquires: 8124 4960 or online at:

[environment.sa.gov.au/topics/heritage](http://environment.sa.gov.au/topics/heritage)



# Adaptive Reuse for Local Heritage Places

While the content provided here primarily relates to State Heritage Places and Areas, it is also acknowledged that local heritage places will also be subject to adaptive reuse and may face the same obstacles as state heritage buildings. For further information on adaptive reuse for local heritage buildings, contact your local council in the first instance.

Other organisations providing guidance on the adaptive reuse of local heritage buildings include the following:

- City of Adelaide  
[cityofadelaide.com.au/development/city-heritage/heritage-incentives-success-stories/adaptive-reuse/](http://cityofadelaide.com.au/development/city-heritage/heritage-incentives-success-stories/adaptive-reuse/)
- Attorney General's Department – Planning and Land Use Services  
[plan.sa.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0010/744427/Protecting\\_heritage\\_and\\_character\\_in\\_the\\_Planning\\_and\\_Design\\_Code.pdf](http://plan.sa.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0010/744427/Protecting_heritage_and_character_in_the_Planning_and_Design_Code.pdf)
- Attorney General's Department – Office for Design and Architecture SA  
[odasa.sa.gov.au](http://odasa.sa.gov.au)





## Definitions

### **Adaptive reuse**

Re-purposing an existing building for a new use. Adaptive reuse may include upgrades, external additions, major internal space reorganisation and replacement of essential services and infrastructure

### **BUF**

Building Upgrade Finance

### **Building Code**

The *Building Code of Australia*

### **DEW**

Department for Environment and Water

### **South Australian Heritage Register**

The Register maintained by the South Australian Heritage Council under the *Heritage Places Act 1993*

### **SPP 3**

State Planning Policy 3: Adaptive Reuse

## Associated Documents and References

*Building Code of Australia*

*Heritage Places Act 1993 and Heritage Places Regulations 2020*

*Ministerial Building Standard MBS 001 Upgrading health and safety in existing buildings 2019*

*Planning and Design Code*, practice directions and guidelines.

*Planning Design and Infrastructure Act 2016*, associated Regulations,

*State Planning Policy 3: Adaptive Reuse*

*The Burra Charter: The Australia ICOMOS Charter for Places of Cultural Significance, 2013.* (In particular Conservation Processes Articles 14 – 33)







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