

# HERITAGE RAILWAY WORKSHOP

the Large Erecting Shop at the Eveleigh Railway Workshops

*The Finest Railway Workshop Building in Australia*





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# Forward



***The proposed workshop and museum. . . will guarantee the future of heritage railway operations in this state and will provide Sydney with another world class visitor attraction***

If you're going to have active rail heritage, it needs to be somewhere that people can actually have access to it.

The importance of active heritage conservation has long been advocated by academics and historians. The State Government should make a greater effort to preserve the existing intangible cultural heritage at Eveleigh which gives meaning to the place and its past.

There has been lip-service given to heritage conservation. The sole focus has been on adaptive re-use of the built fabric to support commercial re-development: only the shell remains. Basically, we're talking about the recolonisation of a site without adequate resources being given to making the heritage accessible to the broader community.

The New South Wales Government is out of step with governments elsewhere in the country. In Queensland, the State Government has provided \$20m towards re-development of Ipswich Railway workshops which contain a functional museum, alongside an operational railway workshop where heritage work continues.

The Labor Government in NSW has had since the 1990s to do adequate heritage interpretation but there has been minuscule heritage funding provided for a design plan and signage. So whilst people can say, 'Oh wow, what a beautiful building' and admire the romance of the rail industry, there is no sign of the people who once occupied that site. People coming to the area don't understand the connection to the past or the social value of the site.

*Associate Professor LucyTaksa  
Director Industrial Relations Research Centre  
University of NSW*

# The History



The Large Erecting Shop is the oldest and longest continuous operating railway workshops in Australia. The place is still functioning as workshops servicing steam railway locomotives, rollingstock and diesels. It is part of the greater Eveleigh Workshop site but unlike all the other buildings, it still retains its rail workshop context and skills. Eveleigh's original design and placement near Sydney formed part of its economic viability allowing easy access to the main rail hub (Sydney Station) and to the rest of the State. This close access to Sydney is still vital today in the economic viability of preserving and running of heritage trains. The impact of the work carried out at the Large Erecting Shop was enjoyed locally, regionally and nationally by the past operation of steam locomotives to every mainland state in Australia.

The Eveleigh Railway Workshops are some of the finest historic railway engineering workshops in the world and Eveleigh contained one of the most complete late 19th century and early 20th century forge installations, collection of cranes and power systems, in particular the hydraulic system. The place is of international significance and is one of Australia's finest industrial heritage items. The value of the place is increased by the fact that it is comprised of assemblages, collections and operational systems rather than individual items still in use.

Conversely, the significance will be reduced by its closure or adaptive reuse, relocation of rolling stock, machinery and its disassociation from the operating rail network. Not only will the Large Erecting Workshop cultural significance be reduced but the significance of the greater Eveleigh Railway Workshops will be reduced.

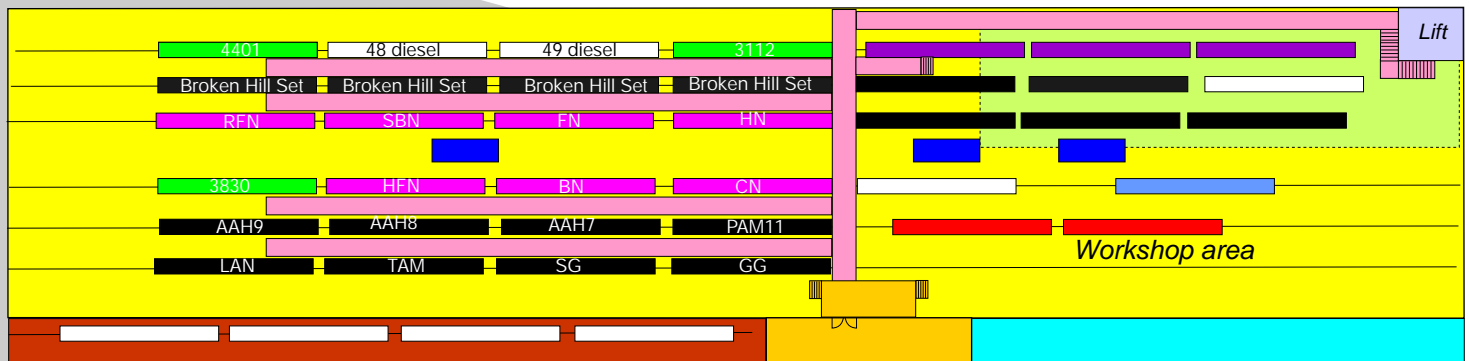


# The History



- In continuous operation as a rail servicing workshop 127 years still in its original format
- Designed by Whitton (trained by John Fowler of the Forth over the Firth Bridge fame) and George Cowdery (trained by Isambard Kingdom Brunel) bringing cutting edge industrial revolution technology to Australia
- The building and others making up the Eveleigh group are iconic in design and proportion
- the political birth place of 1 Governor General of Australia, 1 Prime Ministers and 25 parliamentarians and the inaugural Secretary of the Nurses Association
- the home for twenty years of heritage steam locomotive operations in NSW including the iconic 38 Class locomotives with carriages
- Governor-General Lord Hopetoun's carriage built and stored on site
- A centre of skills and expertise in maintenance/operation of heritage trains directly passed on from retired employees
- One of group of large industrial buildings that form an extended corridor on the main rail access into Sydney
- The place where the Great National Strike commenced in 1917
- A significant place Aboriginal people of Redfern as one of the few places that offered employment, training and employment transfers from regional NSW to the city
- Collection of original machinery including overhead cranes and machinery from all phases of its history up until today

# The Concept



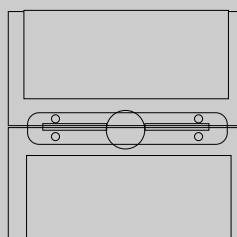
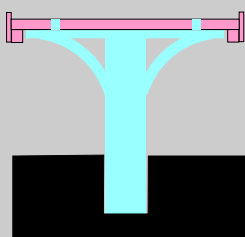
- Running Locomotive
- Running Carriages
- Static Locomotive
- Static Carriages
- Locomotive Restoration
- Carriage Restoration
- Spare Storage
- Operations Offices
- Elevated Walkways
- Mezzanine Floor
- Lift to Mezzanine
- Entrance Hall
- Entrance Forecourt



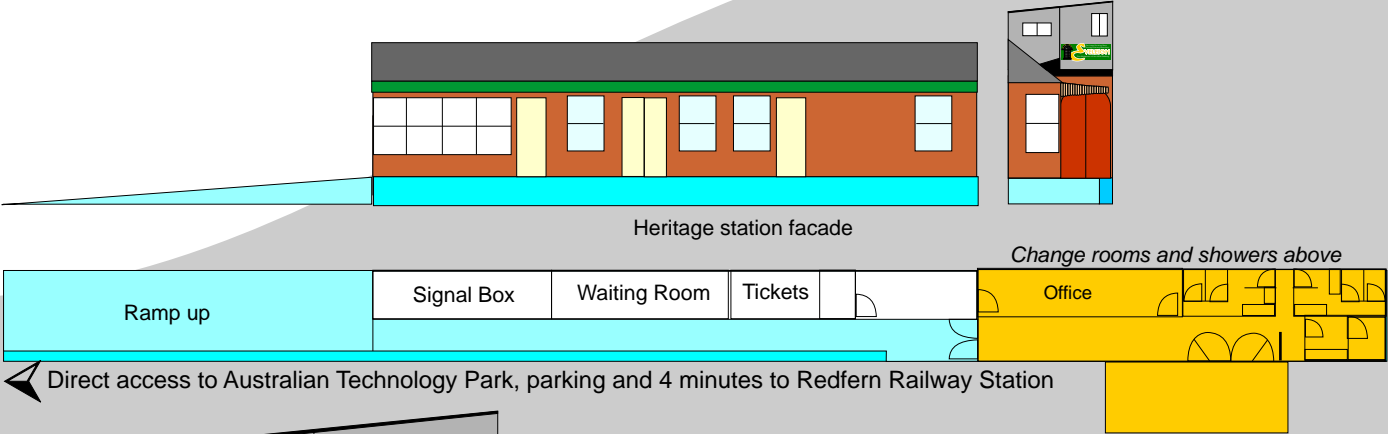
View from Mezzanine Floor

## Removable Walkways

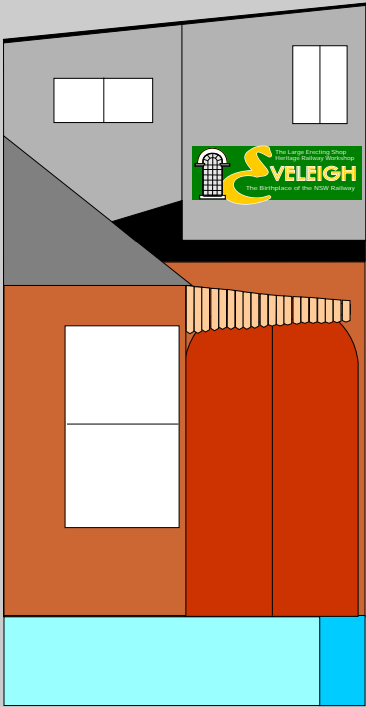
- Can be dismantled and removed for workshop access
- Walkways platform height
- Removable fence stops for ends
- Removable stairs for ends where access is required to workshop floor
- Wheelchair accessible



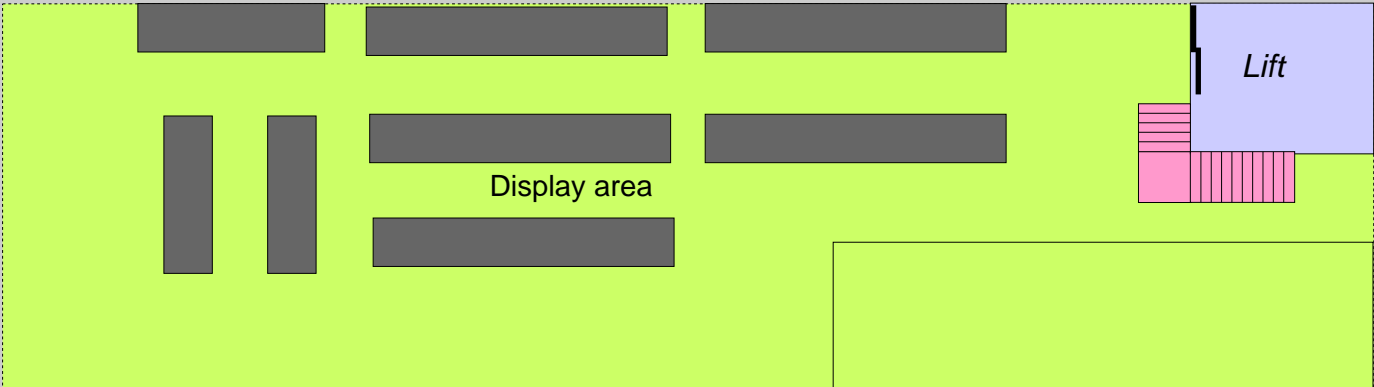
# The Concept



## The Entrance



Proposed entrance site



## Mezzanine Level

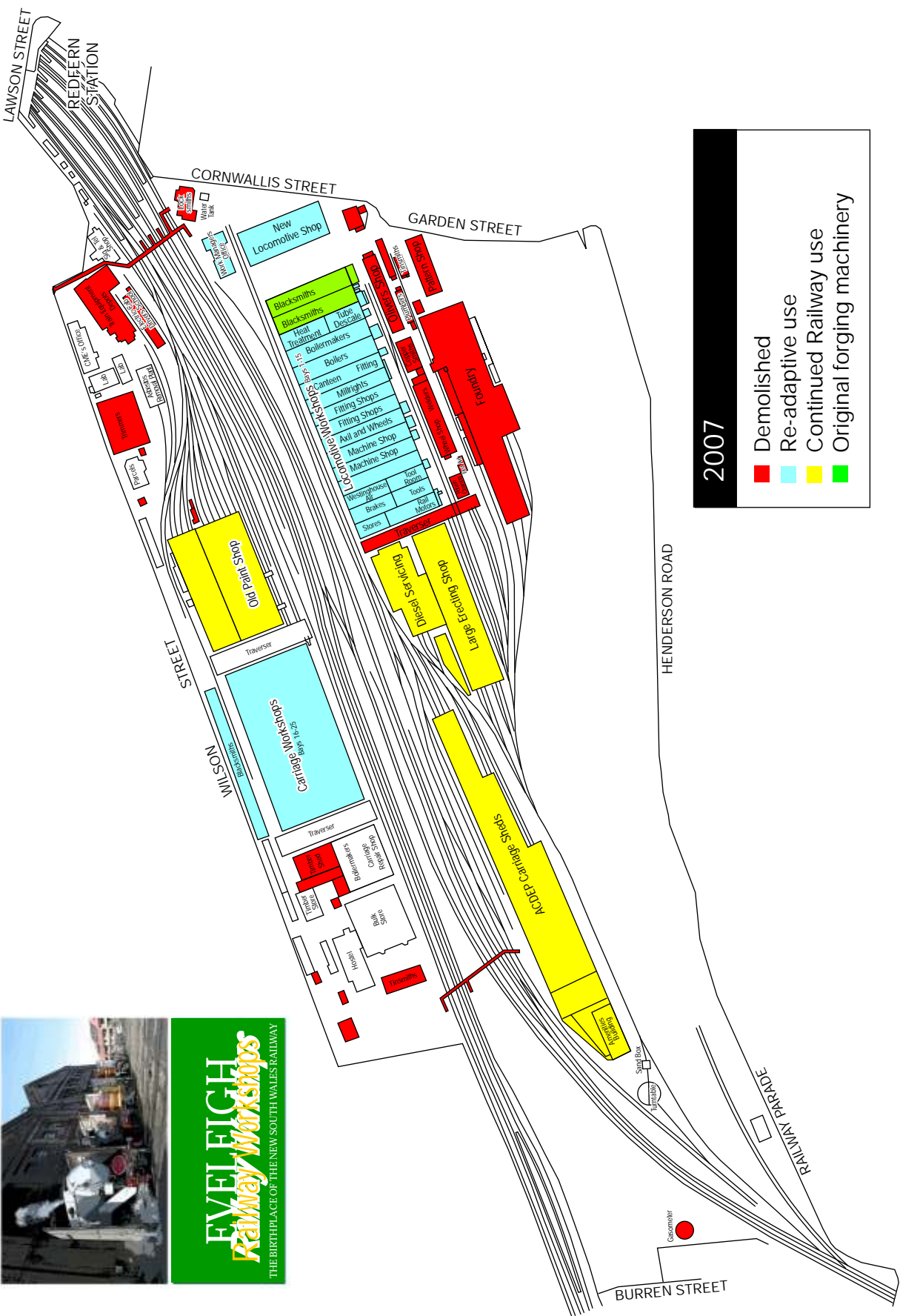
# The Vision



- Access for rail heritage groups.
- The preservation of a building and contents of National Significance.
- The retention of an important association with the foundation of Labor history in Australia and the local Aboriginal population.
- The preservation of a potential source of research into work practices, railway history and technology.
- The preservation of a venue where traditional trade skills can be taught and a living link with retired expertise can be maintained.
- The preservation of a communal asset used by volunteers for the last 20 years to preserve, conserve and restore operational steam hauled trains with access to 200 active volunteers.
- The preservation of a communal asset used by conservators and volunteers for the last 20 years to preserve, conserve and restore operation steam hauled trains for the Powerhouse Museum.
- The enjoyment of heritage steam train running will be greatly maximised due to an operational base near the economic hub of Sydney Station.
- The enjoyment of operational heritage steam trains will be greatly maximised throughout NSW and Australia through the retention of an historic operational facility.
- The apprentice-training scheme would continue to train rail apprentices in a wider appreciation of rail operation and skills in a heritage workshop environment.
- Guided tours so the public at last can enjoy this place of cathedral proportions in steam.



# Eveleigh Today



# Tourism, heritage, unique skills



New Zealand has taken over as the leading South Pacific tourist destination for railway enthusiasts, especially in regards to steam trains. Special excursions are planned throughout the year and there is a concerted effort to attract the train riders, the train spotters and the train photographers.

Across Australia we have individual tourist projects catering for these tourists with Midlands in Western Australia and Ipswich in Queensland but sadly Sydney falls behind as a destination for heritage rail tourists. While a concerted effort is being made by RailCorp to highlight the Thirlmere site, little thought has been given to its major drawback, its logistical position. This is reflected in its annual attendance figures over the past years. The location is too far away from the tourist's base in Sydney, the public transport support is pathetic and people will not travel for 4 hours. How many tourists are lost for this reason?

We are in the best position of all states to capture tourists with our rail history, our rail heritage organisations and our rail infrastructure but the State Government does not recognise the potential for the tourist dollar, one of the top export earners for most developed countries..

While the adaptive reuse policy can be commended for saving many of the buildings on the greater Eveleigh Railway Workshop site the real context and the depth of the cultural landscape can only be understood if the Large Erecting Shop, machinery, contents and access including the turntable are preserved in operation. This requires the protection of the building, protection of the building, access and contents by a zoning that it has enjoyed for the last 126 years, which would allow it to continue to operate as a **Railway Workshop**.

Other adaptive re-use projects at the Eveleigh site such as the Carriageworks Theatre will be that much more effective positioned around the activities of this working Shop, and it will keep Eveleigh alive. The Large Erecting Shop at South Eveleigh is an ideal location for a heritage workshop and museum complex - would cost far less than the Carriageworks Theatre but would see a world class tourist attraction with greater patronage and prestige for New South Wales. Yes, museums are part of the Arts Minister's portfolio but the site is a valuable public asset. Our "Eveleigh Today" map shows the true position when it comes to what heritage retention has occurred. Only two bays of the Australian Technology Park remain without the Large, very little to show that this was a railway complex.

# Tourism, heritage, unique skills



Build a museum in a true heritage listed railway building with easy access from the Australian Technology Park.

Build a working museum with heritage skills and re-introduce heritage apprentice training. This is the best place in NSW to restore, maintain and operate heritage steam & diesel locomotives because this is where the skilled steam people can be found.

See locomotives and carriages being worked on in their original authentic railway environment.

Will attract thousands more people and be self supporting. Would actually make money for the Government.

Large undercover area with sufficient height for mezzanine viewing.

High prestige value for Australia.

Valued tourist complex right in the heart of Sydney and close to all of Sydney's major museums.

This is where a large proportion of the Powerhouse Museum's 3830 locomotive was restored and locomotive 3801 was maintained here for 20 years.

Less than 3 kms from Central Railway Station and in Sydney Metropolitan area.

Continuous public transport available every day of the week.

The Large Erecting Shop is a standing, operational rail workshop with a collection of potential National Heritage Significance.

The Large Erecting Shop has an ongoing role as the only historic operational building in the so-called 'Historic Eveleigh Rail Precinct'.

The Large Erecting Shop will allow for rail heritage groups access to the Sydney passenger market.

The Large Erecting Shop allows for the economical running of heritage tourist trains from Sydney across the State (and interstate). During the last twenty years over half a million passengers have been carried by trains from the Large Erecting Shop.

The cultural and economic benefits are enjoyed locally and in remote towns where the trains have visited bringing enjoyment to both young and old while keeping the skills in their historic setting.

The "Cockatoo Run" is still the only regular heritage mainline railway tourist journey in the State and presently operates from "The Large" to Robertson via the south coast line. It is an excellent vehicle to introduce and promote tourism in the Illawarra Region.

**Once this Eveleigh facility has been lost there will only be a short term gain where its current use allows the benefits to continue for generations to come.**



# HERITAGE RAILWAY WORKSHOP

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*The Finest Railway Workshop Building in Australia*



Concept plan developed by

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