

# I · N · T · B · A · U

A U S T R A L I A C H A P T E R

Greetings from Australia,

I'm sure you will all have heard the cliché "Australia is riding on the back of a Mining Boom" ... well you're right! ...and our recently acquired Prime Minister and Her Tax Officials know it!

I recently hosted a Luncheon of a number of unnamed luminaries who work within the property and building space (Professionals / Builders / Developers) and was surprised to see some truly long faces...

Having quizzed these Gentlemen continuously... the optimism once shared seems to have dissipated at a formidable pace even post GFC...How so ? Well I was astonished to be on the receiving end of the age old complaint - "hold ups with Town Planning! Objections to our Development! We are losing millions fighting battles over height controls, it's ludicrous"!

Well as it happens the subject matter was one of Melbourne's Iconic Hotels, namely "The Windsor" in Spring Street Melbourne CBD - a very good example of "where Australian Architecture is today"

*Quote (from the Windsor Hotel Developers) ..."Melbourne's Windsor Hotel has announced a \$260 Million re - development proposal aimed at securing the future of Melbourne's only 19th Century Grand Hotel"*

*Highlights of the scheme include a new 25 storey curtain wall glass tower and the replacement of the corner 1960's addition"*

I would encourage readers of these notes to view the attachments and can I now say the Former Minister for Planning Justin Madden (Architect by background) approved the Scheme as designed by Denton Corker Marshall.

Has the world gone mad? The scheme as presented in no way complements its neighbours in the first instance being the State

Parliament House (see attachment) which is opposite - nor has there been any meaningful consultation with the General Public - as the Minister "called in" the Permit ! ...I'm sure you are wondering how my luncheon progressed?

Well – I'm a taller man 6ft 3 and Scottish by Heritage - so it was on! Gentlemen Gentlemen - I proclaimed! Using the Windsor Hotel as an example of Planning Policy gone wrong - do you realise that if we lived in Paris we were likely to be on the receiving end of a car bomb? Nonsense! ...was the reply! Have you ever heard of "Plan B"?

Well without boring you - the luncheon did prove successful - to me anyway, as I established with those that are at the core face of the industry the following;

1. A recognised Tertiary Course is Vital to create the Acorn of Knowledge in Classical Architecture - but it takes a lot of "Google" hits to find same in Australia.
2. To raise an "attitude" which dare I say it - is asleep in this country we need to speak! It's not just the National Trust who should be leading debate....I personally wouldn't mind seeing a headline one day

*"INTBAU Slams Project as a Gross Overdevelopment"* or similar.

3. And if my Developer Friends could see an upside to a Plan B i.e.; being a more sympathetic Architectural Solution... that improves their Economic Modeling - then we will be in front.
4. "Lead by Example" well we have all heard this before - but we need to show that people respond well to Tradition and Greenfield Sites can be transformed - and work financially, IF project initiators dare to be wild.

There is room to offer the 5 star Green Building Rating - but! Our power will only ignite if it is legislated and we need to lobby to prove these initiatives up - "our" Architecture will then fall into place.

And that other famous line will be heard ....*"see..! it works"*

Unfortunately - without too many Traditional Architecture Projects on the Ground in Australia – it's a hard road to plough...having said this, it is my view that collaborative Mentor Relationships should be encouraged and I have done this with the National Trust - specifically in Victoria Australia.

The Former Minister Garrett (Environment and Heritage) was a strong advocate to our cause and helped initiate the (Former) Rudd Government Stimulus Package for Heritage Buildings which transformed many wonderful and needy buildings in Australia as a whole - a great result...but can I say, the Victorian Branch is distributed AUD \$250K from the State to look after its buildings! Quite ridiculous...

Money IS the root of evil when it comes to Heritage and Traditional Architecture in this country...though we are fortunate to at least have collaborated into a voice and it is with pleasure I associate with the INTBAU cause.

Kindest Regards and with Best Wishes,

Scott J Strachan  
Australia INTBAU



*Windsor Hotel with Twilight Emerald*



*Parliament House*