

# GUILD HOUSE RENOVATIONS AND EXTENSIONS – PLAN – INFORMATION FOR MEMBERS

## Background

Guild House is a significant asset for the Guild. In 2019, as part of its stewardship role, the Management Committee began looking at improving physical access to Guild House. This followed on from a major improvement program undertaken in 2016-2017 to remove asbestos, replace the roof, and in Rusty Walkley Hall, installing in floor power points, improving the lighting and painting.

It has been identified that there are significant physical access issues in Guild House which are having impacts on members with mobility issues and are a potential safety risk. Both the front section (the Office, entry hall and the Collection room) and the back section (toilets, kitchen and second workshop/wet area space) are at different levels to the Rusty Walkley Hall. With many of our members using walking aids and at least one member using a wheelchair, this presents a current and future risk for the Guild and a dis-incentive for people to participate.

The Disability Working Group established by the Management Committee in 2019, identified five essential issues to be considered:

- compliant access to and egress from Guild House;
- access within Guild House;
- access to the disability toilet (as the entry doors are not wide enough for a wheelchair);
- signage inside and outside Guild House; and
- parking.

Following several months of discussion and consideration of several options to address various aspects of these problems, the Management Committee concluded that small 'fixes' would not work. Only a more holistic approach would be satisfactory.

Simultaneously in 2020, the Management Committee was developing its strategic plan for 2020/21 to 2022/23. One of the elements of that Strategic Plan is increasing access to our Collection.

The Guild maintains a collection of traditional and contemporary embroidery and lace, for enjoyment, inspiration, study, research, and teaching. Most items have been donated by Guild members, tutors, and the community of WA. To complement the Collection, contemporary items are purchased when funds become available. Many pieces have wonderful stories.

The Collection Archives hold many historical publications associated with embroidery and lace dating back over a century. One of these treasures from late 1800s is a series of hand painted graphs for needlepoint tapestry and cross stitch.

The Guild's Collection is the largest and most significant textile collection in the State, and we have a responsibility not only to all our members but to all Western Australians to make it accessible.

Unfortunately, the physical space available to the Collection is limited and is now a major constraint on growth and using items within the Collection for inspiration, research and enjoyment of the variety of embroidery styles represented.

In January 2019, the Collection Group worked very hard to clean, catalogue, accession, and recorded on Mosaic data base, each of the 2200 pieces in the Collection. This data base will soon be available to Guild members which will significantly improve accessibility.

## The Plan

Having identified the issues/requirements above, the Management Committee decided it needed some expert advice/assistance. We engaged an architect, Trent Woods from the firm Officer Woods located in Fremantle. We chose that firm because it was already familiar with the activities of the Guild and Guild House having done some preliminary work in 2014. At that time, Officer Woods suggested that the Guild compile a brief of its requirements. The Guild proceeded to identify a list of requirements for Guild House in priority order. The first two items on the list were 'replace the roof' and 'check the quality of wiring and upgrade as necessary'. These two items were actioned in 2016- 2017. The remaining items are identical to the issues outlined in the Background section of this paper.

Trent Woods was engaged in February 2020. We agreed that the scope of the work would have several aspects:

- Universal access into the building and universal access between parts of the building;
- Provision of compliant universal access car parking bay;
- Provision of universal access amenities facility;
- Extend the facility (within financial means) to provide greater or consolidated space; and
- Update the Guild building's street presentation.

Early on in our discussion, it became obvious that raising the floor level in both the front and back sections of the building was the only practical option to achieve our objective of universal access. Since this would require re-fitting the toilets, we could achieve objective three in the process. However, raising the floor in the front area would make some areas non-compliant for workspaces as the ceiling space would be less than required. They would be defined as storage spaces. This is obviously not desirable as it would reduce our space useable by people.

The best way to achieve objective 2 (universal access car parking bay) was to move it to the front of the building with necessary space, signage etc.

Objective 4 (extending the building to obtain more space) was the subject of much of the discussion. Options such as adding an extra storey (too expensive given that the current walls of Guild House were not built with this in mind) or building a two storey addition at the back with car parking space retained on the ground floor level (too expensive for the additional space gained), were considered but rejected.

The option that we are pursuing is to raise the floor levels in the front and back areas abutting Rusty Walkley hall and push the front wall out approximately 2.5 meters. This gives an additional 22 square meters and, when the space is reconfigured, provides the Collection with 47 square meters (currently 17 square meters).

This plan (at Attachment B) meets all our objectives:

- It ensures that all the front and back areas are compliant and can be used by people;
- It provides universal access to the building and between all parts of the building;
- It provides proper access to the disabled toilet and retains the second toilet;
- It enables us to reconfigure the back room to best utilize the space for the kitchen, wet area and workshop/meeting space;
- It provides significantly more space for the Collection with both a room for storage and a room for display, conservation workshops etc.;
- The new entry arrangements are accessible, more welcoming and more efficient for the office staff;
- The new window from the verandah to Rusty Walkley hall will allow more natural light into the hall and open up the space;
- The two collections rooms and the Rusty Walkley hall can all be opened separately giving flexibility in access;
- For very little additional cost, the brick work on the three sides of the front extension can be patterned and provide Guild House with a distinctive aspect and street presence.

## Implications of the Plan

There are two major implications of this plan – cost and disruption.

### Cost

The cost is estimated to be \$420,000<sup>i1</sup>. This is a significant commitment by the Guild to Guild House.

At the 30<sup>th</sup> June 2020, the Guild had over \$266,000 in the bank (Cash and Term Deposit). This amount has accumulated over many years through fund raising, donations and tight annual budget management. As a not-for-profit organisation, it was quite permissible to hold cash reserves. However, it is important to understand the reasons for holding reserves. The main reason for holding cash reserves is to have funds set aside for use in

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<sup>1</sup> Quantity Surveyors Report Jan 2020

emergency situations. The cash that is saved is used to cover costs or expenses that are unplanned or unexpected. In most cases, the reserves are specifically for short-term needs.

Deciding on a reserve amount is an important financial decision for Management Committee. In the commercial sector many businesses will hold enough funds to cover 3 to 6 months of operations. The Guild has good insurance cover so the Management Committee has decided that reserves in the order of \$50,000 are needed (as expenditure is around \$100,000 per annum).

Failure to set aside enough cash makes us financially vulnerable – but holding too much in reserve means we are not taking full advantage of the opportunity to invest in our future. Money in our reserves should be there for a reason (i.e. earmarked for a purpose) and not just sitting in the bank.

The Management Committee believes that it is important that Guild House is fit for our purposes and the planned renovations and extensions will place the Guild in a very good position to meet its objectives for the next two to three decades. It has therefore agreed that we could commit \$200,000 to the project.

This leaves a shortfall of around \$220,000 which would need to be met by grant funding and donations. Work has commenced on identifying possible grant opportunities. We will not commit to any construction contract without being assured of these additional funds.

#### Disruption to the use of Guild House.

Any work on both the front and back sections of Guild House will require us to vacate the building as the site will be dangerous and there will be no safe access and no toilet or kitchen facilities. The planned extension at the front of the building will add some time to the building works. At this stage it is estimated that the building works will take about six months. So, we will need to vacate Guild House for that period.

We are confident that we can board off Rusty Walkley Hall and the two storerooms that come off the Hall. So, there will be no need to empty the contents from those areas except for those items we will need elsewhere (e.g. the photocopier, tables etc.). However, that will mean that there will be no access to the Library.

The front and back area will need to be completely vacated. We are developing a plan for this which will include assistance with packing, removal and storage.

Groups which currently meet in Guild House will be most affected. We have had preliminary discussions with Melville City Council to investigate whether it can provide any assistance in finding an alternative venue/s. There is considerable support from senior Council staff who will approach the Council early in 2021 seeking in principle support to assist us with suitable accommodation at minimal cost.