

SALVATION ARMY HALL - APARTMENTS

We had been recycling old warehouses in Fremantle for a couple of years and had got to know a few of the problems. We had worked for professional developers, who were delightful and we had worked for amateur developers, who were unbelievably awful...always whingeing, looking for someone to blame and incredibly greedy. It was this experience that led to a very strong desire to become our own clients.

Things we had learnt in Fremantle...People do not mind living in houses that do not necessarily look like houses. Keep as much of the old fabric as possible...no matter how grubby or junky or stupid. It is a resource and it is perceived by buyers of great value. 'Yes, I live in a recycled warehouse in Fremantle'...It is really a new house inside an old shell with a few old exposed trusses outside.

Each house needs direct access to private outdoor space...open to the sky. Each house needs at least one parking bay. In Perth we believe it is also essential to have a secure connection between car and house.

As far as possible each house should be entered from outdoors...a courtyard, a lane or a street.

The biggest market and the most profitable is for tiny 50sq.m. bedsitters.

Fire separation is best achieved vertically rather than horizontally, which means 2 or 3 storey houses separated by masonry common walls.

Much of the recycling in Fremantle made good sense; from both a heritage and an economic point of view. Some of the more recent stuff borders on the insane. Ugly, derelict old shells have been retained simply to achieve density bonuses.

For mine, I do not get too uptight about heritage. I think human culture will survive regardless (It might even be the prime replicator).

However, I do think the street spaces driven by the subdivision of our inner cities are very important and should be cherished. The size and scale of the elements of the street wall should be maintained. If bits and pieces of the street wall are renewed from time to time...not only, so what...but great!

The Salvation Army Hall (Architect Captain Dale Melbourne Salvos 1929). It was interesting that the title was first registered in the name of William Booth, London, who actually founded the Salvos...blood and fire but an organisation not exactly dedicated to architecture.

It seemed that the facade and front part contributed significantly to the street wall and should be kept.

We may well have decided to demolish most of the building. We did not do so because keeping most of the fabric, not only resulted in a more varied development it was a far cheaper option.

In all of our dealings, I must give credit to the Perth City Council...professional, efficient, creative and helpful.

The result...if you look across the page...you may well say what a funny looking building...the units are ok but what a drastic change of use.

It seems a long way from stand alone architecture...where is the juxtaposition of styles? Where is the clever architectural comment?

Perhaps this is the nature of sustainable development. If we do re-use resources and the existing building fabric is a valuable resource and should be re-used, perhaps we are going to end up with some funny results.

Let's disguise our lack of ability...let's call it 'Australian Inpro'.

Brian Klopper

