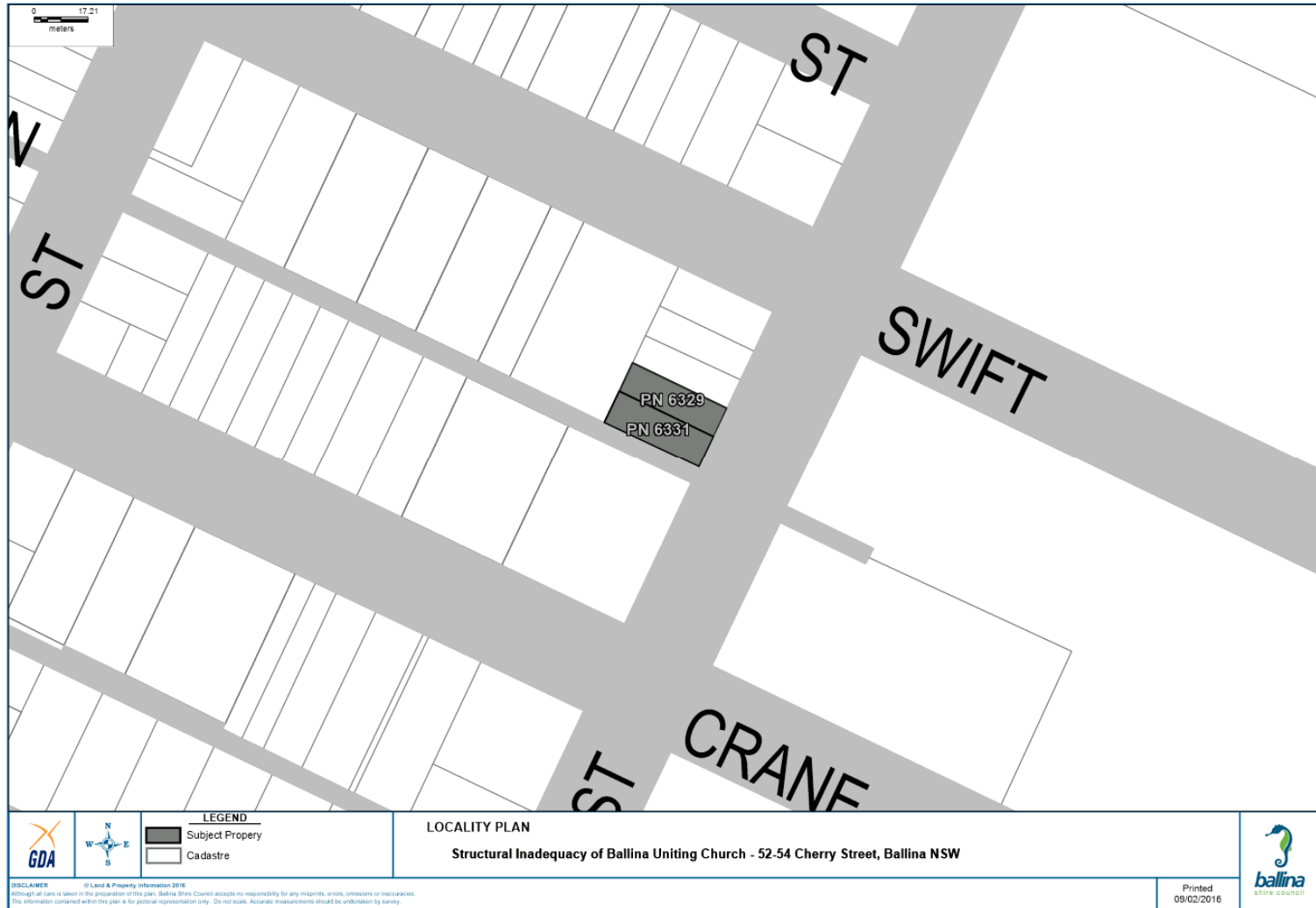


8.3 Ballina Uniting Church - Structural Inadequacy.DOC



GREG ALDERSON & ASSOCIATES

A.B.N. 58 594 160 789

CHARTERED PROFESSIONAL ENGINEERS & SCIENTISTS

OUR REF: S:12094_7

YOUR REF:

17 March, 2015

Ballina Uniting Church
Cherry Street
BALLINA NSW 2478

Attention: Mary Birch

Re: Monitoring Report of Structure, Uniting Church Cherry Street Ballina.

Mary,

Following your request an inspection of the Church building was undertaken on the 13th March, 2015, and we make the following report based on that inspection.

The weather at the time of the inspection was fine and sunny, but with some cloud.

The inspection focused primarily on the old church building and the external walls supporting the roof and any movement that may have occurred and the degree of that movement since the last inspection.

The inspection was a non-destructive inspection, although conducted inside and outside of the building it did not include investigation inside any of the walls of the structure.

Report:

13th March 2015

1. There were similar cracks to the inspection in 2014, but some of the internal cracks are difficult to measure accurately. It is estimated that the gap between the truss supports and the outer walls is about 50mm on the north wall and 30 to 40mm on the south when observed from the floor of the church. The readings are similar to the readings in October 2014.
2. Photographs have been taken for the record, some are attached more can be supplied if required via computer.
3. The Vestry at the rear of the church is similar to the October 2014 inspection.
4. There is a horizontal cracking in both the north and south walls at about 1m from the top of the wall, seems to line up with the top of the external buttresses, or the top of the 2/3 height from the ground beam.

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MEMBER OF THE CIVIL COLLEGE, NATIONAL REGISTERED CIVIL ENGINEER, RPEQ 4907

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5. In the eastern wall of the nave there is horizontal cracking for almost the full width plus vertical cracking over the south door is still present.
6. The foyer to the church had been repainted in 2014. There was no evidence of water leaks in this area, as before the repair.

External

7. On the north side wall there is cracking and measurements were taken with a laser measuring device.
8. The outward lean of the north wall, measured at the worst location, which was adjacent to the 3rd buttress, was 73mm, compared to 70mm measured in October 2014 and 45mm in June 2014.
9. The southern wall is also vertical at each end, but falling outward by 78mm at the 3rd buttress, compared to 67mm in October 2014 and to 38mm in June 2014, both measured at the centre position of the wall.

Conclusion:

- A. The church building has continued to move outwards. We have now measured the outside of the long wall of the church, north and south walls, for a third time.
- B. The first measurement established a base for future measurements. The June 2014 reading of the fall outwards was 45mm at the top of the wall on the north, and 38mm at the top of the south wall.
- C. The measurements taken at this inspection, on the 13th March 2015, compared against the initial June 2014 reading, showed that the walls had continued to move out at the top. The north wall by 28mm and the south wall by a further 40mm.
- D. It would appear that most of the movement outwards is in the top third of the north and south walls. This creates an exaggerated condition for the top third of the brickwork, in that it has a greater angle of lean.
- E. The gaps in the brickwork on the southern wall are not yet covered, as mentioned previously and moisture could be entering.
- F. The accuracy of the laser measuring device and our operation of same would be about 10mm given the height of the wall and the sensitivity of the device.
- G. From our observations, and even allowing for some accuracy corrections for the equipment, we would say that the walls have moved out further.
- H. Given the walls are continuing to move, and there has been no temporary restraint to stop further outward move, nor have the openings in the brickwork on the southern side been covered, we think the Church should not be used and services held only in the hall. There is also the matter of the fall of the walls outward, which could impact on a space of at least 6m out from the

● Page 3

walls on both sides. This 6m area should be fenced off. This includes the public laneway to the south and the space between the Church and the hall

- I. The failure could be the trusses connections let go, which is the worst case as they would then push out quickly as well as fall down in the nave of the Church.
- J. The second failure option could be that the bricks get to such an angle that they fall and the trusses then fall down more gradually as they will be held by the neighbouring trusses. The point at which this is likely to occur is when the "out of plumb" condition of the wall reaches 110mm, being that the centre of gravity of the top bricks on the wall. That would mean that the bricks would be at or on the outside edge of the bricks at the base.
- K. Assuming a limit of 110mm, and then adopting a factor of safety of 30mm, approximately 125%, we should make a call at about 80mm, "out of plumb" as the value to cease use and install protection.
- L. As the largest movement out in a 6month period, as monitored by me, was 29mm on the south wall between June 2014 and October 2014, and it has moved a further 11mm. We are concerned that if the movement is again in the order of 29mm, over the 70mm and 78mm already moved, then the critical value of 80mm may be exceeded.
- M. From the readings taken at this inspection the north wall is 73mm out of plumb and the south wall 78mm out of plumb. It is important to take action before there is a fall of part of the structure, rather than wait until it reaches a critical value, although assumed, as detailed above.

Action:

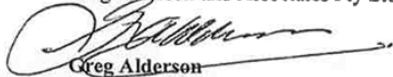
- As this is the third of the measurements taken by this office, and the walls appear to be continuing to move, to a point where they will potentially fall, action is therefore required to protect the Church members and the public.
- The sagging trusses and damaged brickwork in the Church should be repaired ASAP.
- In the interim, until repair is completed, the Church Services and all other uses of the Church building should cease.
- The public laneway to the south should be closed and fenced off for at least 6m from the wall of the Church. Council approval of this closure would be required along with a certified Traffic Control Plan, signage etc.
- On the northern side of the Church, the area between the Church and the Hall, should be fenced off and all access denied.
- If the repair cannot be commenced immediately, then the empty Church should have a support scaffold installed to support the 3rd roof trusses, so that it does not or cannot place any further outward loads on the cracked brickwork. Further sagging of the timber trusses would then be supported on the scaffolding.
- Monitoring intervals, of the wall and truss movements, should be reduced to 3 monthly, if repairs are not immediate.

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- Further temporary support measures could be investigated for the brick walls, to keep the potential danger to the public and Church members to a minimum. These investigations should centre around the public laneway to the north and the use of the Church hall and the containment of any failure to within a designated space.

If you have any questions, please contact our office.

Yours faithfully,
Greg Alderson and Associates Pty Ltd.



Greg Alderson
Chartered Professional Engineer
Attachments: photographs

Ardill Payne & Partners 

ARDILL PAYNE

& P a r t n e r s
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ABN: 51 808 558 977



STRUCTURAL CONDITION REPORT

At:
Uniting Church
54 Cherry Street
Ballina, NSW

For:
Uniting Church of Australia

August 2015

Structural Condition Report
Uniting Church, Cherry Street, Ballina

Page 1

Document Control Sheet

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Uniting Church, Cherry Street, Ballina

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1 Introduction & Scope of Works

Ardill Payne and Partners (APP) has been engaged by the Uniting Church of Australia to undertake a site inspection of the church at 54 Cherry Street, Ballina and provide an opinion as to whether the building damage at the top of the walls renders the structure unserviceable or whether suitable and cost effective repairs can be made. The following report discusses the specific condition and structural defects observed during inspection of the building and provides commentary on suitable repairs if appropriate.

Structural inspections were undertaken in July 2015 by Bill Payne and subsequently Ursula Lammerich of APP. APP was provided with Greg Alderson's earlier research, findings and subsequent measurements of the building and its deflections. The inspections were limited to ground level assessment of the masonry cracks and rotations around the top of the walls at their juncture with the roof.

Subsequent survey measurements were undertaken by APP's surveyor to determine the extent and type of wall deflections.

This report details the structural condition observed during the site inspections and discusses potential requirements and/or rectification works.

2 Site Inspection

At the time of the inspections the church building was closed to the public. The weather during the inspection on the 8th July 2015 was very rainy and dark. This inspection consisted of a visual inspection of the exterior and interior of the church from ground floor level. The weather during the 2nd inspection on 16th July 2015 was sunny and the buttresses could be inspected in good light.

No physical access to the roof / truss level was available. No destructive testing or sampling was undertaken. The following areas were excluded from the inspection:

- Within wall cavities
- Roof/ truss connections and supports from close quarters
- beneath ground floors/slabs
- Other encapsulated areas.

3 Building Characteristics

The church building located at No. 54 Cherry Street, Ballina, at the time of the inspection, comprised of a masonry structure with a timber truss roof and corrugated iron roof sheeting. Stepped buttresses strengthen the external brick walls at the locations of the roof trusses at approximately 3m centres along the building. Four timber trusses in all are visible on the inside.

The timber trusses consist of rafter elements and two diagonal struts leading from the support points to half height points of the rafters. Dimensions of the trusses were used from the Greg Alderson measurement to check for structural behaviour in a structural analysis package.

The timber elements of the trusses are connected to each other with steel cleats and bolts.

The internal floor of the church appears to be a timber floor structure at present covered by carpet.

4 Observations

The following subsections summarize the structural issues found around and within the church building. Photos 1-8 within **Attachment 1** show the exterior and interior of the building at the time of the inspection.

4.1 Visual Inspection:

4.1.1 Internal

The structural system used to support the roof consists of timber "trusses" at approximately 3 metre centres spanning 10 metres with timber purlins at nominal 1.2 metre centres. The purlins support a timber ceiling and corrugated steel roof. The timber trusses appear to be in good structural condition. No apparent damage to the timber or the central connection point was observed. (Refer to Photo 5).

Separation between the walls and some of the decorative timber framing to the trusses can be seen (Refer to Photo 6).

An extensive horizontal crack is visible across the interior of the southern external wall. The crack line runs on a level of approx. 1m under the eaves line over the windows. This height level appears to coincide with the top of the stepped buttresses on the outside.

The northern wall shows a similar crack line though less severe than the one described for the southern wall.

4.1.2 External

Cap tiles have been removed from the decorative triangular tops of the buttresses. The cap tiles are reported to have loosened and fallen off. We understand therefore the remainders have been removed for safety reasons.

The majority of the buttresses to the outside of the brick walls show shear cracks on the 2nd to 3rd brick course from the top of the buttress, which in their form strongly suggest an outward movement. (Refer to Photo 7). These shear cracks seem to coincide in height with the crack lines on the internal wall surfaces.

On standing at the north-western corner of the building and looking along the northern wall an outward leaning/tilting of the top 1m of masonry above the buttresses can be made out even with the bare eye.

Some shear cracks have also been observed in the western gable wall on the eaves line level, underlining the impression of an outward movement of the top 1m of the northern wall and separation forces between the northern and western walls at that point.

From the exterior open brick work pockets reveal the timber truss ends. Access to the top of the walls and the truss supports was not provided, Hence a close up visual inspection of the truss supports has not been performed. (Refer to Photo 8).

4.2 Further Investigations

4.2.1 Survey of the external walls:

Rob Jacob of APP undertook a detail survey of the horizontal movement of the external masonry walls on 14th of July 2015. This survey has been undertaken to better understand the extent and possible cause of the damage. Surveys have been taken at bottom, mid-height and top level of the walls. At six points along the church building, explicitly at both ends and mid-way to the north and the south wall these measurements have been taken. (Refer to survey results, **Attachment 2**).

This arrangement of survey points have been chosen to investigate whether the damage to the external walls has been caused by the roof or whether some possible rotation of the footing caused the leaning of the wall.

The results of this survey clearly show, that both the northern and the southern walls lean outwards.

The top half of the walls appear to be leaning out under a much bigger angle than the lower half of the walls. This is especially evident between the 2nd and 3rd buttresses of the north and the south wall. Offset differences between mid and top of wall have been measured with 54mm on the northern wall and 49mm on the southern wall whereas the respective bottom halves of the walls show a mere 8mm offset to the northern and 10mm to the southern wall.

5 Structural Assessment

Based on the evidence gathered during the visual inspections, the survey and some desktop assessment the following can be concluded:

5.1 Structural Commentary

The timber roof trusses, which do not feature a tie member at the level of the supports, seem to have sagged and spread due to their rather flexible nature. Greg Alderson reported horizontal deflections of 45 to almost 80mm. APP has measured average deflections of 60mm. The “trusses” were analysed using an industry standard structural analysis package called *SpaceGass*. The modelling of the main roof “trusses” supports this observation. The model showed that without any brick restraint the “trusses” would have spread 130mm. The survey figures show that with the brick restraint the spreading has been approximately 60mm at each support.

A truss as defined by structural behaviour does not spread under vertical load. They are primarily axial structural elements and are relatively rigid. The bottom chord of the truss acts as a tie preventing any spreading of the structural element. Beams or flexural members deflect more under load and are principally subject to bending stresses. The church trusses are therefore not trusses but a type of hybrid flexural and axial structural member.

The engaged buttresses start about 1m under the actual level of the truss supports. The brickwork leaves at the top of the wall are therefore not strengthened by the buttresses. The unsupported top 1m of the external masonry walls on both the north and the south wall appear to be inadequate to transfer the horizontal spreading forces from these hybrid elements.

Based on preliminary desktop assessment the buttresses themselves are undersized to withstand permanent loads from the spreading action. They do however appear adequate for the temporary wind loads for which they would have originally been designed. Note, the majority of them show clear shear cracks in the 2nd and 3rd course from the top indicating outward movement, an evidence of their failure under permanent loading.

5.2 Survey Results

From the survey results as described in Section 4.2, a rotation of the foundation and subsequent tilting of the walls could be ruled out at this stage.

As described the lower wall part show just minimal offsets whereas the majority of the damage concentrates on the top of the walls. A tilting due to footing rotation would presumably result in a rather even tilting angle over the whole of the wall, which is not the case here.

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5.3 Discussion of Repair Options

The cracking can safely assumed to be the result of spreading of the hybrid "trusses". Greg Alderson has previously provided a tie rod detail to control further spreading of the roof. Such a solution is conventional and recommended in this instance. We would propose some amendments to the detail shown by Greg Alderson regarding connection details. However, the method of solution is essentially the same.

However, further work is required for the cracked and damaged brickwork. Strengthening of this cracked brickwork will be required to ensure structural integrity against wind loads and possible isolated dislodgment of existing loosened bricks. The extent of and type of repair work required will be determined by further evaluation. However, the anticipated method of repair would involve staggered strengthening or replacement of the external brickwork skin at the buttresses and then in between the buttresses.

A conventional repair sequence would be:

- Install ties and hand tighten at Truss 1 (T1).
- Prop both ends of T1 and tighten ties.
- On either side of T1 remove outer skin of brickwork for approximately 1.2m below the top of brickwork for 1.0 metres either side of the truss. Also remove damaged buttress brickwork. Provide a cavity filler at the bottom of the removed brickwork.
- Install new brick ties
- Reinstate outer skin of brickwork including damaged buttress brickwork. Ensure buttress is engaged with new outer skin.
- Grout or concrete fill the cavity for the top 1.2m of reconstructed wall.
- Once grout/concrete has cured remove props and ensure trusses are seated on to reconstructed brickwork.

Truss T3 could be done coincidentally with T1. Once they are completed T2 and T4 repairs could be started. Once T2 and T4 are complete infill walling between T1 and T2 could be completed.

It is noted that Bill Payne completed repairs to masonry buildings in Newcastle after the earthquake in 1989. The repaired buildings had suffered considerably more damage than that suffered by this Church. There are other repair methods which may be suitable and cheaper (e.g. pin repairs and grout infill to the masonry walls) however this would require more thorough investigation of the top of the wall via scaffolding.

Final construction detail would be determined via closer inspections and refined once work has commenced. However, the above system provides a conservative method.

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6 Recommendations

The outward movement of the masonry has in our opinion reached a critical stage and requires immediate action. We consider the deflection measured at the top of the brickwork to be the result of spreading of the roof and not foundation movement.

Until remediation works have been completed the church needs to remain closed to the public.

However, we do not consider the building to be unserviceable and therefore does not require demolition. Rather there are a number of ways to repair the brickwork and stabilise the 'trusses'.

If the Church Council is to keep the building we recommend the installation of adjustable steel ties to all timber trusses at the truss support level. Furthermore some additional local strengthening of the support area and intermediate wall is required as discussed above. Alternative methods should be investigated before commencing reconstruction.

Legislative requirements for building safety and Council approval should be applied where required. This report does not provide commentary on this aspect of the work.

7 Scope of Engagement

This register has been prepared by Ardill Payne & Partners (APP) at the request of Uniting Church of Australia for the purpose of a structural Assessment and is not to be used for any other purpose or by any other person or corporation.

This report has been prepared from the information provided to us and from other information obtained as a result of enquiries and investigations made by us. APP accepts no responsibility for any loss or damage suffered howsoever arising to any person or corporation who may use or rely on this document for a purpose other than that described above.

No part of this report may be reproduced, stored or transmitted in any form without the prior consent of APP.

APP declares that it does not have, nor expects to have, a beneficial interest in the subject project.

To avoid this advice being used inappropriately it is recommended that you consult with APP before conveying the information to another who may not fully understand the objectives of the report. This report is meant only for the subject site/project and should not be applied to any other.

8 Attachments

Attachment 1 Photographs

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Uniting Church, Cherry Street, Ballina

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ATTACHMENT 1

Attachment 1
Photographs

Photo 1 -



Photo 2 -



Photo 3 -



Photo 4 -



Photo 5 -



Photo 6 -



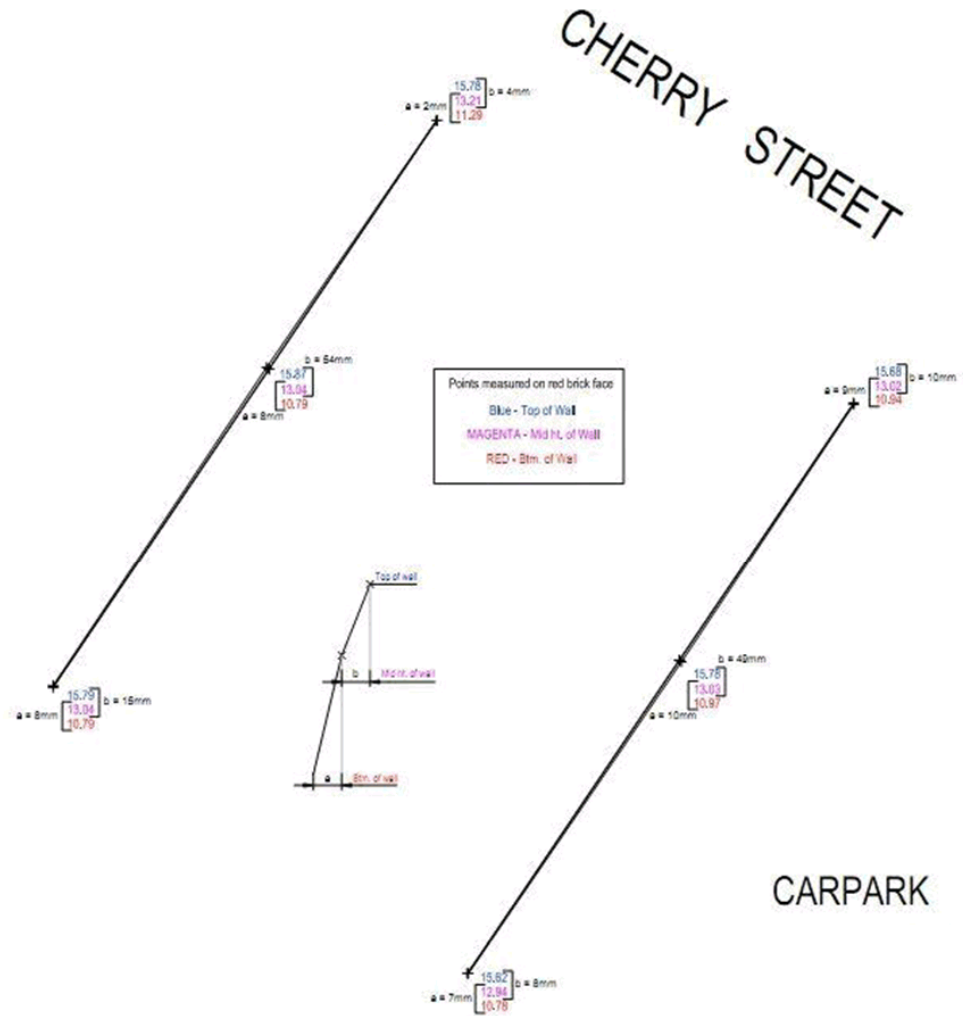
Photo 7 -



Photo 8 -



Attachment 2 Survey Results



STATEMENT OF HERITAGE IMPACT



Uniting Church 54 Cherry Street, Ballina

Prepared by Kate Gahan, December 2015, in accordance with the NSW Heritage Branch's guideline for preparing a Statement of Heritage Impact.



Kate Gahan

history • heritage • interpretation

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Front image: the newly built Ballina Methodist Church c. 1920s.
Courtesy Ballina Uniting Church Congregation.

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1. Proposal:

This Statement of Heritage Impact (SoHI) considers the proposal to demolish the (brick) Uniting Church located at 54 Cherry Street, Ballina. The building is 'listed' as an item of environmental heritage on Ballina Shire Council's (BSC) Local Environmental Plan (LEP) (2012) heritage schedule.¹ Its listing on the BSC LEP recognised its heritage significance to the Ballina Shire area. The building therefore is described as having local heritage significance. It is not (currently) listed on any other state or national heritage schedules or registers.

The context of the demolition proposal:

The proposal to demolish the Uniting Church building at Ballina is an adverse consequence of the sagging of the building's scissor-trusses. In turn, this has forced outward pressure on the side walls; undermined the external wall buttress supports; and caused some cracking of the building's brickwork. Engineer and builders' assessments undertaken in 2012, 2013 2014 and 2015 identified and documented these issues. Further, these reports conclude this problem can be rectified.² Costings received by the Church's congregation show the repairs needed to make the building functional and safe again could cost in excess of \$168, 000.³ Based on advice received up to the time of preparing this report, the Church's congregation, the Far North Coast Uniting Presbytery and the NSW and ACT Synod (henceforth Synod), agreed the repairs are cost prohibitive.

2. What this report has examined:

In light of the above, investigations undertaken to prepare this SoHI have examined the following matters:

Review of heritage values of the Ballina Uniting Church:

Understanding the heritage values of the building are key to reporting on heritage impact. The building's known heritage values were first documented as part of the Ballina Shire

¹ <http://www.legislation.nsw.gov.au/maintop/view/inforce/epi+20+2013+cd+0+N>

² Alderson, Greg and Associates, unpublished Structural Report of the Ballina Uniting Church, 8 February, 2012; Ardill Payne and Partners, unpublished Engineer's Report on the Ballina Uniting Church, 2015 and Bathgate, Simon, unpublished inspection report of the Ballina Uniting Church, 6 February, 2013.

³ Henderson, JS Building, repairs and restoration Ballina Uniting Church Building, 3 September, 2015 and quote for repair work to Ballina Uniting Church, 20 August, 2015.

Community Based Heritage Study process, conducted in 2008 and in accordance with the NSW Heritage Branch's significance criteria. However, listing of the building on Council's LEP heritage schedule preceded this study (1987). The 2008 study affirmed its heritage significance and importance to the Ballina Shire community.

The review of the building's heritage values undertaken as part of preparing this report was to establish whether any new information has emerged since 2008 that alters the understanding of its known heritage values. This step was particularly pertinent in the context of the proposal to demolish. These values are outlined at Section 4 below.

Heritage impacts of the proposal to demolish the Ballina Uniting Church:

In the context of this report, heritage impact refers to the consequence(s) resulting from demolition of the Uniting Church building on its congregation, as well as the broader Ballina Shire community. Documenting the heritage impact of the demolition proposal on the Ballina community / shire is a requirement of the *NSW Environmental Planning & Assessment Act* and is regulated by BSC through its LEP.

The NSW Office of Environment and Heritage, Heritage Branch, supports local authorities and heritage practitioners to manage heritage items in accordance with best practice through various measures. One of these is providing a guideline for reporting on heritage impact. Accordingly, this report has followed the NSW Heritage Branch's *Statements of Heritage Impact* guideline. The heritage impacts that will result from the proposal to demolish the church building are documented at Section 5 below.

Options for retention of the Ballina Uniting Church:

In accordance with the NSW Heritage Branch's *Statements of Heritage Impact* guideline, this report canvasses options for retention of the Uniting Church building, despite the proposal to demolish it. While it is understood and appreciated that the Ballina Uniting Church congregation, Far North Coast Uniting Presbytery and the Synod has indicated that repair of the church building is cost prohibitive, alternate options for funding of the building's repair are outlined. The premise of considering the logistics and implications of all possible options for the building's retention is that heritage buildings are highly valued by many in a community, and best practice heritage management advocates demolition to be a last resort option

The demolition of a heritage item / building is a *non-reversible* action. When a heritage item

/ building is demolished what it embodies and contributes socially and economically to the community is lost forever.

Heritage buildings are valued by communities because they are tangible reminders of the past, as well as have contemporary meanings and contributions. Heritage buildings underpin personal / community identity and belonging by connecting people to their forebears and each other. They shape the physical character of a place making it a more pleasing environment in which to live – aesthetically and emotionally. Heritage buildings contribute to a community economically, as they add character and uniqueness to a place that makes it a desirable place to live and visit.

It is further noted here that the Ballina Uniting Church building has been the recipient of grant funds to make earlier building repairs, in light of its heritage values and contribution to the Ballina Shire community. Local Heritage Fund monies, granted to the church and jointly funded by the State government and BSC, assisted: the repair of water damage (2003) and the re-roofing of the building in (2011).⁴

Options posed for retention of the Uniting Church building are outlined at Section 6 below.

Recommendations to mitigate the heritage impacts of demolition:

If, following consideration of all possible options for retention, a heritage building cannot be kept best practice heritage management advocates taking action to ensure its form and history is documented as an archive record. Mitigation measures often include: making a comprehensive photographic record of a building; gathering information about a building's history, including from people historically associated with it; salvaging parts of a building's fabric and / or moveable heritage (i.e. the materials with which it is made and significant objects housed within the building that have historic) for commemorative re-use or object archiving.

Recommended mitigation measures in the case of demolition are outlined at Section 8 below.

⁴ Ballina Shire Council Local Heritage Fund.

3. Address and property description:

The (brick) Uniting Church building is located at 52-54 Cherry Street, Ballina. It is situated on Lots 4-5 DP 2722. The building dates from the interwar era (1918-1939), with its construction commenced and completed in 1920. It was formerly dedicated for use on Saturday 25 September that year.

The church's built-form is characteristic of the Federation Gothic style. Key features of this era of church architecture demonstrated in the building include: Gothic arch window and door openings, a steeply-pitched roof and buttressed external walls, simple external brickwork and stucco dressings.

Located adjacent the (brick) church are two other buildings owned by the Uniting Church. The first, a carpenter gothic building, which is the original Methodist Church built in Ballina in 1887. The second, the Church's Fellowship Centre, built in 1962. The original church building is located at the rear of the Fellowship Centre, which fronts Cherry Street. (Further notes on the original church building are provided at Section 3 below).

4. Heritage significance of the Ballina Uniting Church building:

Summary of heritage significance:

The brick Uniting Church building has been assessed as demonstrating the following local heritage values:

Criterion (a) – historic – meaning the item is important in the course, or pattern, of the cultural or natural history of the local area / Ballina Shire. That being both the European settlement and development of the Ballina Shire LGA; and the establishment and development of the Methodist faith in in the local area / Ballina Shire;

Criterion (c) – aesthetic – meaning the item is important in demonstrating aesthetic characteristics and/or a high degree of creative or technical achievement in the local area / Ballina Shire. The Ballina Uniting Church building is an important example of simple brick Federation Gothic / Methodist Church architecture in the local area / Ballina shire.

Criterion (d) – social – meaning the item has strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group in the local area / Ballina Shire for social, cultural or spiritual reasons. The Ballina Uniting Church building has special association with residents of the Methodist / Uniting faith – many of whom hail from Cornish and English backgrounds. The

8.3 Ballina Uniting Church - Structural Inadequacy.DOC

building represents: the history of the establishment and development of Methodism in Ballina, including Ballina's history as heading one of two historic Northern Rivers Methodist Circuits; the histories of pioneering and long term community members of the Methodist and Uniting faith; it also has special association with families of the Methodist and Uniting faith who lost loved ones during WWI.

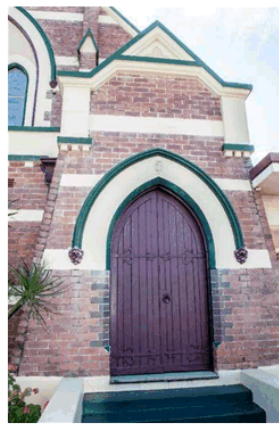


Image left and right shows sections of the front façade of the Ballina Uniting Church. It demonstrates typical gothic architecture features of a steep gable roof and Gothic arch windows and doors.

Historic notes on the establishment of Methodism, its churches and congregation at Ballina:

The following historic notes on the establishment of Methodism, its churches and congregation at Ballina is provided to supplement the above summary of significance.

Early Methodist services at Ballina were conducted in the Ballina Court House from 1868 and prior to the construction of the first Methodist church in Norton Street, in 1888. This building is a simple Carpenter Gothic style church and was built immediately following the division of the Richmond River Methodist Circuit into two areas. Ballina headed the newly created Circuit, which stretched from Woodburn to Tweed Heads. It embraced congregations at these centres and those at Coraki, Wardell, Ballina, Alstonville, Newrybar, Bangalow, Mullumbimby and Murwillumbah.⁵

In 1921 the timber church was moved from Norton, to Cherry, Street (the present Uniting Church site). The building of the new church in Cherry Street saw the original timber building

⁵ 'Country Methodism – The Ballina Circuit', *The Methodist*, Saturday 29 October, 1932, p. 1.

used for Sunday School activities. With the construction of the new church in Cherry Street, at this time the trustees determined that Sunday School services would be more effectively administered from there.⁶ The former Methodist Church site in Norton Street was used to build a Methodist Ladies College (1925). This building survives and is now known as the Ballina Manor.

Once facing Cherry Street, the original timber church still stands on the Cherry Street site, but is obstructed from clear view by contemporary buildings; from Cherry Street the Uniting Church Fellowship Centre, and from Swift Street the Masonic Hall. This 'original' building is also historically significant / important. Aside from its association with the establishment of Methodism, and the early European settlement and development of the town of Ballina, it is the oldest church building in the shire, and the only timber church building remaining in Ballina. Its Carpenter Gothic architectural form is increasingly under threat locally, as well as regionally.

As a group of historic buildings, the brick Uniting Church, the original Carpenter Gothic Methodist Church, and the Ballina Manor building demonstrate, and embody, the history of the establishment and development of the Methodist faith in Ballina. The establishment of the brick Uniting Church building at Ballina in 1920 stemmed from the growth in importance of Ballina as head of the Ballina Circuit. The establishment of the Methodist Ladies College at Ballina in the 1920s further indicated, and affirmed, the Ballina congregation's position as Circuit head.

The foundation stone for the brick church was laid on St Valentine's Day 1920 by Mr. G Towner, on behalf of his brother Mr. W J Towner (the stone reads W. J. Towner). William Towner is celebrated for having established the first class meeting of residents of Methodist faith at Ballina, in 1867. This gathering established the need for a Methodist Minister at Ballina. Towner is reported to have walked from Ballina to Grafton to plead for a Minister to administer services at Ballina. With this request heeded, the following year he then rowed to Casino, some 85 miles, to pick up the Reverend Meicklejohn and bring him back to Ballina to conduct the first ever Methodist service north of the Clarence. This service was held in the Ballina Court House on 3 May, 1868.⁷ The growth of Methodist families living at Ballina led to the building of the first Methodist Church in Norton Street.

⁶ 'Ballina Methodist Church – Anniversary Celebrations', *Northern Star*, Saturday 1 October 1921, p. 1

⁷ 'Methodism – Richmond River 1855-1932 – Ballina Church Anniversary', *The Northern Star*, Thursday 29 September, p. 13.

8.3 Ballina Uniting Church - Structural Inadequacy.DOC



Above: Located on the building's front façade, the foundation stone of the Ballina Uniting Church commemorates William Towner. Towner settled at Ballina in the 1860s. Those of the Uniting Church faith continue to celebrate Towner as a founder of Methodism in the town.

The sustaining of a Methodist congregation at Ballina in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries saw the eventual planning for a new brick church. The construction of the new building was administered during the term of Reverend F H McGowan. Land for the new church, the present Cherry Street site, was purchased in 1918 from the estate of Mr. William Temperley. To date, who designed the new church remains unknown. The cost of the land, building and furnishings was approximately £3, 200.⁸ After being put out to tender in 1919, it was built by local contractor Messrs. R. Hughes and Sons.⁹ Its establishment during war-time saw labor and material shortages impact its construction. Indeed, the church was dedicated prior to some 'details' being complete. When completed the *Northern Star* reported of the building:

The new church presents a very imposing appearance, and adds greatly to the surroundings in which it is set. The building is entirely of brick, with pine lining. The edifice has an imposing buttress in the front, and provides for the two main entrances at either side, which, with their stately arches, etched in white, set off the building. On the inside the walls are nicely finished in plaster, and the building has an appearance of staunchness as well as stateliness. Provision has been made at the extreme end for the day when a handsome pipe organ will occupy a position in the church, while at the rear,

⁸ 'Country Methodism – The Ballina Circuit', *The Methodist*, Saturday 29 October, 1932, p. 1.

⁹ 'New Methodist Church at Ballina – Opening Ceremony and Dedication', *The Northern Star*, Monday 4 October, 1920, p. 7.

8.3 Ballina Uniting Church - Structural Inadequacy.DOC

in a further buttress, ample accommodation is afforded for a sacristy. The church is a credit to the Methodist fraternity, and is also a decided acquisition to the town.

Of Gothic Federation style, the brick Uniting Church has a number of stained glass windows. Some of these were dedicated as memorials soon after the church was first opened in 1920, including one commemorating the life of the Reverend D. D. Hunter who served as Minister at Ballina during 1914. In 1916, Rev. Hunter left Australia to serve as Chaplain on the Western Front in France and Belgium; he was killed whilst administering to soldiers on the frontline at Polygon Wood in Belgium.¹⁰ The pulpit that remains in the church was also built in memory of Hunter. A handmade timber Honour Roll, now removed from the building, commemorates a number of the church's congregation who also died during WWI. Other memorial windows dedicated in 1932 celebrate 'honoured pioneers of Methodism on the North Coast'.¹¹



Image left: War Service portrait of Rev. David D. Hunter. Rev. Hunter served the Ballina Methodist congregation in 1914. Courtesy Australian War Memorial. Image right: Three of the commemorative stained glass windows that hang at the front of the church. The centre window is a memorial to Rev. Hunter. Hunter lost his life while serving as war Chaplain in Belgium in 1916.

In addition, important internal features of the building include its exposed decorative scissor truss roof support; the trusses are of timber and are set off by a pine roof lining. Windows not dedicated as memorials are steel framed with lead light glazing, sections of which are

¹⁰ Gahan, Kate, *A Community at War: Wartime Stories from Ballina Shire*, Ballina Shire Council, 2014, pp. 18-19.

¹¹ 'Churches Established – Religious Influence', *Northern Star*, Wednesday, December 18, 1935, p. 2.

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finished with small diamond panes. The layout of the church includes the nave (central room) containing two isles; a vestry and twin-entrance and porch-way flank the western and eastern ends of the nave. Openings into, and from, the nave have Gothic arch doorways; all the buildings original doors remain in place. Important moveable heritage items, historically associated with the church's establishment, include a WWI Honour Roll, holy water font, organ and various furniture pieces. (These have been removed from the church for safe keeping).



Above: Image shows the exposed scissor truss, pine lining, decorative windows located on the church's front façade, and the twin Gothic arch doorways that lead into the nave.



Left: detail of the timber scissor truss and the pine lined ceiling. Right: An example of one of the Gothic arch stained glass windows dedicated as memorials.



Significantly, the Uniting Church building also represents particular histories of women and children associated with the Methodist / Uniting faith in Ballina. The Methodist Ladies Church Aid group and Sunday School activities are an important facet of the social history of the Methodism in Ballina. The functioning of both the Methodist Ladies Church Aid groups and the Sunday School are areas of the church's history that are poorly understood and / or documented.

Of the Methodist congregations and churches in the Northern Rivers and which formed part of the historic Ballina Circuit, the Ballina Uniting Church buildings are somewhat unique in that both the original and brick churches remain standing. In many centres across the Northern Rivers, and with respect to all Christian faiths, the construction of a brick church followed the building of a timber one. The majority of brick churches in the Northern Rivers were constructed in the early decades of the twentieth century. By this time congregations were well established and had grown. This meant many communities were in a financial position to replace the use of the earlier-built timber, with a masonry, church. Masonry buildings were celebrated by communities as a symbol of both stability and importance / prestige. Earlier-built timber churches were often kept and re-purposed as church halls, which were used for social and other spiritual based activities.

Over the decades, particularly in the latter half of the twentieth century, a number of ageing church buildings across the region have been demolished. Where congregations / parishes faced declining numbers some were sold off. As a consequence of this gradual attrition the number of historic churches has declined significantly. With respect to the Methodist / Uniting Church, of the Congregations that made up the Ballina Circuit established in 1888 – Alstonville, Bangalow, Coraki, Mullumbimby and Murwillumbah, Newrybar, Tweed Heads, Wardell and Woodburn – historic buildings remain at the following centres: Alstonville (1908-reinforced concrete), Bangalow (1910-timber), (Wardell 1905-timber) and Murwillumbah (c. 1900-timber). Within this Circuit, Ballina was the only Congregation to build a church of brick.

The broader streetscape setting in which the church is situated includes a number of other important historical and heritage listed buildings and/or items. These are: the Catholic Convent (1910), the Catholic Church (1962), timber classroom buildings at the Ballina Public School (1930s), the former Ballina Municipal Council Chambers (1927), St Stephen's Presbyterian Church (1915) and Manse (1954), memorial-cross grove (Cherry and Crane Streets) and Memorial Norfolk Island Pine trees (WWI) (in the grounds of the Northern Rivers

Community Gallery).¹² Together these buildings and features create a character precinct, which contributes a particular look and feel to this section of Cherry Street (which also has further potential to be enhanced as a special streetscape in Ballina). Notable character features demonstrated by these historic buildings and their setting include: generous setbacks and open space around the buildings; brick church buildings dating from the early twentieth century; and vernacular weatherboard / timber buildings dating from the late nineteenth and early and mid-twentieth century.

5. Heritage impacts of the proposal to demolish the Ballina Uniting Church:

In light of the heritage values of the brick Uniting Church at Ballina outlined above, the proposal to demolish this building will have the following negative consequences:

- It will remove an important historic early twentieth building from the Cherry Street streetscape that demonstrates building features and an aesthetic character that are no longer constructed / fostered. That the building's original form and fabric has remained significantly intact across almost a century compounds this loss, given many history buildings are subject to alteration overtime. Demolition of the building is a non-reversible change. A building of this character cannot be replicated.
- It will significantly diminish the town's tangible reminders of the history of the development of the Methodist faith in Ballina and the European settlement and development of the town of Ballina (especially into the early twentieth century). The history of the Methodist Church in Ballina reveals its central role as head of one of the Northern Rivers' Methodist Circuits – that being the Ballina Circuit. Its position as the head of the Ballina circuit saw the Methodist Ladies College also establish in the town in the 1925.
- It will remove an important tangible link those of the Methodist faith in the Ballina community have with their forebears and spiritual origins. The building embodies the past actions, stories and memories of those who: pioneered Methodism in Ballina; supported and grew the Methodist faith in Ballina / the region; worshipped and celebrated the Methodist faith in Ballina; and were of the Methodist faith and died during the Great War.

¹² Ballina Shire Council, *Shire Wide Community Based Heritage Study*, 2008, Ballina Shire Council.

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- It will deplete the broader character setting of the southern section of Cherry Street (especially between Tamar and Burnet Streets) which contains a cluster of historic buildings. This streetscape has the potential to grow in importance as a significant cultural / historic precinct.
- It will diminish the potential for future generations to experience and learn from the town's historic built landscape.



The original timber and 1920 brick Methodist Church buildings stand side-by-side and front Cherry Street. Circa 1960s. Courtesy Ballina Uniting Church Congregation.

6. Options for retention of the Ballina Uniting Church:

As noted at Section 1 of this report, at the outset of preparing this SoHI the Ballina Uniting Church Congregation, the Far North Coast Presbytery and the Synod advised that making repairs to the church is cost-prohibitive. Notwithstanding the Church's position, the premise of considering the possible options for the building's retention is that the building is known to be valued by many in the community, including from within the Uniting Church congregation; as well, best practice heritage management advocates demolition to be a last resort option.

During the course of preparing this report two options for retention of the building have been considered. In the process of exploring these considerations representatives of the Ballina congregation have concluded a wish to pursue option b) below.

Nevertheless, both options considered for the retention of the Ballina Uniting Church are now outlined. These include:

a) Sale and re-purposing of the building:

Advice received from Ballina Shire Council has indicated that, despite the (brick) Uniting Church building being situated across two separate lots, sale of the building can occur and can be executed without the need for any approvals from Council. The benefit of this option is that the building is retained and re-purposed. Prior 'investment' – both emotional and financial – made in the building by the congregation and the community continue to be demonstrated, made tangible and realised.

This option is dependent on finding a buyer with an interest in the, and with the means to, repair and conserve the building. It also requires: a willingness from the Ballina Congregation, Far North Coast Presbytery and Synod to sell the building; and sufficient time to execute its sale. Given the preference of Church representatives to pursue option b), option a) is not the preferred course of action.

b) Fully exhaust the Ballina congregation's capacity to make repairs to the building

During the preparation of this SoHI it has been established that the option of the Ballina congregation making repairs to the building has not been fully exhausted.

In the last 12 months, only one building contractor has quoted to undertake repairs to the building. This quote was requested with the view to completing the full repair of the building immediately, and in response to a single method / sequence for effecting these repairs.

In light of the proposed demolition of the church further discussion with the engineering firm Greg Alderson and Associates canvassed the option to stage repairs to the building. The staging of repairs would spread the burden of these costs overtime and allow more time to explore the securing of funds to make these repairs. In addition, an alternate sequencing of works has been posed to support the staging of the building's repair. The first

stage of repair would aim to stabilise the building to the satisfaction of Council to mitigate public safety concerns.

Given the above, representatives of the Ballina congregation feel that enabling the full exploration of the congregation's capacity to make repairs to the church is desirable. Therefore, Church representatives give their support to request that Council suspend making an immediate decision regarding the church building to allow for an urgent meeting of the congregation so that it can vote on whether it supports the option to explore the staging of repairs to the building. This action is warranted as additional congregation funds would need to be spent to fully explore this option. Given the pending Christmas period, it is anticipated that this meeting would take place early in the New Year.

It is acknowledged that suspending a decision about the church building means BSC's concern to address the public safety risk it poses cannot be immediately addressed. The Church will work as quickly as it can to report back to Council – it anticipates being able to do this within one month. It is noted that during this time the ability to engage a contractor to demolish the building is unlikely to occur in any case.

7. Recommendation:

That Council suspends making an immediate decision regarding the proposal to demolish the Uniting Church to allow for an urgent meeting of the congregation so that it can vote on whether it supports the option to explore the staging of repairs to the building.

The premise of the recommendation is:

- It is supported by representatives of the Ballina Uniting Church who have assisted in preparing this report;
- Engineering reports indicate the building can be fully repaired and made safe;
- The building has heritage significance and contributes to the Ballina Uniting Church community, as well as the broader Ballina Shire community, as outlined in this report;
- This action may avert the impacts of demolition, as outlined in this report;
- Should future demolition result this can be executed with the knowledge that *all* possible options to repair the building have been fully exhausted.

8. Mitigating of the heritage impacts of demolition:

Notwithstanding that this report recommends Council suspend its decision regarding the proposed demolition of the church building until into the New Year it makes a number of recommendations in the case of a decision to demolish. These actions are made to mitigate the adverse impacts of demolition and have been agreed to by the church's representatives:

1. A photographic archive recoding of the building is made by a suitably qualified practitioner and should include significant moveable heritage items held by the Ballina Congregation. This recording and associated catalogue report should be made in accordance with the NSW Heritage Branch's *Photographic Archiving of Heritage Items* guideline. A copy of this record should be deposited with a local Historical Society.
2. A Care Plan for the re-housing and conservation of historic moveable heritage items recently removed from the Church, and any other significant fabric from the Church, is undertaken. This Plan would consider and document the stories and significance of these items and determine where and how these are stored into the future, including beyond the time of the present congregation.
3. Oral histories are undertaken to document gaps in the current record of the building's history and those associated with it, are made and deposited with a local Historical Society.

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