

# The Forum Health & Wellness Centre

**webberarchitects**  
commercial and residential

## Awards

- The Landcom 2007 Lower Hunter Design Awards - Babic Construction Heritage Award for the Forum Health & Wellness Centre
- The Landcom 2007 Lower Hunter Design Awards – Andrews Neil Peoples Choice Award for the Forum Health & Wellness Centre
- Nominated for MBA Excellence in Building Awards – Commercial Projects between \$12M for the Forum Health & Wellness Centre
- Nominated for MBA Excellence in Building Awards – Public Buildings Open Category for the Forum Health & Wellness Centre

## Publications

- New Uses for Heritage Places – Guidelines for the Adaptation of Historic Buildings and Sites by the Heritage Council of New South Wales and the RAI A featuring the Forum Health & Wellness Centre
- The Leader Dec 07 / Jan 08 by Hunter Business Chamber featuring the Forum Health & Wellness Centre

Located between Workshop Place and Harbour Square at Harbourside, in Honeysuckle, Newcastle, this is adaptive re-use project for the new Forum Health and Wellness Centre owned by University of Newcastle Sport is within the heritage listed Civic Railway Workshops Block A (the former Permanent Way Store or Perway Building).

The underlying principles of the health and wellness centre were to maintain important aspects of the existing building, mainly the sense of scale and size of the internal volume along with an interpretation of the building's previous use. The concept of 'a building within a building' was adopted maintaining a strong axis through the building and retaining existing openings and part of a former platform enabling a clear interpretation of previous use.

The concept was to keep new internal structures independent of the existing fabric allowing the new development to maintain a 'minimum and reversible impact' on the significant fabric of the building. New building work was detailed in a contemporary manner which while substantial, touches the building lightly.

Externally the context is a combination of heritage railway and contemporary buildings within the Honeysuckle urban regeneration area's contemporary streetscape. New additions to the rear of the building housing the new changing room areas are clearly discrete from the heritage building with little impact on the public domain.

The clear brief for large open spaces and acoustic and visual separation between uses within the building, was potentially in conflict with heritage aspects of the building. The resolution to spatial and acoustic requirements was by separating the aerobics area on a mezzanine over the equipment areas in the main body of the building. Stopping the mezzanine structure short of the external walls and infilling with clear glass maintains the sense of scale and acoustic separation.

All consultants worked hard to fulfill the brief working within a heritage fabric. Electrical, Hydraulic and the Archeology consultants worked with the entire team to achieve our brief. Specific issues such as minimising natural frequency on the mezzanine slab required significant input from the structural engineer to design an effective structure within the budget and brief.

The design and execution of the facility required the co-operation of State Heritage, Newcastle City Council and the Honeysuckle Creek Authority within a tight time frame. The tight brief and budget guided the design resolution of the building and its spaces. Since opening in late 2006 the centre has been a great success with over 3000 memberships sold to date, out performing their business plan.

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