

# **JACKSON TEECE**

## **ARCHITECT'S DESIGN STATEMENT PREPARED TO ACCOMPANY THE DEVELOPMENT APPLICATION SUBMITTED TO THE MAITLAND COUNCIL**

**For the Proposed 108 beds Residential Aged Care Facility  
Morpeth Road,  
Morpeth NSW 2321  
Lot Part 3 DP 272740**

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Prepared by:

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## 1. SUMMARY

This Design Statement has been prepared in support of a Development Application to the Maitland City Council seeking Council's approval of the proposal for the development at Morpeth Road, Morpeth NSW for Catholic Healthcare.

This proposal is for a new 108 bed aged care facility which comprises of the adaptive reuse/ refurbishment of Closebourne House, the former Laundry, Gym/ Chapel and the Arkell House buildings precinct with the remaining buildings to be removed, new building extension of single storey and double storey components, associated parking and extensive high quality landscaped court yards and building curtilage.

The subject site currently sits within Closebourne Estate, NSW State Heritage listed item which comprises of the Closebourne House group of buildings and forming part of the greater 'Closebourne Village' Lend Lease retirement precinct. The site sits on the north eastern part of the estate development which will maintain a good connection and integration with its surrounding developments while providing safety and security for the new and existing residents.

## 2. OPPORTUNITIES AND CONSTRAINTS

### 2.1 HERITAGE CURTILAGE LINES

The Conservation Management Plan 2005 (CMP) established curtilage lines to protect the rural and historic nature of the site by limiting development to those areas inside and behind those lines. There is also grading of significance that has been taken into account.

### 2.2 HERITAGE BUILDINGS

The key heritage buildings are the focus of the proposal and as such an adaptive reuse strategy would be adopted to provide sustainable outcomes for Closebourne House. This offers a new lease of life for an important heritage site that has been deteriorating over recent years as its previous uses and functions have been relocated.

### 2.3 HERITAGE LANDSCAPE FEATURES

Significant landscape features identified in the CMP including the axial view of Brushbox Avenue of trees, Olive tree and fig tree on the south.

### 2.4 TOPOGRAPHY

Closebourne House has a ridge line which cuts East West across the site providing both falls and vantage points to distant views across the Hunter River and Valley, St. James church and Cemetery. The western boundary levels also sit above the existing Closebourne House precinct and the significant slope towards the south east providing further constraints.

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## 3. DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSAL

### 3.1 CONTEXT

The Subject Site is described as Lot Part 3 DP270740 and Lot Part 1 DP270740 (Consist of the External Walls) with a site area of 2.041 ha. It is bounded on all sides by Lot Part 7, DP270740. The north and west boundaries formally adjoin an existing access easement.

The northern aspect of the site is characterised as open grass slopes to Morpeth Road, on the west there is an existing oval which is surrounded by existing established trees, on the south and west boundaries are open grass slopes towards an existing dam southeast of the site.

The eastern boundary is partially adjoining the heritage listed Avenue of Brush Box trees, of which six trees are located within our site.

The overall masterplan neighbourhood consists largely of detached single and 2-storey dwellings of low densities. The retirement village precinct of ‘Closebourne Village’ also features a successful adaptive reuse Morpeth House building.

### 3.2 HERITAGE RESPONSE

The proposal strives to strike a balance of the site’s strong historical context. The significance of the site not only lies in its build form and landscape heritage elements but also closely linked to overall Heritage Significance of the Closebourne estate.

In defining the overall design concept, due consideration was taken in implementing strategies or framework that would provide an appropriate scale and built form response to site and context. Design workshops within the team including detailed on-site investigation from planning stages to ensure all heritage impact is raised and resolve before progressing to the next phase. One of the key components identified is to ensure that the views of the site from the road, preserve the rural nature of the site and not diminish the heritage elements that are prominent in these views. In addition, a hierarchy of built form relationships that are in dialogue with the locality as well as the character and scale of the existing buildings.

Closebourne House would form part of the Aged Care Facility operations and as such would be incorporated as part of the adaptive re-use strategy. Its significance and frontage to Morpeth Road would be preserved by ensuring that the new facility would sit behind the House and integrate into the slope to the south. The setting of Morpeth House will be considerably enhanced by this proposal, with removal of built and landscape elements which presently obscure its key views and relationships. Working closely with the heritage architect, sketch details are produced to verify all detail decisions adopted to change as little as possible to achieve the functional requirements of the residential aged care facility. Existing original built fabric are to be protected.

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## 3.3 DESIGN RESPONSE TO HERITAGE

The main entry is accessed directly off the driveway from an internal road network of Closebourne Village. It is co-located with a parking area, which is sympathetic to the heritage curtilage configuration and landscape batter easing the transitions. A porte-cochere provides cover for drop-off and ambulances while a covered walkway leads to the main entry door.

Here, the entry experience is focused on the discovery of the heritage items, with the entry road from the south-west and driveway that lead the views of people approaching the building towards them. The pedestrian entry presents all visitors with the texture and colour of the sandstone which leads them to an enclosed courtyard, where the height and massing of this early 19<sup>th</sup> century Country House can be fully understood. It is indeed in the central courtyard that existing and new converges, pulling together the original fabric, the additions, the laundry building, the historic memorial garden as the backdrop of the new aged care facility.

The front of house consists of the existing heritage buildings and new build. This includes the administrative areas, with offices, a meeting room and staff facilities, well-being areas with a multi-function room, a salon, consulting rooms and a gym. For a better integration with the community use, the front of house is centrally located and easily accessible from the residential wings through the 'Inner Street' and lifts.

There is a need to connect and change the back of Closebourne House because of the operational requirements of an aged care facility. For example, the current existing low pitch roofs over the south wings of Closebourne House provide low ceiling heights, unsuitable for an aged care facility and deemed non-compliant under BCA (minimum 2.7m ceiling heights required for 9C buildings). For this reason the southernmost parts of the roofs have been altered reinterpreting the original fabric, so that in the new scheme they are consistent with the northern parts. The introduction of a covered central courtyard defined by the wings either sides creates the 'main hub' of the development. In here are located the waiting room, the reception and the café, while the meeting room and the chapel open towards it, generating a vibrant area where all guests and visitors can appreciate the sandstone facades of Closebourne house.

Moving eastwards from the courtyard, the corridor, aligned with the porte cochere axis, acts as an 'Inner Street' that connects all household's front entries. The Inner Street is intended as a transitional highly activated space for meeting and social engagement of residents and visitors alike. The internal public functions open out onto this 'street' which also connects an outdoor café seating area overlooking the olive tree.

A lift was introduced to make the access to Closebourne House level 1 DDA compliant. The level 1 areas have been designed to provide great amenity to the staff. There is minimal impact on this level in terms of heritage significance, also noting its former use as conference room.

With regards to the other buildings response to heritage, there is glazed connection to the former Laundry, through a side entry, next to the reception. The reception has been orientated in such a way to use the laundry building as a backdrop, enhancing the role the Laundry building's connection to the House. The Former Gym / Chapel will be used as an open plan office, reminiscent of the former use.

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There will just two offices partitions sitting within the space. The Arkell House has been appropriately allocated to use as a multi-function space hub, with the high ceilings and its visual connection to the Olive Tree Courtyard garden, shared with the Closebourne House.

## 3.4 BUILDING FORM

While the building form is informed by requirements for operational functionality and resident's amenity the overall design is sympathetic to Closebourne House precinct, its surrounding context and adjacent sites. The adaptive reuse integration of the Closebourne House and its group of buildings to the RAC development reduces building footprint and form.

From the start of the design process, Closebourne House is the main reference for the whole architectural composition of the building forms and massing. There is also careful consideration of the existing topography which slopes significantly towards the southeast by approximately 5 metres.

Here, the new facility is formed by two main volumes: the one storey front of house wing and two 'Household' residential wings on the south; and 'Household' residential wings on the east, which sits at a half a level lower than the single storey component.

The topography also allows the Back of House to be 'tucked' away from the Front of House located directly below one of the single storey residential wings but remained centralized and accessible to all Households. These base walls also act as a podium reference which extends east before merging back to existing ground levels towards northeast of the site.

Six Care 'Households' are located in two 'U' shaped wings of single and double storey. Two secure households for dementia care are located at ground floor, providing direct access to a secure courtyard dedicated to outside perambulation. The residents affected by dementia have supervised access to these courtyards and other parts of the facility because of their tendency of trying to leave the facility and generally finding themselves in un-safe situations.

The lower ground floor, below the southern 'U' shaped wing of the Care Homes, accommodates the 'back-of house' rooms which comprise of a central kitchen, central laundry, maintenance workshop, storages and services plant areas.

The lower ground floor also includes a delivery bay and waste holding, which will be accessed from a proposed driveway off the Closebourne Village internal roads network.

The shapes of the individual building wings have been conceived to break up the bulk of the building and to minimise the visual impact on neighbouring properties and especially with regards to addressing significant views and key sightlines identified by the CMP. The building fabric will be also heavily concealed by the avenue of trees on the North.

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## 3.5 FACADES & COLOURS

The façade has been designed to minimize the visual impact with vertical and horizontal elements introduced to break up otherwise long monotonous façade thus reducing the scale to a more domestic one.

The materials and colours compositions respond to the existing setting of the place, with a palette of materials typical of the area. These materials draw reference from Closebourne House precinct and neighbouring buildings and residences. The proposed facades colour will be light with some accents of dark colours, which to reference a residential character. There is a conscientious decision to choose complimenting colours that will not compete but rather enhanced the precinct especially the sandstone colours of Closebourne House.

The external wall skin is generally a cladding system, with the exception of the façade pop outs and ground floor, where is a mid-dark tone face brick. The cladding is a prefinished painted plank that gives a 'weatherboard' look. The sitting rooms at the ends of each wing are clad with a darker cladding in order to create variation and reduce the scale of the building. The lower floor has been treated as a podium finished with natural colours to merge to surrounding landscape.

## 3.6 ROOF FORM

The facility new roofs are respectful of the domestic character of the estate with a roof pitch that relates to the Closebourne House precinct. The roof lines and the simplicity of the new roofs will not detract from the heritage building.

The Porte Cochere roofing and built form has always been intended to be a modern, contemporary and subtle architectural expression, which is an appropriate gesture for the reinterpretation of a new entry for the brand new aged care facility.

The main roof over the two 'U' shaped wings of Care Homes is visually expressed as a connected hipped structure with a 600mm wide eave all around. These roofs connect with each other at the central circulation cores with a gable end in order to integrate the lift overrun with the overall roof forms at this level.

The roof over the front of house wing is a mono-pitch structure which is an extension of half of the hipped roof form of the single storey Care Homes next to it. The intent here is to simplify roof forms towards the Northern public courtyards which forms part of main elevation of Closebourne House and to deliver the appropriate scale over part of the common public areas. A gable end is provided towards the western side of this roof distinguishing itself from the existing.

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## 4. DESIGN PRINCIPLES

### 4.1 BUILT FORM AND SCALE

The topography makes appear the building mass and scale of the proposal different according from where it is perceived.

From a massing perspective all new volumes are subservient to Closebourne House that retains the highest position of the site. The new volumes are placed in a way that they impact as minimum as possible the views to the house as identified in the CMP.

For this reason, the two storey component of the aged care facility has been placed on the North, leaving the sightlines from the South overpass the one storey wing.

There is a sense of respect of the existing building also in the way the new wings are treated: in order to reduce the scale of the long volumes, they get broken through different materiality and elements protruding the main alignment of the facades. Placing the low volume towards the South was also a strategy to visually break the two-storey component in a composition of volumes of a lower scale.

The bulk perceived from Closebourne House and its group of precinct buildings has been reduced limiting the adjoining new built form to a single storey element and then transitioning to the two-storey component. The new buildings do not encroach beyond Closebourne House and their roof form is in harmony with the heritage components.

### 4.2 DENSITY

The design targeted the smaller footprint possible that would meet the brief of an aged care facility. This choice was aimed to provide the largest extent of landscaped areas.

### 4.3 RESOURCE, ENERGY AND WATER EFFICIENCY

The design of the site, landscape and buildings has been guided by best practice standards in Ecologically Sustainable Design and applied.

The provision of rainwater tanks has been proposed for irrigation. Additional low-energy design features include cross ventilation to the majority of rooms and living areas, and northern orientation of the rooms where possible.

### 4.4 LANDSCAPE

Easy access to well-designed landscaped space is considered an important part in the provision of care for the residents.

A key element of the design was to address the importance of the existing large and significant trees that has been identified in the CMP. Appropriate landscape treatment addressing vistas

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and setting of the place as identified by CMP has been carefully considered which forms an important part of the amenity of the Village.

Landscape buffers act as screenings to and from the buildings enhancing the existing landscape whilst still retaining important viewing vistas within the overall development.

The main driveway, porte-cochere and car park from Avoca Drive has also been landscaped to provide a welcoming experience and soften the effect of hard surfaces.

Each care home wing will have their ground level landscaped courtyard.

## **4.5 AMENITY**

One of Catholic Healthcare's main guiding principles revolves around the provision of amenity to residents at very high standards.

In addition to the provision of extensive landscaped areas the amenity is achieved through the concept of the household. This is a space, with a strong residential feel, where supervision and privacy are articulated to achieve the best care goals.

Accessibility is a prime focus of the buildings and will be provided to all areas of the development.

Living areas are provided at various locations around each household, most maximized with views to a landscape outlook which aligns to the viewing vistas highlighted by the CMP. These provide alternative places for residents to spend time during the day while respecting the delicate heritage history and culture.

## **4.6 SAFETY AND SECURITY**

Security fencing is provided between the two wings to provide a secure outdoor area for residents with dementia, who will be located at the ground floor level. The west wing will have an additional secure open space towards the north to take advantage of the northern aspect during winter. Security fencing is also provided between the resident's area and common public areas.

Proposed boundary fencing, existing is designed to limit the access points to the site. The proposed vehicular gates to the driveways will enable better security at night for staff and residents where these gates can be closed off.

No security fencing is proposed within Closebourne House Heritage Curtilage and Brushbox Avenue of Trees for maximum integration of the existing heritage setting and landscape of the site.



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## 4.7 SOCIAL DIMENSIONS

The vision for the site is to create a positive difference to the lives of residents, visitors and staff alike by providing accommodation in a highly domestic environment and of a residential scale.

Health and wellbeing have been the guiding principles for the design of this facility, with the intent also of promoting social interaction among residents, and with the broader community especially with the adjacent retirement living village.