

Civic and State Square Revitalisation

Sneak peek of new art gallery

City goers are being given a preview of the future Northern Territory Art Gallery as excavation for the building is completed on site. An image of the Northern Territory Gallery now adorns a secure perimeter fence that has been erected around the construction site.

Part of the Civic and State Square Revitalisation project, the Northern Territory Art Gallery (formerly known as the State Square Art Gallery) is being built by local contractor Sitzler Pty Ltd as part of the Territory Government's historic Darwin City Deal with the Australian Government and City of Darwin.

Other projects within the Civic and State Square Precinct are progressing with the tender to redevelop Liberty Square under review and the contract anticipated to be awarded in late June 2023. Liberty Square will include seating with panoramic views of Darwin Harbour and pathways through picturesque gardens in between Parliament House and the Supreme Court.

The Chan lawns, which were created as an open, green space following the demolition of the Chan building, hosted the Darwin Laksa Festival and will host 2023 Darwin Festival events for the first time.

Acknowledging Larrakia

The Northern Territory Government acknowledges the Larrakia people as the Traditional Owners of the land on which the Civic and State Square Precinct is located and their cultural connection to the land, water and seas.

Part of the scope of the Civic and State Square Revitalisation Project is to respond to and celebrate all cultural influences associated with this site and acknowledge the rich history of the site, the city and the Northern Territory.

The project team is working to ensure there are strong links between the Civic and State Square Precinct and the Larrakia Cultural Centre near the Darwin Waterfront, and that Larrakia people are involved in the Precinct design, including developing the heritage, public art and wayfinding elements of the project.

Uncovering a historical building footprint

The multi-layered history of Darwin's peninsula – on which the Civic and State Square Precinct is located – includes the former site of a range of government and commercial buildings that were constructed during different stages of developing Darwin into the city it is today.

Early construction works have uncovered remnants of previous buildings on the site as the foundation is established for the 3-storey art gallery building and basement.

Located on the old jurors' carpark, the basement walls of an earlier building, known as the Brennan Building, were revealed while excavating the site.

The Brennan Building – a long, thin building built in 1968 and demolished in the 1980s – was one of 8 buildings that made up the Commonwealth Administrative complex.

It was known as Block 5 before it was renamed after self-government was declared for the Territory in 1978¹.

An archaeologist has been employed to work on site during excavations of historically significant areas to monitor the site.

Above right: Aerial view of the Commonwealth Administrative Centre 1968 from the Port end of Smith Street following completion of Block 4 & Block 5 (Brennan Building) – LANT, Peter Spillett Collection, PH0238/1582 from <https://hdl.handle.net/10070/883425>).



What's happening next?

Bulk excavation is now complete at the site for the new Northern Territory Art Gallery and design continues for the overall Civic and State Square Masterplan, which includes Liberty Square.



The foundation and slab for the Northern Territory Art Gallery basement will be constructed this month as work progresses on site. The contractor will continue to minimise dust and noise during construction activity on-site.

A Precinct Redevelopment Reference Group has been established to continue to engage with key stakeholders for the site, which includes involving Aboriginal leaders, heritage, cultural, art and business groups and neighbouring organisations.

¹ David Bridgeman Architects, State Square Precinct, Darwin Site Investigation Report Heritage – 15% Stage, February 2023

Being sustainable

Utilising excavated rock

Local rock previously used to build some of Darwin's oldest buildings, as well as in recent projects such as Garramilla Boulevard, is being dug up during excavation and will be used to create the retaining walls for the Northern Territory Art Gallery driveway and in elements of Liberty Square. The distinctive local porcellanite rock can be found in the construction of many heritage listed Darwin buildings, including Browns Mart, the Sue Wah Chin Building (Stone Houses) and the Town Hall ruins.

Tree recycling and planting

A key guiding principle for the Civic and State Square Precinct revitalisation project is to develop a green, cool, tropical park. The aim is to create areas that are a refuge from the heat by planting arbours, additional trees and vegetation.

As well as planting additional trees, timber from several trees that needed to be removed from the Northern Territory Art Gallery construction site are being recycled to create landscape features for the precinct. Logs salvaged from the introduced African mahogany species that were removed during early construction works have been salvaged and will be milled into slabs and cured off site for future use to retain the tropical character of the precinct.

Using 'green' concrete

A product referred to as 'green' concrete, which uses a recycled material created from a manufacturing by-product, is being used to reduce the carbon emissions during the manufacturing and construction stage of the project. Sitzler Pty Ltd has used this new product to pour small concrete test slabs in early May 2023.

Fast facts

- 1800 tonnes of porcellanite rock has been harvested for re-use on the Northern Territory Art Gallery and Liberty Square project sites
- 14,912 cubic metres of material has been excavated, which equates to about 960 tonnes of soil being removed from site each day
- 192 workers inducted to site so far, which ensures up-to-date knowledge of safety, environment and quality management specific to the project.

Access and parking conditions

Current traffic access and parking conditions remain in place, including the closure of the driveway access to the Supreme Court, Parliament House and Old Town Hall Ruins off Smith Street. Access is still available to the Supreme Court for deliveries/short term parking via Bennett Street and limited to left turn in and left turn out only.

Want to know more?

If you have any questions, go to <https://invest.nt.gov.au/infrastructure-and-key-sectors/infrastructure/civic-and-state-square-revitalisation> or please contact the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics A/Project Director Peter Wastle on 8936 5698 or email CivicanStateSquare.Projects@nt.gov.au. We are also keen to hear from people who may have pictures and/or memories of working in the former Brennan Building, now a construction site for the art gallery.