

Statement of Evidence

prepared by Joanna Theodore ANZIA,

registered architect and heritage specialist,

on behalf of Dr Matthew Keir and Ms Sarah Cutten, in respect
of **28 Robieson Street, Wellington.**

INTRODUCTION

My full name is Joanna Patrycja Tolloczko Theodore.

I have prepared this statement of evidence on behalf of Dr Matthew Keir and Ms Sarah Cutten in respect of further submissions, regarding the inclusion of 28 Robieson Street in SCHED1 of the Wellington City Proposed District Plan (PDP).

QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE

Registered Architect NZ

Registered Architect UK

ICOMOS Member

2004 ARB Part III course – Architectural Association, London, UK

1999 Bachelor of Architecture (1st class honours) – Victoria University of Wellington

1999 Bachelor of Arts (Art History major) – Victoria University of Wellington

I am the director of hā., a practice dedicated to heritage architecture, which I set up after many years of working in medium to large practices including Arup in London, then in New Zealand, DPA Architects and foster + melville Architects, where I was Principal for 5 years.

I have worked on significant, award winning, heritage projects both in the UK as well as in New Zealand. My experience spans across major cultural, commercial, hospitality and multi-unit residential projects and I specialize in design, as well as the assessment of buildings. As such, I have written a number of significant Conservation Plans and heritage reports. I am currently responsible for projects across New Zealand, including Auckland and Wellington. I take a practical and balanced approach, which stems from having worked as a practicing architect and a project manager, leading many projects from design through to completion, as such, I have had first-hand experience of the multiple goals, from different stakeholders, which drive a project.

I am also a Professional Teaching Fellow at the University of Auckland, teaching third year and postgraduate students, in architectural design studios, ARCHDES301, ARCHDES700, ARCHDES701 and a thesis supervisor for ARCH796/7/9.

Finally, I am a PhD candidate at The University of Auckland, where my thesis is focused on the seismic strengthening of heritage buildings.

CODE OF CONDUCT

I have read the Code of Conduct for Expert Witnesses set out in the Environment Court Practice Note 2023. I have complied with the Code of Conduct in preparing my evidence. Except where I state that I rely on the evidence of another person, I confirm that the issues addressed in this statement of evidence are within my area of expertise. I have not knowingly omitted to consider material facts that might alter or detract from my expressed opinions.

I am not currently, and have never been, employed by WCC, so am independent of the PDP process. I am based in Auckland but work on projects across New Zealand, many of which

have been in Wellington, so I have had experience working with a variety of different territorial authorities.

SCOPE OF EVIDENCE

I have been appointed by Dr Keir and Ms Cutten to assist with the Heritage Assessment of the Toomath House (former) and provide a submission and a statement of evidence, which addresses the proposal to include 28 Robieson Street in SCHED1 Heritage Buildings, of the PDP.

In preparing this statement I have read the following documents:

- The HHE
- The relevant parts of the s42A report
- Ms Smiths evidence on behalf of the Council
- The submission from Dr Keir and Ms Cutten
- Policy 21 from GWC that outlines assessment criteria

OUTLINE

What is the purpose of a home if not to provide shelter, warmth and comfort? Currently, the building at 28 Robieson Street fails to meet these very basic criteria. In light of this urgent need to bring the building up to basic habitable standards, it is important to consider what are the advantages and disadvantages of including this building in SCHED1 of the PDP?

I have visited the house on two occasions and can confirm that it is in urgent need of repair and significant remedial work. The 2007 study addition, mentioned in the HHE in support of the assessment criteria, has already been lost due to the building's inability to keep water out, so it is important to ensure that the rest of the building can be protected from further damage.

Including the building in SCHED1, is not only unsupported by the evidence provided in the HHE, it will make it more difficult to undertake the remedial work. Scheduling the building would place an undue burden on the owners, and it will undoubtedly add to the time and cost of undertaking the work. Dr Keir and Ms Cutten bought the house, understanding that repairs and remediation would be necessary, and they are saving so that this work can be done.

It is my recommendation that 28 Robieson Street should be excluded from SCHED1.

TOOMATH IN CONTEXT

Bill Toomath's most notable work is the Karori Teachers College that he devoted over 15 years to and completed in partnership with Derik Wilson. The body of work that the Council has presented in their HHE consists of six buildings based entirely in Wellington. This evidence does not support the conclusion that Toomath was nationally important when compared to Manning and Alington, whom Council cite in their comparative analysis. Manning and Alington worked across New Zealand (and in Alington's case internationally) on many high-profile projects that shaped both Wellington and New Zealand.

While Toomath House (former), 1964, is undoubtedly modernist in styling, it is not a pivotal example, coming some 20 years after Wilson, Plischke, Firth, and The Group, as well as others, had progressed modernism in New Zealand. By the 1960's, modernism was well established in New Zealand. I note that Toomath House (former) is not included in NZ heritage list, it is not noted as a national example by Docomomo, in their top 20 lists of modernist buildings, or in "Modern : New Zealand Homes from the 1938 to 1977", edited by Jeremy Hansen, which spans most of Toomath's career.

Ms Smith agrees in paragraph 369 that modernism is not a theme identified in the Wellington Thematic Heritage Study. She also agrees in paragraph 367 that the Council has no shortage of modernist examples in SCHED1, and has agreed in paragraph 355 that the interior of Toomath House (former), which much of the HHE has focused on, is not relevant to the listing. The purpose of the HHE is to provide the evidence to support the evaluation against the criteria and conclusions that are reached. Modifying the conclusions subsequently, to this degree, highlights the fact that there is no evidence to support scheduling of the building.

REVIEW OF COUNCIL'S HERITAGE ASSESSMENT

The evaluation of 28 Robieson Street in the HHE is not an accurate representation of the value of the building. A brief summary of my own assessment and considered opinion is provided below:

Criteria	Values	Ranking	Comments
Historic Values			
	Themes	moderate	The house is associated with the theme of Modernism and was designed by an architect who followed the tenets of Modernism, but it was not pivotal or significant. This approach to architecture was well established by 1964.
	Events	n/a	
	People	moderate	Toomath has moderate significance locally when compared to Arlington and Manning, who he is compared to in the HHE. His most significant work was the Karori Teachers College. Due to the loss of this building, a disproportionate focus has been placed on Toomath's significance.
	Social	n/a	
Physical Values			
	Archaeological	n/a	
	Architectural	moderate	The house is a well composed example of Modernism and therefore has moderate architectural value. The interior, which is cited as the key evidence in the HHE, is not a relevant consideration for the scheduling. In any case, open plan design was not new at the time, having already been established by other architects some 20 years earlier.
	Townscape	none	The building makes no contribution to the townscape as it is barely visible.
	Groups	low	The building does sit within a group of other Toomath buildings but (as stated under Townscape, above) these are not legible together.
	Surroundings	low	Many houses in Wellington are on steep and windy sites, surrounded by bush. There is little that makes this house, or its response to its site unique.
	Scientific	none	
	Technological	low	Many Modernist houses were experimental with construction techniques and materials – in keeping with this approach the house does have some technological value at a local level.

	Integrity	moderate	The building is reasonably intact but requires extensive remediation due to failing materials and construction techniques.
	Age	n/a	
	Sentiment	n/a	
	Recognition	low	The award includes the interior and the study addition from 2007, which no longer exists. The home is not recognised in: - Docomomo top 20 list
	Sense of place/ continuity	n/a	
Tangata whenua	n/a	n/a	
Rarity	significant, unique (study)	Low	The house is not rare -- the HHE cites the interior and the study addition as evidence for its rarity, the latter does not exist, and neither are relevant to this assessment.
Representativeness		Moderate	The house is an example of a Modernist building but the exterior of the building, which is all that is being assessed, is not exceptional in any way. The HHE cites the use of untreated timber cladding as the only evidence in this category, which does not make the building significant.

The Strategic Objectives of the PDP, notably HHSASM-O1, state that: “Significant buildings, structures, areas, and sites that exemplify Wellington’s historical and cultural values are identified, recognised and protected”. The subject building does not exemplify Wellington’s historical and cultural values.

RESPONSE TO HEARING STREAM 3 SUBMISSION SCHED1 ITEM 514, TOOMATH HOUSE (FORMER), 28 ROBIESON STREET

331. Ms Smith claims to have not found any substantial errors or inaccuracies. However, she has had to ignore large sections of the report because they pertain to the interiors and the claim that “The fabric appears to be sound over 50 years later...” is substantially inaccurate. This has a considerable bearing on the decision as to whether or not this building should be scheduled. I accept that Ms Smith acknowledges this in statements 336, 337 and 338 and the fact that the Council’s evaluation and report were based on a desktop study alone. However, in the case of experimental buildings such as this one, the condition plays a significant role, as I will explain below.

339 & 340. I agree with Ms Smith that intactness and authenticity do not preclude a place from having value, however what she does not appear to acknowledge, is that in the case of experimental buildings such as the subject building, the repairs and remedial work that is required, may alter the building. Until the work has been completed it is unclear whether, or to what extent, any values of the building will be altered. It is with respect to this consideration that Dr Hartley’s thesis becomes particularly relevant.

344. In respect of Ms Smith’s comments, I would like to clarify that Dr Hartley’s thesis sets out how, due to the experimental nature of the construction methods used by Modernist architects, the solutions may need to diverge from the original and it may no longer be possible to repair or remediate using like for like materials. As such, it is unclear how this may impact any heritage values in the future.

This very situation is currently unfolding at the Wellington Central Library and it is interesting to note that in the submission pertaining to the Library (544), Ms Smith recommends that:

“...the Wellington Central Library Te Mātapahi should be assessed against the WCC criteria/GWRC RPS policy 21 criteria in 2026 when the building works are complete...”

Similarly, at 28 Robieson Street, where many building elements need to be remediated, the building may change. To illustrate this point, I will use just one example, that of the roof, which cannot be remediated in a like for like manner. The nearly flat roof, which has been clad in an aluminium strip rib-jointed roofing, simply cannot be made weathertight using like for like materials. Either the material will need to change to a membrane roof to maintain its current pitch, or the pitch will need to be increased to accommodate a standing seam style cladding, similar to the existing cladding. In either case, the exterior of the building will change and it is the exterior the Council wishes to protect, so it is significant.



Roof at 28 Robieson Street (Photo: M Keir 2022).

Achievable solutions exist for the above-mentioned problem and will result in improved weathertightness of the building. At this point, it is not possible to assess which solution would be most appropriate - some solutions may have less impact on any heritage values than others, but these may be considerably more expensive or difficult to execute, particularly given the topography of the site. A balanced approach will need to be used to determine which is the overall best solution.

Works such as the remediation of the roof, fall well outside of what would usually be defined as “maintenance and repair”, which would be a permitted activity for a scheduled building.

350. Ms Smith maintains that including the building on the heritage schedule would not prevent the required remedial works. At this point, given the nature and scale of the work that is required, as well as how, and to what degree, the proposed solutions will deviate from the existing materials and construction methods, it is not possible to determine whether or not the work would be permitted or not.

Council’s opinion may vary from solution that is proposed by a project team. Having worked on several heritage projects with WCC, I can confirm that Council’s heritage advisors have often challenge the proposed solution, even when led by an experienced heritage architect, and even when there is evidence, such as cost or constructability issues, which support the proposed solution. Resource Consents for scheduled or listed buildings are always more complicated, thereby adding significant costs and burden to owners, sometimes to the point that projects are no longer viable. It is also important to note, and this is discussed in Dr Hartley’s thesis, that in New Zealand, we are only just starting to understand the conservation of Modernist buildings and our expertise in managing Modernist heritage is limited. The premise of most conservation projects at the moment, is based on item 6 of the

ICOMOS New Zealand Charter 2010 -- Minimum Intervention. The scope within the existing assessment frameworks is currently insufficient for the adequate management of Modernist heritage conservation processes. This is likely to result in a protracted and costly consenting process if the building is scheduled.

For the reasons cited above, Council may well prevent the required remedial works.

357. Ms Smith disagrees that including the property in SCHED1 will prevent repair and place unreasonable burden and undue costs, however, by including the property in SCHED1, the owners will undoubtedly have a large and onerous burden of an extended timescale and increased costs. If the building is scheduled, this will trigger a resource consent application because the work required will not be a like for like replacement, resulting in a considerable extension of the project timeframe and an escalation of the costs. The increase to the timescale is often considerable and is in the order of months, rather than weeks. It is without a doubt, that any listed or scheduled building requires a considerably greater amount of consultant involvement and in my experience, thousands of dollars of the clients' budgets have been spent on consultants' fees, diverting these funds away from the construction budget itself, which does not necessarily lead to a better heritage outcome. A standard architect's hourly rate of \$150.00 per hour + GST equates to \$6,000.00 + GST worth of fees for one week's full-time work. Typically, several weeks work will be required to put together a Resource Consent application, attend a pre-application meeting, respond to comments and queries, as well as handle requests for further information. This process can be very drawn out, particularly if a new approach is required for which there is little or no precedent.

It is important to bear in mind that there is virtually no public funding or tax relief for heritage building projects in New Zealand. WCC heritage funding pool amounts to a mere \$500,000.00 per annum, which is a tiny proportion of the expenditure that is required for the many heritage building projects undertaken in a year. Furthermore, 85% of this fund is for seismic upgrades so this project would not qualify. The funding is then split amongst several projects so the contribution, as a percentage of the project cost, if awarded at all, would be very small.

If the process, or the works themselves, become too onerous and / or too expensive, then the work will not be done.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, 28 Robieson St is not rare or a nationally significant example – it is not exemplary of Wellington's historical and cultural values – and there is no advantage to including 28 Robieson Street in SCHED1. This will, in fact, delay, if not entirely prevent, the necessary work from being done, leading to a further deterioration of the house.

As Bill Toomath himself said, "I had to let the house become what it needed to be." (from the Council's HHE). Thus, this house must continue to *become* and its story must be allowed to evolve.