

HERITAGE IMPACT STATEMENT



Alterations to Signage

Marion Street Underbridge, Leichhardt

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**Weir
Phillips**
Heritage
and Planning

Level 19, 100 William Street, Sydney, NSW 2011
Phone: (02) 9310 1010

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Preamble

This Heritage Impact Statement (HIS) has been prepared in conjunction with an application to alter the existing advertising signage on the Marion Street Underbridge, Leichhardt, New South Wales.

The Marion Street Underbridge is listed as a heritage item on the s170 Register of the Transport Asset Holding Entity. The underbridge is also located within the immediate vicinity of heritage items and conservation areas listed by Schedule 5 of the *Ashfield Local Environmental Plan 2013 (Ashfield LEP 2013)* and by Schedule 5 of the *Leichhardt Local Environmental Plan 2013 (Leichhardt LEP 2013)*.

The section of the Underbridge part of this proposal is located within an area managed by Sydney Trains.

1.2 Authorship

This statement has been prepared by Peter Duggan, B.Sc.(Arch), B.Arch(Hons), M.Herit.Cons., and James Phillips, B.Sc.(Arch), B.Arch, M.Herit.Cons.(Hons), of Weir Phillips Heritage and Planning.

1.3 Limitations

No historical archaeological work was carried out on the site. A detailed history was not provided for. The brief history contained in this statement was compiled from the State Heritage Listing sheet for the item and the resources identified in Section 1.6.

1.4 Methodology

This statement was prepared with reference to the NSW Heritage Office's (now Heritage NSW) *Statements of Heritage Impact* (2002 update) and with reference to the Council documents listed in Section 1.6.

1.5 Physical Evidence

An inspection of the property and the surrounding streetscape took place in November 2021. Unless otherwise indicated, the photographs contained within this report were taken at this time.

1.6 Documentary Evidence

1.6.1 General References

- Oakes, John, *Sydney's Forgotten Goods Railways*, Australian Railway Historical Society, 2001.
- Casey, John, 'Sydney's Metropolitan Goods Lines' in *Roundhouse Magazine*, Winter 2019.
- Australian Historical Railway Society, 'Sydney's Railways' in Don Fraser (ed)., *Sydney: From Settlement to City*, NSW, Engineering Heritage Committee, Sydney Division, the Institution of Engineers, Australia, 1989.

1.6.2 Planning Documents

- *Ashfield Local Environmental Plan 2013*.
- *Inner West Consolidated Development Control Plan 2016*.
- *Leichhardt Local Environmental Plan 2013*.

- *NSW Government Department of Planning Transport Corridor Outdoor Advertising and Signage Guidelines, November 2017.*
- *State Environmental Planning Policy No. 64 (Advertising and Signage).*

1.7 Site Location

The site of the proposed signage is the western side of the Marion Street Underbridge (Figure 1).

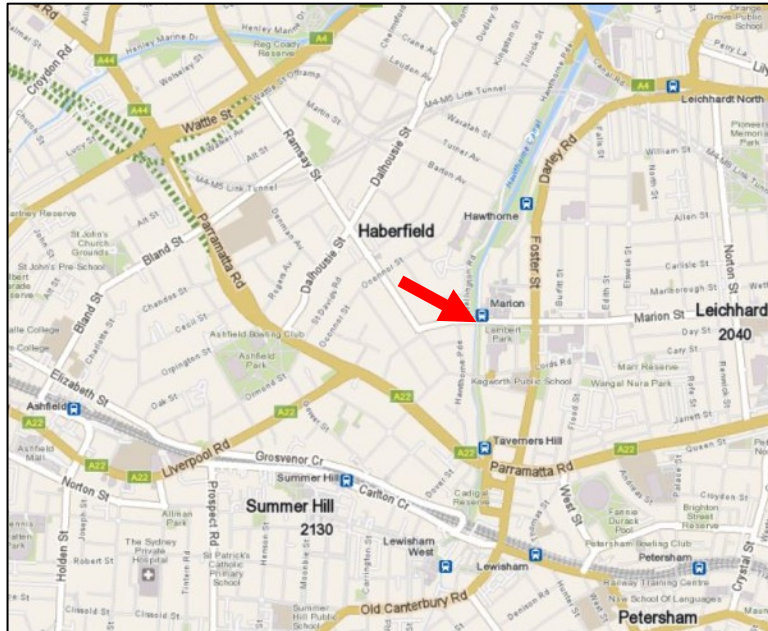


Figure 1: The location of the subject site (indicated by the red arrow).
WhereIS.

2.0 HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

2.1 Aboriginal History

While an Aboriginal history is not provided for, it is acknowledged that the Cadigal people of the Eora Nation are the original occupants of the present-day Leichhardt area.

2.2 Brief History of Marion Street Underbridge

The State Heritage Inventory provides the following historical notes for the Marion Street Underbridge:

'By 1900 the Sydney metropolitan railway network was fast reaching congestion through the combined, and conflicting, demands of the suburban and country passenger services and the movements of freight trains. Segregated running periods and special timetables were only short-term solutions and did not address the differing traffic requirements. So, the decision was made to build a separate rail system for freight trains so they could move independently of the passenger services, but they would be able to link into the four Main Lines (North, West, South and Illawarra) at specific locations. Also, a large marshalling yard would be built in the "middle" of the Goods Line Network, at Enfield, to centralise the interchange of freight traffic.

Work began on the Metropolitan Goods Line around 1910 and was eventually completed when the Goods Line from Rozelle to the northern end of Darling Harbour was completed in 1922. As at the year 2000 the network is largely as originally built and is still serving its design function, with some upgrading and modifications. The

Darling Harbour Goods Yard has been abandoned and the site redeveloped, and the Enfield Yard has been completely rebuilt to suit modern traffic operations. Nearly all the underbridges, a mix of brick arches, steel girders and steel trusses, are still in use.

The first wrought iron riveted girder bridge was constructed at Menangle in 1863, using prefabricated girders imported from England. During the late 1860s the government allocated around 50% of public works funds to railway construction, and when extensions to the Main trunk lines were approved the major bridge crossing were constructed from imported wrought iron.

While during the depression years of the 1890s and beyond through the first world war brick arches were employed for use on upgrading the infrastructure of existing lines, iron and then steel bridges were still used for construction of new railway lines, with plate web girders used for bridges with spans up to 80feet (24m).

The riveted steel plate web girder Marion Street Underbridge was constructed in 1912 as part of the original infrastructure for the Metropolitan Goods Line.¹

3.0 SITE ASSESSMENT

The purpose of this section is to establish the character of the area immediately surrounding the proposed signage site and to identify any significant visual relationships.

3.1 Marion Street

Marion Street is a main thoroughfare through the local area that runs from its junction with Ramsay Street within Haberfield in the west to its junction with Balmain Road within Leichhardt in the east. The street generally runs in an east-west direction; the street passes through a number of intersections with traffic lights along its length. The street is generally lined with conjoined and closely spaced shops and single storey and two storey dwellings along its length.

The proposed signage site on the Marion Street Underbridge is located towards the western end of the street near its intersection with Hawthorne Parade. The character of Marion Street in the vicinity of the site is mixed. To the west lie a number of Federation period dwellings on both sides of the street. This section of Marion Street lies within the Haberfield Conservation Area. To the immediate west of the underbridge Marion Street crosses over the Hawthorne canal, an open stormwater channel that runs from Canterbury Road in Lewisham to the south and discharges into Iron Cove to the north. Hawthorne Canal is listed on the Sydney Water s170 register.

Marion Street carries traffic in both directions in four lanes. There are footpaths to either side. Street vegetation is located along the length of the street further to the east and west. The street is given a leafy character in the immediate vicinity of the underbridge due to the mature trees and vegetation that line either side of the Hawthorne Canal. A lift tower and stairs lead up to the Marion Street light rail station immediately adjoining the underbridge on the northern side.

On the eastern side of the underbridge is the suburb Leichhardt. The northern side of the street in the immediate vicinity is a large Volvo service centre and The Marion, a large residential nursing home run by Uniting. On the southern side, immediately beyond the underbridge, is the rear of the northern stand to Lambert Park, a purpose-built soccer stadium and home to the APIA Leichhardt Tigers Football Club.

¹ *Leichhardt (Marion St) Underbridge*, Dulwich Hill to Rozelle Goods Line 11.127km, Marion Street, Leichhardt. State Heritage Inventory Database No.: 4805739.

3.2 Marion Street Underbridge

The Marion Street Underbridge is a single span double track structure of riveted steel plate web girders. It supports the railway tracks of the Inner West Light Rail line (formerly part of the Metropolitan Goods Line), which runs from Dulwich Hill to Central. The underbridge spans 22.71m and is supported at either end by brick abutments with perpendicular wing walls. The section of the underbridge for the location of the proposed works is shown by Figure 2.



Figure 2: The Marion Street Underbridge, looking east.
JCDecaux.

3.3 View Corridors and Contribution to the Streetscape

The underbridge is a dominant element in Marion Street. The underbridge is visible on approach from either direction along the street. Views towards the western side of the underbridge as it is approached along Marion Street are restricted by the bend in the street near Hawthorne Parade. Visibility towards the underbridge is restricted on approach along Hawthorne Parade from the north or south as the area of proposed advertising signage is screened by vegetation and street elements. Figures 3 to 5 demonstrate the visibility of the existing signage on the underbridge at increasing distances along Marion Street.





Figures 3 to 5: Views toward the existing signage from along Marion Street from an increasing distance.
JCDecaux.

The underbridge is a prominent element as it is approached along Marion Street from the east. There are no proposed works to the eastern side of the underbridge. The existing signage on the eastern side is to be retained unaltered (Figure 6).



Figure 6: Views toward the eastern side of the underbridge on approach along Marion Street from the east.
JCDecaux

3.4 Summary Statement of Significance

The State Heritage Inventory provides the following statement of significance for the Marion Street Underbridge:

‘The Marion Street Underbridge is of local significance as part of the original infrastructure for the Metropolitan Goods Line, one of the most significant and effective railway projects in New South Wales during the 20th century.

The bridge is a good representative example of riveted plate girder rail bridges, with a span towards the maximum length for plate web girders, and is a highly visible landmark structure over Marion Street.’²

3.5 Summary of Heritage Citations and Listings

3.5.1 The Marion Street Underbridge

The Marion Street Underbridge is listed as a heritage item on the Transport Asset Holding Entity’s *s170 Register*.

3.5.2 Adjacent Heritage Items

The boundary between the former Leichhardt and Ashfield local government areas, lies along the eastern side of the Hawthorne canal. These LGAs amalgamated in 2016 to form the Inner West Council.

Within the former Ashfield LGA (now Inner West Council)

Heritage Items within the immediate vicinity of the Marion Street Underbridge listed by the *Ashfield LEP 2013* include:

- Haberfield Conservation Area.

Within the former Leichhardt LGA (now Inner West Council)

Heritage Items within the immediate vicinity of the Marion Street Underbridge listed by the *Leichhardt LEP 2013* include:

- Former house, including interiors, 20-22 Foster Street, Leichhardt.

4.0 HERITAGE IMPACT STATEMENT

4.1 The Proposal

It is proposed to convert the existing advertising sign on the western side of the Marion Street underbridge to a digital LED screen. The existing advertising sign, measuring 8.3m x 2.2m (18.26 sq. metres), is used for commercial advertising purposes. The proposed digital sign, measuring 7.9m x 2.0m (16.25 sq. metres) is to be located in the same position. The existing anti-graffiti screen is to be slightly adjusted to suit the smaller width of the new sign. The existing access platform is to be retained. The steel support structure for the proposed sign is to be painted to match the underbridge. It is also proposed to remove seven of the existing poster signs on the brick wing walls beneath the underbridge.

² *Leichhardt (Marion St) Underbridge*, Dulwich Hill to Rozelle Goods Line 11.127km, Marion Street, Leichhardt. State Heritage Inventory Database No.: 4805739.

4.2 Effect of Work

The following statement is written with an understanding of the guidelines provided by the:

- *State Environmental Planning Policy No. 64 (Advertising and Signage).*
- *NSW Government Department of Planning Transport Corridor Outdoor Advertising and Signage Guidelines, November 2017.*
- *Inner West Comprehensive Development Control Plan 2016 (Inner West DCP 2016)*

Clause 24 of *SEPP 64* permits advertising on bridges provided that it meets the requirements outlined by the *Department of Planning Guidelines* (November 2017). The primary purpose of these guidelines, aside from ensuring public safety, is to ensure that the architectural qualities of the bridge or overpass are not compromised. Signage must also be compatible with the visual character and amenity of an area.

This statement deals with heritage impact only. Safety implications and public benefit are not discussed.

The NSW Heritage Office guideline publication *Statements of Heritage Impact* requires three specific statements to assist in determining the impact of proposed works on the heritage significance of a site or area. These statements are as follows.

The following aspects of the proposal respect or enhance the heritage significance of the item for the following reasons:

Section 2.5.5 of the *Department of Planning Guidelines* deals specifically with signage on bridges.

The proposed LED digital screen is compatible with the scale of the underbridge. The area of the existing signage is slightly reduced in the proposal to suit the smaller digital screen size in comparison to the existing sign. An understanding and appreciation of the existing underbridge is retained in the proposal.

The existing signage to be converted into a LED digital screen lies within the structural boundaries of the bridge. It is restricted to the western face of the underbridge only (see below).

The proposed signage will reuse the existing support structure. No structural work including welding or bolting into the underbridge is required. The significant fabric is thus protected and the work will be fully reversible at a later date.

The proposed conversion of the existing signage provides for a more interesting element within the public domain. Through the use of digital technology the advertisements on the proposed LED screen will change on a 10 second basis. These images are static and not animated. This high turnover of advertising will provide visual interest without detracting from the character of the surrounding streetscape.

Part 10 Signs and Advertising Structures of the *Inner West DCP 2016* permit illuminated signs if they are considered to have merit. The changeover of advertising on the LED screen on a 10 second basis will not introduce any new impacts on the heritage significance of the underbridge.

The proposal to remove seven of the existing poster signs will have a positive impact on reducing the amount of visual elements in the vicinity of the underbridge and in the streetscape.

The following aspects of the proposal could detrimentally impact on heritage significance. The reasons are explained as well as the measures taken to minimise impacts:

The proposed digital LED screen advertising sign will continue to conceal part of the welded steel plating of the underbridge. This will have an acceptable impact in that the overall area of the underbridge covered is small; other continuous sections of steel plating will remain clearly visible from the public domain. As noted above, the area of plating covered by the proposal is marginally smaller than that covered by the existing advertising sign.

The proposed signage is located within the immediate vicinity of heritage items and Conservation Areas within Haberfield and Leichhardt. The proposal will have a minimal impact on the heritage items within Leichhardt, given that it is located on the western side of the underbridge. The proposed signage will not further obscure view corridors towards these items and does not extend above or below the form of the underbridge.

The proposed conversion of the existing signage to a LED digital screen will have a minimal impact on the character of the Haberfield Conservation Areas in the vicinity of the underbridge. Existing streetscape elements and trees will assist in the integration of the proposed LED screen into the streetscape.

The following sympathetic solutions have been considered and discounted for the following reasons:

The proposal complies with the guidelines and examples for bridge signage provided by *NSW Government Department of Planning Transport Corridor Outdoor Advertising and Signage Guidelines*, November 2017. It is considered that the conversion of the existing signage into a LED digital screen will not introduce any new detrimental impacts on the item or the heritage items and the Haberfield Conservation Area in the vicinity for the reasons as stated above. The proposed LED digital screen advertising signage is a use of new technology that allows the change over of advertisements without having to physically replace them and therefore cause less obstruction to the public domain.

5.0 CONCLUSIONS

This heritage impact statement has considered the impact of altering the existing signage to the western face of the Marion Street underbridge. The proposed LED digital screen advertising sign will have a minimal impact on the heritage significance of the underbridge and on heritage items and areas within the immediate vicinity.