Relocation and reconstruction for conservation

The reconstructed Church building in the Darwin Botanic Gardens

In order to save the Church building, the original core was relocated in late 2000 to a place where its long-term conservation could be assured.

Dismantling the Wesleyan Methodist Church, 2000

The Church was carefully dismantled and all components were numbered and relocated to the Darwin Botanic Gardens. Some interesting discoveries were made as the building was dismantled - the original roof framing was considerably lighter than first thought, floor framing members had been replaced and strengthened and the floorboards had been totally destroyed by termites.

In terms of the heritage significance of the Church this was a radical move, nevertheless, conservation measures respected the Burra Charter*:

'The physical location of a place is part of its cultural significance. A building, work or other component of a place should remain in its historical location. Relocation is generally unacceptable unless this is the sole practical means of ensuring its survival'.

Burra Charter, Article 9.1.

A conservation study of the Church building provided the basis for the reconstruction. Many of the construction details were developed following the careful analysis of early photographs supported with a detailed investigation of the remaining building elements.

'The original structure is quite remarkable and without parallel in any known surviving or published building'.

Dr Miles Lewis, Heritage Australia, 1991.

Completing the roof, 2000

The roof was reconstructed using galvanized sheets that matched the corrugated galvanized iron previously installed on the Church. With the help of early photographs elements such as the curved ridge vent and the front entrance porch were reconstructed.

Re-erecting the Church in the Darwin Botanic Gardens, 2000

A new steel supporting frame was first erected at the Darwin Botanic Gardens and then the original steel wall and roof framing was fixed in position. Missing sections of the walls and the front entrance porch were reconstructed. Cypress Pine floor framing was reused and fixed to new concrete piers. The termite damaged flooring was replaced with new floorboards.

* *The Australian ICOMOS charter for the conservation of places of cultural significance, more commonly known as The Burra Charter. This charter has been accepted as the standard for heritage conservation practices in Australia.*