



Willow Court Heritage Precinct  
Signage Strategy  
V.2 12 January 2024

*Curio Projects acknowledges that Willow Court is located on the unceded lands of the Linawini people.  
We acknowledge and pay respects to their Elders past and present.*



# Document Information

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1	15 December 2023	V.1	Internal Review	Flo Hastings	Jody Steele & Gemma Davie
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This report has been prepared based on research by Curio Projects specialists. Historical sources and reference material used in the preparation of this report are acknowledged and referenced at the end of each section and in figure captions.

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Cover Image: Willow Court Barracks, Source: Libraries Tasmania, Tasmanian Archives and Heritage Office (AA193/1/2320)

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## Background & Overview

The Derwent Valley Council (DVC) has commissioned Curio Projects (Curio) to develop a Signage Strategy for the Willow Court Heritage Site, known as the Willow Court Asylum Complex on the Tasmanian Heritage Register (THR ID: 7019).

This project is an outcome of interpretation advice that Curio provided to the DVC in the Willow Court Heritage Interpretation Plan (2022). The Plan included the development of four interpretive themes that encompass the sites heritage significance, including:



*'Up the River and Down the Road'*



Out of Sight, Out of Mind



Care, Community, & Consciousness



Transformation and Healing

In addition to a set of themes and storylines, the plan also made interpretive recommendations categorised according to short, medium, and long-term priorities.

The development of an Interpretive Signage Strategy and associated signs were identified as a short-term priority: a project that can be feasibly implemented on a short-term basis that will have positive, long-term impacts on the visitor and storytelling experience on site. This Signage Strategy establishes a framework for the creation of a new suite of signage at Willow Court that is informed by the messaging outlined within the Interpretation Plan and aligns with contemporary, best-practise interpretation principles. In developing this Strategy, Curio has undertaken the following tasks:

- Assessment of existing signage across Willow Court's publicly accessible domain, including observational research on how visitors interact with this signage.
- Analysis of previous reports, such as the Heritage Interpretation Strategy, to identify what the most important messages are and where these should be communicated through the use of signage.
- Mapping of critical way finding locations.
- Development of a basic style guide, addressing elements such as colour palette, materials, structural design, font, images, and graphics.
- An assessment of technologies and other media that can be incorporated to complement proposed signage.
- Discussions with DVC staff to address concerns and priorities.

Overall, the purpose of this strategy is to ensure that any new signs installed at Willow Court are located appropriately, have a consistent tone of voice, reflect the site's identity, deliver the appropriate messaging to visitors, and provide a foundation for the continuation of further interpretation across the site.

A summary of recommendations is contained within this strategy, however detailed content, design, and notional costings are not included and will be considered as a separate deliverable in partnership with a signage contractor.

### Why is interpretive signage important?

Signs are an important part of creating a visitor-friendly environment at historic sites such as Willow Court. They are one part of an overall visitor journey and assist visitors to understand the world around them. Signs at historic sites should provide a balanced amount of interpretive content and wayfinding information that enables visitors to understand the significance of where they are as well as a means of orienting themselves in a way that makes logical sense. When done well, interpretive signage can achieve these aims concurrently, giving visitors the means to spark their imagination and orientate them 'in place'.

# 1. Assessment of Existing Signage

## 1.1 Current Signage

Willow Court currently has four signs installed at various points across the site (placements pictured below). Sign 1, located at the entrance of the site, was developed as part of the Derwent Valley Council project, *Walking Through Time*. Launched in 2013, it functions as a self-guided walking tour of New Norfolk, using interpretive signs and podcasts, including a small segment at Willow Court covering the site's overall history. Three other signs, while not part of *Walking Through Time*, complement that project and offer more detailed histories of landmark buildings, including the Barracks, Wards A, B, and C, and Frescati.

Given their positioning outdoors, the signs have been manufactured to withstand weathering over time. They are fixed to their positions by metal posts concreted into the ground, with steel vinyl-wrapped panels mounted to display text and imagery. All but the *Walking Through Time* sign have a consistent colour scheme of red, cream, and grey, and a selection of images and content divided into three columns. Having been installed for over a decade, the signs have a reasonable amount of general wear and tear, including marks, creasing, tearing and a small amount of graffiti.

The content of the signs is historically accurate and thorough, providing visitors with a starting point to understand the heritage significance of the site. However, the crowded aesthetic and high word count are not accessible for diverse learning styles and could deter visitors from engaging with the information in full.

The production of new signage offers an opportunity to bring interpretation at Willow Court into line with contemporary heritage interpretation practice and design. By condensing the existing content, fine-tuning signage positioning, and utilising modern design principles, signage will breathe new life into the current visitor experience at Willow Court, paving the way for the development of further layers of interpretation, including digital elements.

Map of Current Signage Locations

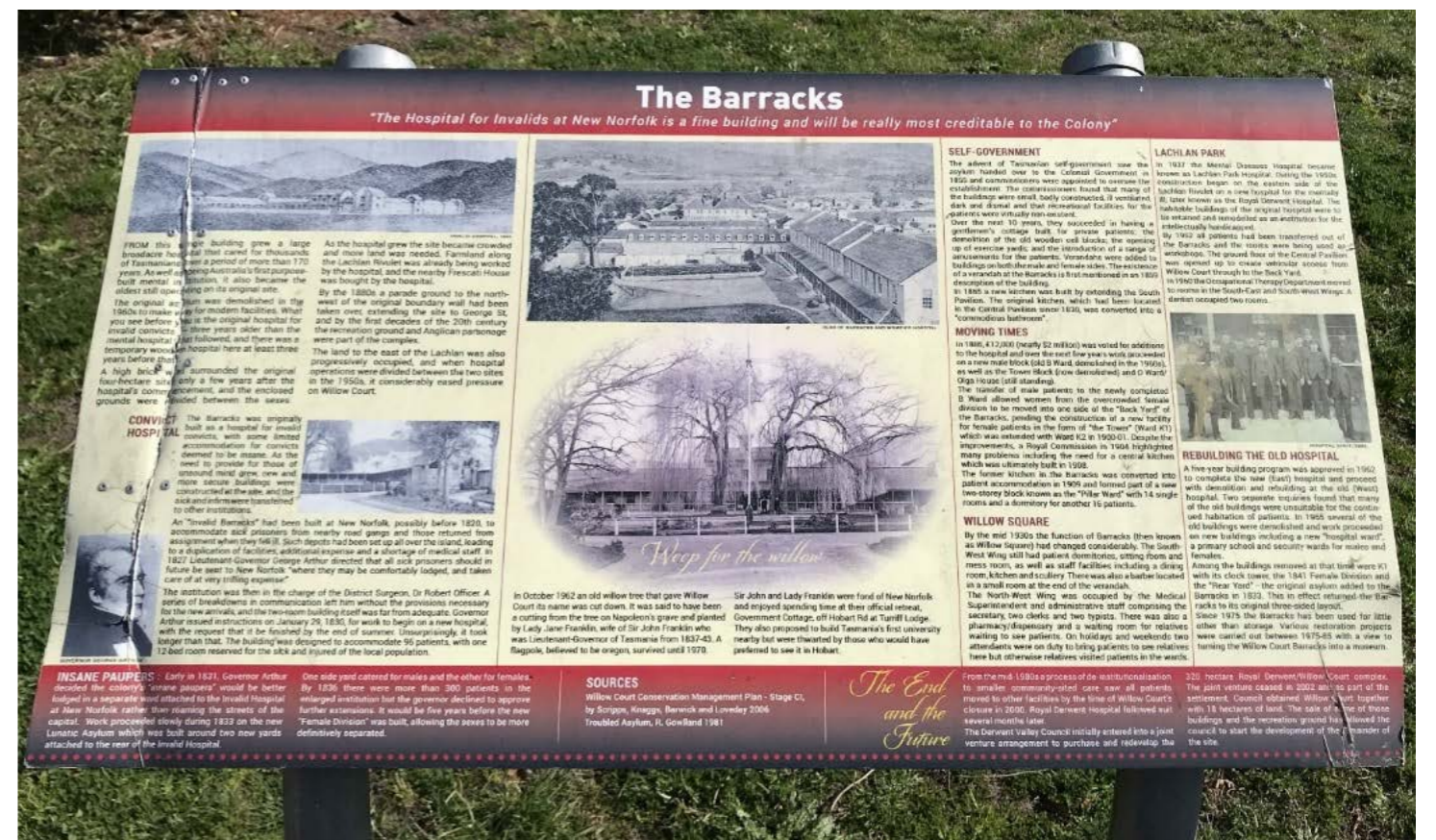


- 1: Willow Court Overview
- 2: The Barracks
- 3: Wards A, B, and C
- 4: Frescati





Sign 1: Walking Through Time overview



Sign 2: The Barracks



Sign 3: Wards A, B, and C



Sign 4: Frescati

## 2. Technology & Other Physical Media

## 2.1. Current

Current heritage interpretation technology at the site is limited to a stop in the walking trail podcast *Walking Through Time*, developed in 2013. This can be accessed via a QR code located in the bottom right-hand corner of Sign 1, the Willow Court overview sign at the entrance of the site.

Other physical media located in the public domain includes the presence of a sculptural item located in the grass-expanse at the front of the Barracks (pictured below right). Located to the right of the courtyard, it was installed by Derwent Valley Arts as part of The Barracks Art Gallery display, and does not play an interpretive role.

## 2.2. Potential

There is a range of technologies and other media that could potentially be embedded into future signage at Willow Court.

Additional sculptural elements which relate to the themes and storylines of the precinct could be developed to incorporate interpretive content (see reference image below right).

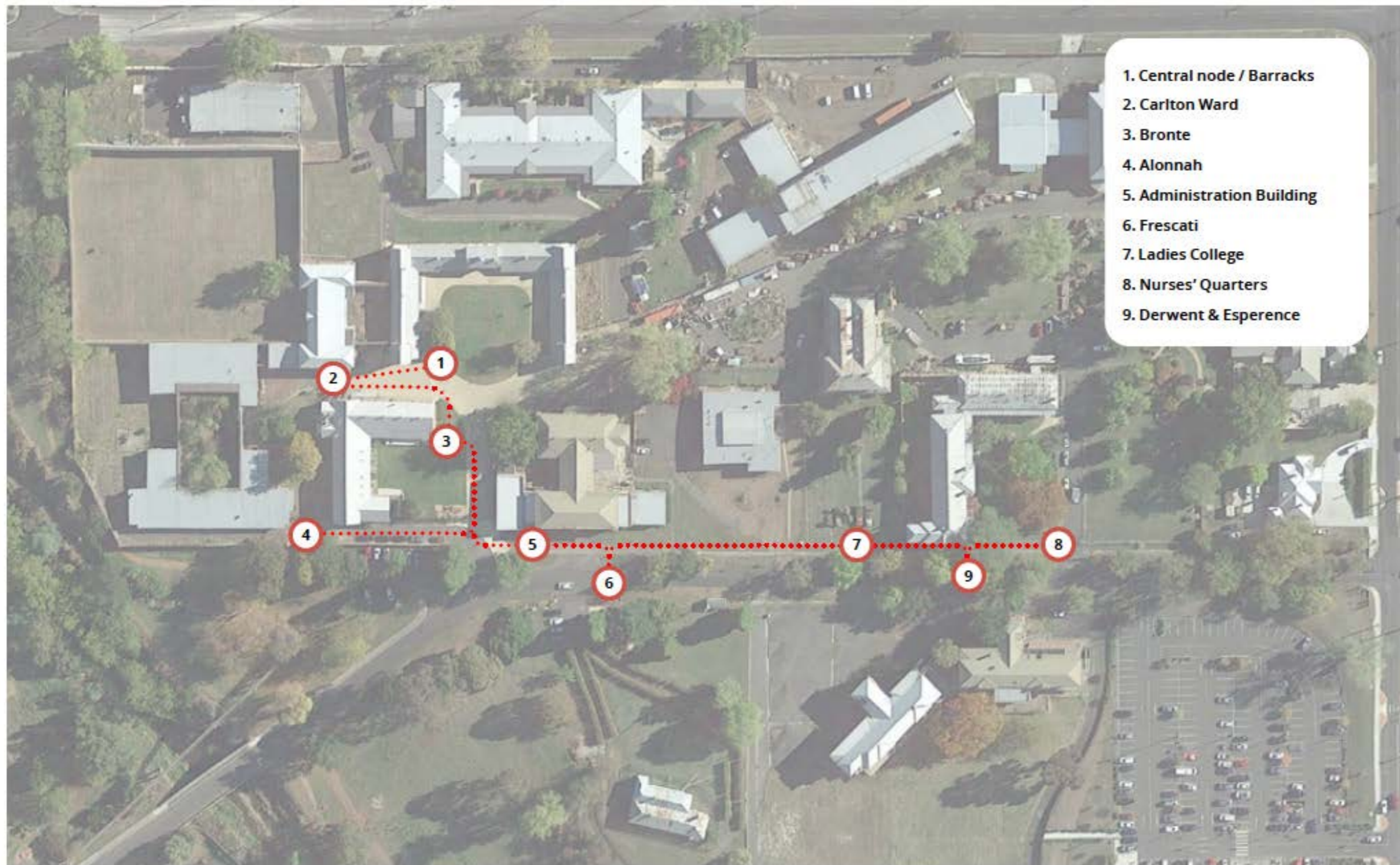
QR codes are one of the simplest and most effective ways of incorporating a digital layer and can function as an extension to the interpretive experience signage provides. By using a QR code on each sign, visitors have the option to explore further information in their own time and in their own way. Resources may include a language selection feature, location information, personal stories and audio vignettes, as well as further images and reading.



### 3. Signage Site Plan

### 3.1. Signage Locations

Potential locations for a suite of new signage, including a proposed visitor journey, are outlined in the below map:



### 3.2. Signage Hierarchy

Signage hierarchy is an important form of visual communication. As a broad principle, signage hierarchy refers to a unified system of signs that assists to communicate clear messages over a large and disparate site, such as Willow Court. As a visual tool, signage hierarchy and associated designs provides subtle guidance to the reader about the order in which information should be consumed, the relative importance of the message being conveyed, how different pieces of information relate to one another, and enhances the visual flow of a site and its setting.

For the purpose of this signage strategy, signs have been organised according to level one, two, and three, organised by their intended design, function and purpose.

#### Level One signs

- A level one sign acts as a key point of information and wayfinding. Visually striking, they are designed to draw the attention of visitors and introduce them to the central themes, histories, and structures that characterise the site.

At Willow Court, the Level One sign is proposed to be located at the front of the Barracks (sign 1) and has a multi-functional purpose as a 'place making' and way finding sign, dedicated to orientating the visitor in the centre of the site, where they can be immersed in its historic context and orient themselves accordingly. Importantly, it will set the tone for the other signs in language, visual communication, design, and tone.

#### Level Two signs

- Level two signs provide specific information relating to a building, element or place. Typically more succinct and subtler in design or size, level two signs can provide both interpretive content and wayfinding.

At Willow Court, Level Two signs have been proposed for various locations across the site, including the Administration Building, Frescati, Bronte, Alonnah, Carlton Ward, the Ladies Cottage, and Nurses' Quarters. These signs will offer clear messaging on the role these areas played at Willow Court and how they represent philosophies behind the treatment of mental illness and disability during their historical eras.

#### Level Three signs

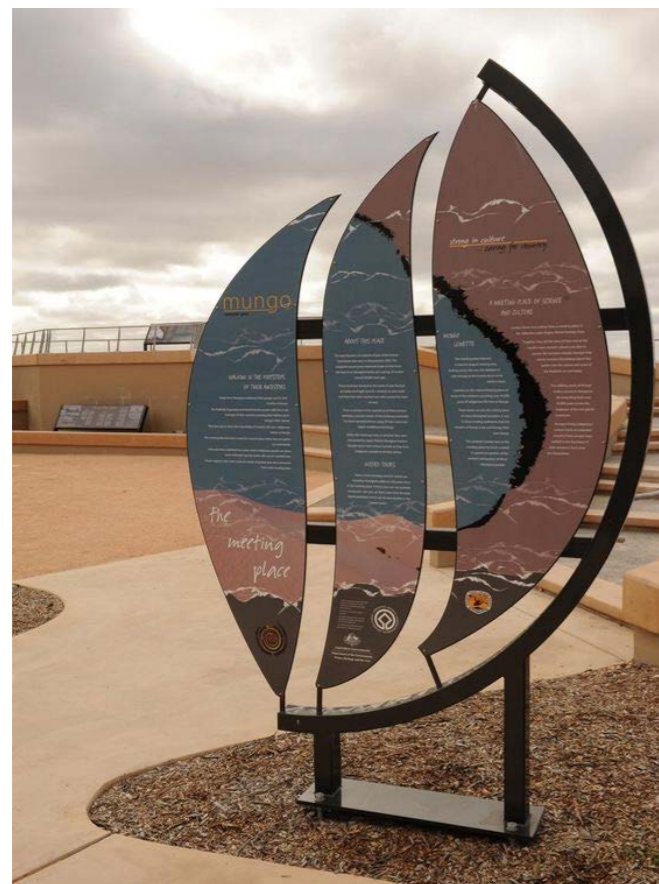
- Level three signs are smaller, directional place-making tools, designed to convey short, clear messages to visitors.

At Willow Court, Level Three signs could consist of building identifiers, providing minimal information but assisting to orient the visitor and convey the chronological timeline of the site. These signs may be placed at buildings such as the Occupational Therapy Building, the southern side of Allonah, the Nurses Home and Ladies Cottage, and Carlton Ward and Gardens.

### 3.3. Placement Rationale

There are a number of key principles to consider when determining where signs should be placed, including:

- Sign locations should be determined by assessing circulation routes and decision points by visitors using the Willow Court site. The primary concern should be what makes logical sense for the visitor in relation to how they access and move around the site.
- Where possible, concepts should be discussed in relation to their whereabouts. This means that events and stories should be conveyed closest to where they happened, to more easily inspire the imagination of visitors and place them within the site's relevant context.
- Signs should be positioned free of visual obstructions and in optimum sightlines, between 900mm – 1800mm above ground level, that are accessible by foot, wheelchair, or mobility scooter. An appropriately designed and positioned sign should be obvious, however it should not dominate the space.
- Wayfinding signage should be consistently placed at key decision-making locations that will access the largest audience, such as a main pathway or track, intersection, or at public facilities.
- Signs should be adequately setback from shared paths or roads so visitors can comfortably absorb the information in their own time and space, without hindering the free movement of others around them.
- The location and positioning of signage should adhere to guidelines and best practice advice regarding acceptability. For example, signage should be located close to defined pathways to ensure readability for wheelchair users.



Left: Examples of potential Level 1 signage types.

Above, top: Examples of potential Level 2 signage types.


Above, bottom: Examples of potential Level 3 signage types.

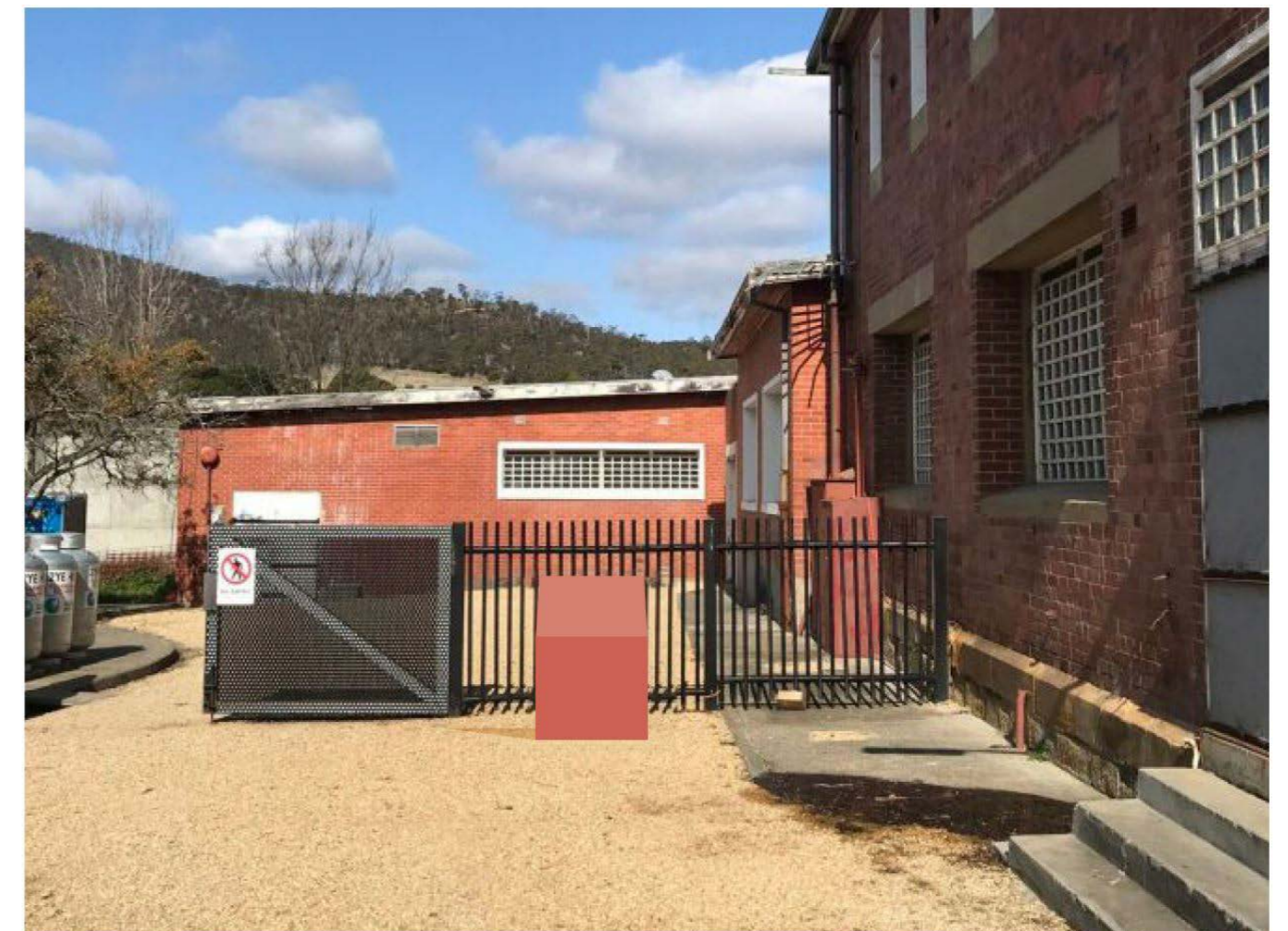



## 4. Signage Concepts


### 4.1. Content, Placement & Defining Features


An overview of potential content for each individual sign and indicative features is described in the following pages.

Sign	Proposed Content	Proposed Placement
<p><b>Sign 1:</b> Central node/Barracks</p> <p><b>Sign Level:</b> 1</p> <p><b>Word count:</b> 350</p> <p><b>Relevant Themes:</b> Up the River and Down the Road, Transformation and Healing</p>	<p>This sign will provide an overview of the site that offers visitors an introduction to the history of Willow Court and the site’s overall themes. Topics include how it came to be here, the people it housed, it’s development over time, and the legacy it continues to have in New Norfolk and wider Tasmania.</p> <p>As a central node, this sign will include an acknowledgement of Country, and also act as a key form of way finding, offering directional waypoints designed in an integrated way.</p> <p>It will be set back from the grass to minimise disturbance to landscaping, and designed to be visually eye catching and larger in size to draw the attention of visitors and orient them to the central nucleus of the site.</p>	

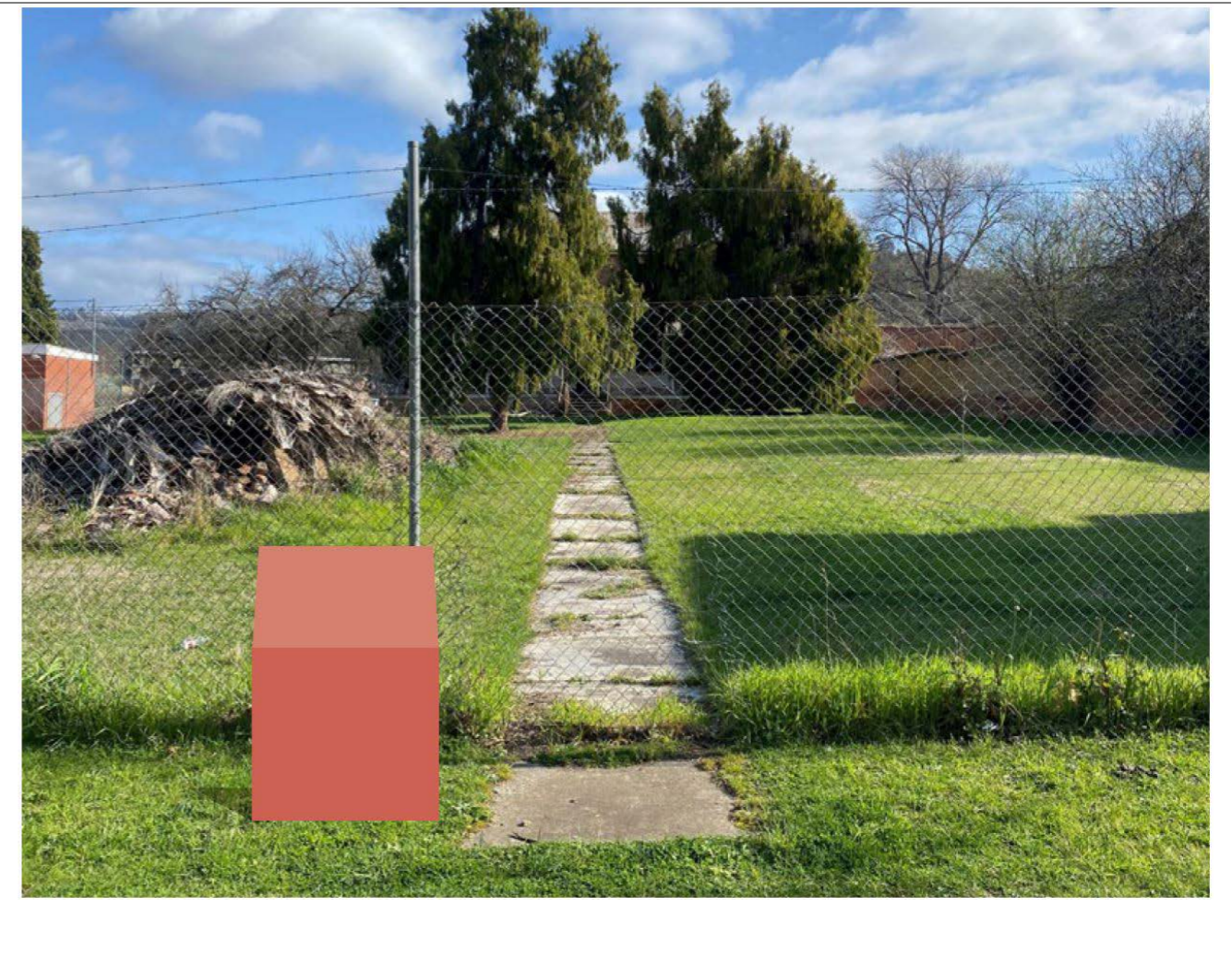
Sign	Proposed Content	Proposed Placement
<p>Sign 2: Carlton Ward</p> <p>Sign level: 2</p> <p>Word count: 200</p> <p>Relevant Themes: Out of Sight, Out of Mind, Care, Community and Consciousness</p>	<p>This sign will discuss the story of Carlton Ward, who was housed there and why. Relying heavily on primary source materials such as newspaper articles and staff reports, it will bring to light the unique and surprising stories of Carlton, highlighting how its legacy is remembered in New Norfolk and the ways the community felt it's presence.</p> <p>It will be designed in a free-standing lectern style, and placed in the same position the existing sign is, in front of the gates that separate Carlton Ward from the publicly accessible domain.</p>	

Sign	Proposed Content	Proposed Placement
<p><b>Sign 3: Bronte</b></p> <p><b>Sign level: 2</b></p> <p><b>Word count: 200</b></p> <p><b>Relevant themes:</b> Care, Community and Consciousness, Transformation and Healing</p>	<p>This content will discuss the uses of Bronte Ward, dating from when it opened in the 1940s to the present day.</p> <p>Highlighting the many changes the building has experienced, it will represent the continuous way that structures within the site, including the entity of Willow Court itself, have evolved, adapting to the site's needs over time.</p> <p>This sign will make reference to Carlton Ward and the Agrarian kitchen gardens to encourage visitors to explore the interconnected pathways and storylines of the site, both historically and contemporarily.</p> <p>It will be designed in a free-standing lectern style and placed near to the entrance way of Agrarian Kitchen to allow for both dwell time and free flow of movement for patrons using the space.</p>	

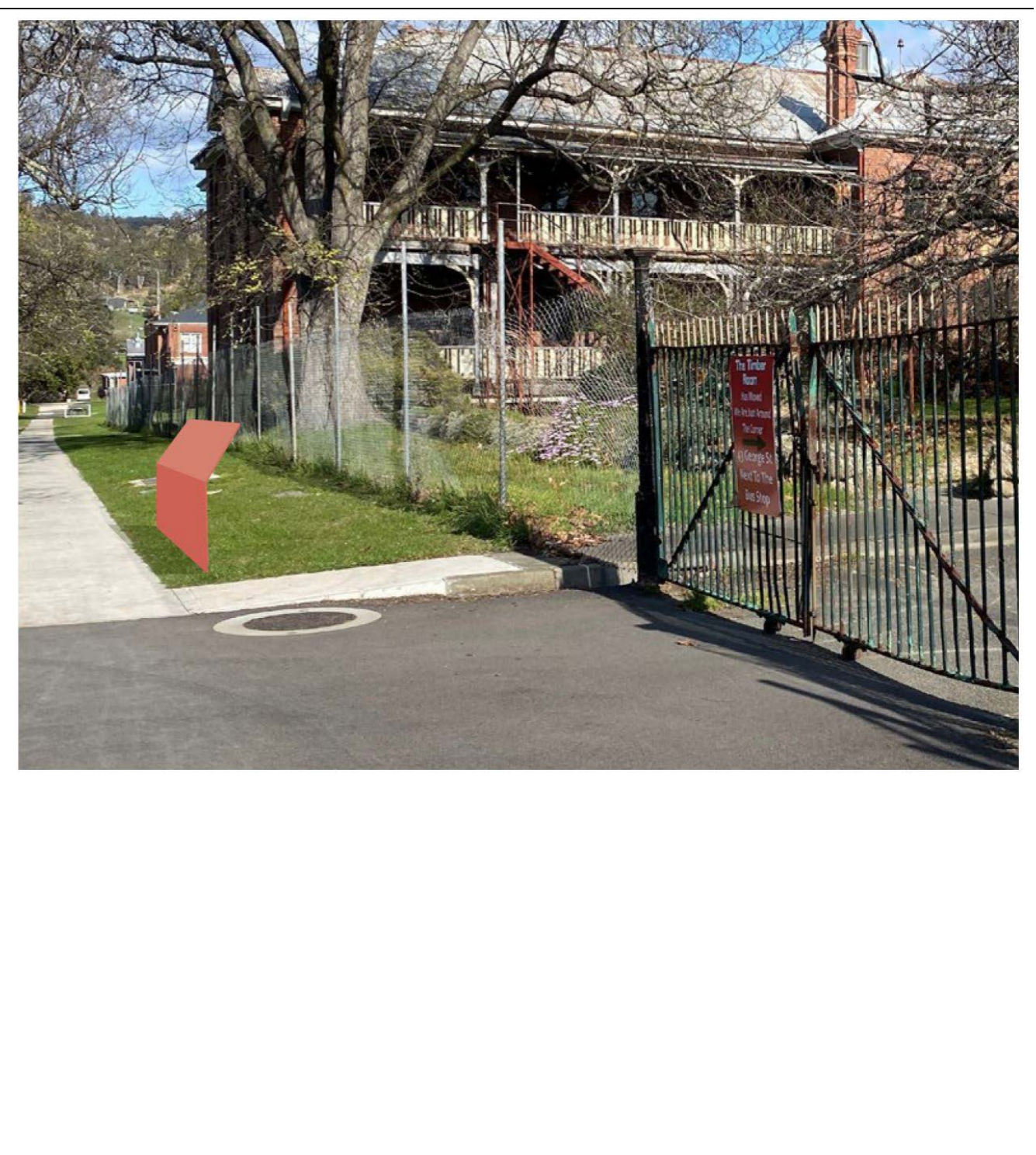
Sign	Proposed Content	Proposed Placement
<p>Sign 4: Alonnah</p> <p>Sign level: 2</p> <p>Word count: 200</p> <p>Relevant themes: Out of Sight, Out of Mind, Transformation and Healing</p>	<p>This sign will tell the story of Alonnah by directing attention to the unique architectural features that symbolise the use and purpose of this building.</p> <p>Relying heavily on contemporary imagery, it will evoke the experiences of women housed in the building, discussing daily life, conditions, and how attitudes to incarceration of women deemed 'delinquent' and experiencing mental health challenges have changed over time.</p> <p>It will be positioned on the footpath, at a 90-degree angle to the black fence, placed strategically in view of the building to highlight its distinct architectural features.</p>	


Sign	Proposed Content	Proposed Placement
<p>Sign 5: Administration Building</p> <p>Sign level: 2</p> <p>Word count: 200</p> <p>Relevant themes: Care, Community and Consciousness</p>	<p>This sign will demonstrate the essential role the Administration Building played in the everyday running of Willow Court, as well as the important social and cultural role it played for the entirety of New Norfolk.</p> <p>Positioned slightly outside the site, it will make reference to what lies within the gates, positioning the Administration Building as a key site for understanding the site both now and then.</p> <p>It will be designed in a free-standing lectern style and placed on the grassy curb near to the entrance way to the site.</p>	

Sign	Proposed Content	Proposed Placement
<p><b>Sign 6:</b> Frescati</p> <p>Sign level: 2</p> <p>Word count: 200</p> <p><b>Relevant themes:</b> Up the River and Down the Road, Care, Community and Consciousness</p>	<p>As one of the oldest structures at the site and one that has much cultural meaning to the Willow Court community, this sign will uncover the many layers of Frescati, highlighting its connections to colonial Tasmania, and its long connection with the management of Willow Court.</p> <p>It will be placed in a highly accessible position, fronting The Avenue, positioned to draw attention to the building, seen in the background beyond the hedge.</p>	

Sign	Proposed Content	Proposed Placement
<p>Sign 7: Ladies Cottage</p> <p>Sign level: 2</p> <p>Word Count: 200</p> <p>Relevant themes: Up the River and Down the Road, Out of Sight, Out of Mind</p>	<p>Positioned outside of the Ladies Cottage with frontage on the Avenue, in addition to uncovering the use of the building over time, this sign will discuss the nuances of patient treatments and how they differed according to class and gender.</p> <p>It will bring a human element to interpretive signage by using illustrations and imagery to depict the many items unearthed by archaeologists during excavations that would have been used and created by patients of the Ladies Cottage.</p> <p>Placed just outside the fence lining the Ladies Cottage property, it will make reference to Willow Court as a whole, inviting intrigue into the stories of the site. The materials will be required to be durable and easily interchangeable in case of vandalism.</p>	



Sign	Proposed Content	Proposed Placement
<p>Sign 8: Nurses' Quarters</p> <p>Sign level: 2</p> <p>Word count: 200</p> <p>Relevant themes: Care, Community and Consciousness</p>	<p>This sign will be positioned outside of the Nurses' Quarters with frontage on the Avenue. It will use first person accounts and quotes to discuss the everyday lives of the workers at Willow Court, including those who lived in this building and others who worked at the site across time. In addition to discussing its varied uses as one element of the Willow Court facilities, it will make note of the contemporary uses of the building, including its time as an antique centre, demonstrating the adaptive reuse the site is continuing to experience.</p> <p>Similar to the Ladies Cottage, the materials will be required to be durable and easily interchangeable in case of vandalism.</p>	

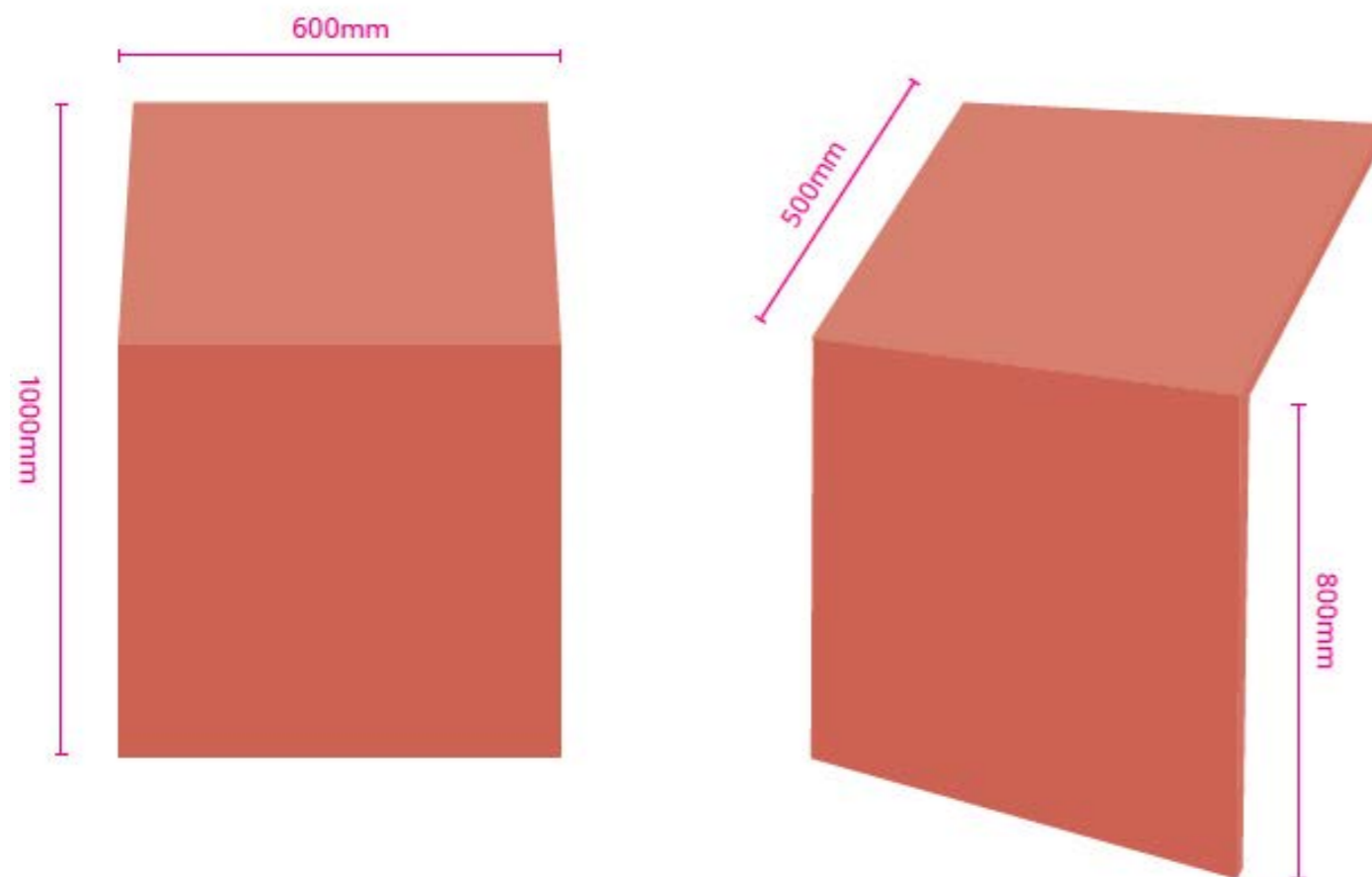
Sign	Proposed Content	Proposed Placement
<p>Sign 9: Derwent &amp; Esperence</p> <p>Sign level: 2</p> <p>Word count: 200</p> <p>Relevant themes: Care, Community and Consciousness</p>	<p>This sign would be positioned outside of the new Corumbene development with frontage on the Avenue. It will provide an overview of the histories of these wards and provide an insight into the housing and treatment of male patients in the mid-20th century through primary source content. The adaptive re-use of the site for community health services.</p>	

Optional Signs	Sign Level	Identified Issues
<i>The following signs have been identified as optional and will be further developed following consultation with the client.</i>		
Occupational Therapy Building	2/3	Obstructed view, not currently part of visitor journey
Industrial Therapy Building	2/3	Obstructed view, not currently part of visitor journey

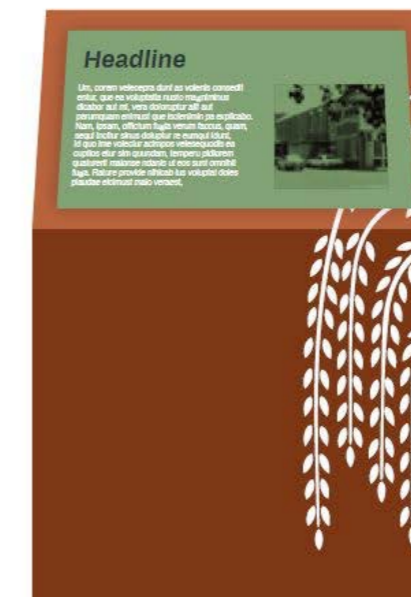
## 4.2. Signage Dimensions

The below specifications and artwork examples have been developed to guide the built form of Type 2 Signage. Specifications for Type 1 and 3 signage should be developed following confirmation of this draft by the client.

### Specifications



### Artwork example



NOT FINAL ART

### Precedent



Laser cut



Etched and painted

### 4.3. Style Guide

It is recommended that a comprehensive style guide be produced at a time when signage is in production. The following basic style guide principles have been selected to contribute to the DVC brand identity and complement existing and planned interpretive elements.

#### Colours

We recommend the below Willow Court primary colours for use across all signage.



#293838  
C:76 M:60 Y:62 K:55  
R:41 G:56 B:56  
Pantone: 7722



#81A275  
C:52 M:22 Y:65 K:2  
R:129 G:162 B:117  
Pantone: 577



#C86028  
C:16 M:72 Y:100 K:4  
R:200 G:96 B:40  
Pantone: 1595

#### Typography

Headlines

**‘Derwent Valley’**

Subheadings

**‘Playfair Display’**

Body copy

**‘Archivo Regular’**

## Style Guide (Cont.)

In addition to colour palette and typography, an effective style guide includes the following principles:

- Use of compelling, site-specific graphics that connects the visitor to the significance of the site. This can include maps, historical and contemporary imagery, and illustrations.
- Consideration for outside lighting conditions, taking care to avoid large areas of white or cream that may cause glare under direct sunlight.
- Attention to visual layering, including a compelling title, subheading, a body of text that contains clear, concise messaging.
- An excess of colours and styles should be avoided – limit text, graphics, typefaces, and decorative elements.

## 4.4. Materiality

Signage will consist of durable materials, designed to withstand wear and tear from the elements and mitigate vandalism. Priority should be given to:

- Simplicity of installation
- Ease of maintenance including minimal maintenance costs
- Vandal resistance, or materials that can be easily replaced in case of vandalism
- Influence of weather and UV radiation

The key recommended material for construction of signage at this site is self-weathering steel, referred to as Corten or ACRS (Atmospheric Corrosion Resistant Steel). Cost effective and durable, this product is a highly effective material often used in signage systems that are exposed to the elements and is most sympathetic to the historic aesthetic of Willow Court buildings.

For graphic panels, vinyl or metal print is recommended, as materials that are high-quality, compliment the design aesthetic of Corten, and can be easily replaced.

## 5. Recommendations

## 5. Recommendations

This strategy presents the proposed hierarchy, content, indicative placement and design for the production and implementation of signage across the Willow Court Heritage Precinct. As part of this strategy, it is recognised that the development of new signs and replacement of existing signs will be a process of gradual evolution, subject to resourcing and funding availabilities. As such, Curio has provided the following recommendations to provide guidance on the development of interpretive signage and the most pressing priorities:

- The identification of funding opportunities and available resources is critical to determining how many signs can be developed and what form and function they may take.
- Sourcing a signage manufacture contractor should be a central priority in the early stages of any signage project to determine availability of materials and indicative costings, before substantial design takes place.
- Some level of community consultation should take place as part of the signage project to ensure that content meets community expectations. This may include liaison with Willow Court precinct partners, community groups, those who have been personally impacted by Willow Court, or those who have personal anecdotes and/or materials that could be incorporated into interpretive opportunities.
- Reference to Aboriginal Cultural Heritage, including an Acknowledgement of Country, should be developed by member(s) of the Aboriginal community first and foremost.
- To avoid gaps in the current visitor journey, existing signage should only be removed when new signage is readily available.
- Further development of an online portal, such as a DVC-operated Willow Court website page, will be required as part of incorporating a digital layer into new signage. This may include further written content, sourcing of historical imagery, audio and video vignettes, further research, and personal stories of former staff and patients.



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