



LETTING IN THE LIGHT

The new state-of-the-art City of Perth Library is the first major civic construction undertaken by the city since the Perth Concert Hall was built in the 1970s. Its design has captured the imagination of the people and is expected to open to the public in early 2016. INCITE reports.

The new City of Perth Library's modern and innovative structure, designed by architect Kerry Hill, covers 3,500 square metres with seven levels, multiple function spaces, amenities

and a café. Costing \$33 million, the library will consist of dedicated sections, including a children's floor, a young adults' floor and a history centre. Along with reading spaces and other book-related resources, the building also contains private conference rooms, a digital media wall, audiovisual rooms, a 90-seat function room and an exhibition space.

The Tree of Knowledge, located in the children's section on the fifth floor, is one of the special features of the building. This live weeping fig tree (*Ficus benjamina*) will provide a gathering place where people can read or socialise while inside the library. The roots of the tree will house a time capsule containing a letter from the lord mayor, a set of six uncirculated coins marking the 50th anniversary of the Royal Australian Mint and a photograph of City of Perth councillors. There is also a garden café, an outdoor terrace and a four-metre vertical garden containing over 500 plants. The library was designed to be as eco-friendly as possible; its circular design allows the maximum amount of natural light into the building. The design of the new library, built on the site previously occupied by the Law Chambers building, also allows more natural light to stream onto the surrounding buildings and public plaza.

This new building is part of the plan to redesign the St George's Cathedral Heritage Precinct to provide for maximum interactivity and community involvement. Next door is a heritage building, which will become a 48-room



luxury hotel – reputed to be Perth’s first six-star hotel. The final building in the new plaza will be ‘The Glass Box’ which, upon completion, will house WA State Government offices. The grouping of these three buildings in the new public plaza will also create a link between historical and modern architecture. It is also intended to open up to the public an area previously avoided and to create an imaginative, peaceful community space for all to enjoy.

The City of Perth Library’s website states: ‘Although books will continue to be integral in our library services, the new building will provide more space for people to connect with each other, explore, learn, create, reflect and participate.’

The new library has been decorated to reflect its role as a hub of creativity and knowledge. Local Perth artist Andrew Nicholls has contributed an impressive, hand-drawn mural for the fourth-floor ceiling, which depicts an elaborate and intricate collection of native flora and fauna – a tribute to Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*.

Perth’s former city library was located in the dungeon-like basement of the Law Chambers building that was demolished to make way for this project. Perth’s Deputy Lord Mayor, Robert Butler, said that the new library, unlike its predecessor, is ‘a true capital city library’. He is pleased that the new structure will encourage people to visit the library, not only for education, but also for entertainment and pleasure. 🌟



Ravenswood Girls School Library

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