



BALANCING HERITAGE, EXPANSION AND PERFORMANCE

CLIENT : Swan Hill Rural City Council
MAIN CONSTRUCTION COMPANY : Keystone Building Group
ARCHITECT : Brandrick Architects

The redevelopment of the Art Gallery of Swan Hill into a modern cultural center marks a generational investment in the creative, social and economic future for the region. With expanded exhibition spaces, purpose-built education areas and improved environmental controls, the gallery is now equipped to host major touring exhibitions, nurture local talent and deliver dynamic public programming.

Set along the banks of the Little Murray River, the Art Gallery of Swan Hill has long been a defining cultural asset for regional Victoria. Its recent redevelopment marks a significant evolution, balancing heritage preservation, contemporary architecture and improved environmental performance to deliver a future-ready arts destination.

Originally established in 1966 aboard the paddle steamer Gem, the gallery's journey reflects the growth of Swan Hill's creative community. Its permanent home, opened in 1987 and designed by architect Ian Douglas, drew inspiration from the Australian woolshed, featuring exposed redgum timber and locally made mud bricks that grounded the building firmly within its regional context .

Swan Hill Rural City Council identified the need for expansion and modernisation to support larger exhibitions, improved visitor experiences and enhanced community engagement.

Early concept designs by Brandrick Architects, alongside feasibility input from Common and Enlocus Landscape Architects, set the

foundation for a design that would ultimately expand the gallery to approximately 800m² while maintaining a strong connection to its surroundings .

Delivered by Keystone Building Group, the redevelopment required a careful and considered construction approach. Rather than replacing the original building, the project focused on extending and reworking the existing structure, retaining its distinctive architectural identity while integrating new functionality.

The result is a single-storey expansion shaped by community consultation, ensuring the scale and form remain sympathetic to the site and its riverside setting.

Key improvements include expanded exhibition spaces capable of hosting major touring programs, upgraded public areas designed to foster interaction and engagement, and dedicated workshop and education zones. These additions significantly enhance the gallery's ability to support artists, schools and visitors, reinforcing its role as a dynamic community hub .

From a construction perspective, the project involved more than architectural expansion. Supporting infrastructure upgrades were critical to ensuring the gallery could meet modern operational demands. Civil works, including the installation of high-voltage and low-voltage electrical systems and a 1000kVA kiosk, were delivered in coordination with multiple stakeholders, demonstrating the level of technical integration required to support a contemporary cultural facility .

Environmental performance was also a key consideration throughout the redevelopment. The introduction of upgraded environmental control systems ensures that temperature and humidity levels can be carefully managed, critical for the preservation of valuable artworks and for meeting the standards required to host high-profile exhibitions. At the same time, retaining significant elements of the original structure reduced material waste and embodied carbon, aligning with broader sustainability principles in adaptive reuse projects .

Importantly, the design reflects a sensitivity to place. The decision to maintain a single-storey form, rather than a previously proposed double-storey expansion, was shaped by community feedback and a desire to ensure the gallery remained visually connected to its natural and built surroundings. This approach underscores a growing emphasis within regional projects on integrating architecture with landscape and community identity.



Construction officially commenced in late 2024, marking a major milestone in what Council described as a 'transformative project' for the region. Throughout delivery, careful staging and coordination ensured the redevelopment progressed efficiently, culminating in completion in late 2025 .

For Keystone Building Group, the project highlights expertise in delivering complex upgrades within existing structures, while maintaining architectural integrity. For Swan Hill Rural City Council, it represents a strategic investment in cultural infrastructure, one that strengthens community connection, supports economic growth and ensures the arts remain central to the region's identity.

For more information contact Swan Hill Rural City Council, phone 03 5036 2333, email council@swanhill.vic.gov.au, website www.swanhill.vic.gov.au

Below McCluskey Heating & Cooling delivered HVAC and humidification systems ensuring precise gallery climate control and preservation.



Below Integrated plastering and acoustic systems delivering compliant performance, refined finishes, and enhanced gallery experience.



DELIVERING CONTROLLED ENVIRONMENTS FOR CULTURAL ASSETS

Delivering a stable and controlled internal environment is critical in any gallery setting, where fluctuations in temperature and humidity can directly impact the preservation of artworks.

At the Art Gallery of Swan Hill redevelopment, McCluskey Heating & Cooling was engaged to deliver a mechanical services solution capable of meeting these requirements.

With over 13 years in operation and a dedicated team of 12, McCluskey Heating & Cooling specialises in commercial and residential heating, cooling and mechanical ventilation systems, including ducted air conditioning, VRF systems and energy-efficient climate control solutions. “Our team delivered the full mechanical scope, ensuring the gallery spaces achieved the level of environmental control required for artwork preservation,” said Director Luke McCluskey.

A key challenge of the project was meeting the strict environmental requirements necessary for a gallery environment. Beyond temperature control, maintaining consistent humidity levels was essential to protect sensitive artworks from deterioration. “We incorporated humidification systems and worked closely with the design team to ensure stable environmental conditions were maintained,” Luke explained.

Achieving this level of precision required close coordination with project stakeholders and a detailed commissioning process to fine-tune system performance. “This wasn’t just about installing systems—it was about ensuring everything worked together seamlessly to achieve the required performance,” Luke said.

The result is a carefully controlled internal environment that supports the gallery’s expanded exhibition capabilities while safeguarding its collection.

McCluskey Heating & Cooling’s contribution highlights the critical role of mechanical services in cultural infrastructure, where performance, reliability and precision are essential.

For more information contact McCluskey Heating & Cooling, 8 Mcharry Place, Shepparton VIC 3630, phone 0434 447 454, email office@mccluskeyheatingandcooling.com.au, website www.mccluskeyheatingandcooling.com.au
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SHAPING INTERIOR EXPERIENCE THROUGH PLASTERING AND ACOUSTIC DETAIL

At the heart of the Art Gallery of Swan Hill redevelopment lies a seamless blend of architectural intent and technical craftsmanship, brought to life through the expertise of BSM Plastering Pty Ltd.

Delivering a comprehensive internal package, the team’s scope included the supply and installation of steel stud framing, plaster linings, and suspended concealed grid ceilings, including a striking custom rolled ceiling grid to the entrance barrel—all designed and installed to stringent seismic specifications.

“When it came to the architectural details like the curved entrance barrel, we made it a priority to spend the right amount of time in the planning stages... that was the key for us being able to deliver with precision and on time,” Director Ben McPherson explained.

The entrance barrel delivers an immediate visual impact, setting the tone for the visitor experience. Inside, the acoustic gallery ceilings balance technical complexity with understated elegance.

“It gives that initial wow factor, and the gallery ceilings help provide ambience to the space,” Ben said.

Acoustic ceiling linings were installed across gallery and education spaces to support sound control and occupant comfort, while Versilux linings to soffits provided durability and a refined finish in high-exposure zones—ensuring the visual quality of the space was matched by its functional performance.

Working closely with Keystone’s Site Manager Frank Dattilo, as well as mechanical and electrical trades, BSM Plastering ensured all services integrated within the ceiling systems. “We worked very closely in the initial set-out stage to ensure there weren’t any clashes so everything worked seamlessly and we were able to provide the highest quality finish,” Ben said.

Through meticulous planning, collaboration, and craftsmanship, BSM Plastering has helped shape a gallery that is as functional as it is inspiring.

For more information contact BSM Plastering Pty Ltd, phone 0416 828 798, email ben@bsmplastering.com.au

Below Solidity delivered integrated helical pile foundations at Swan Hill Art Gallery, overcoming variable ground conditions reliably.

Below AH Landscaping delivered culturally responsive landscape construction at Swan Hill Art Gallery, integrating design, place, and function.



ENGINEERING STABILITY IN UNPREDICTABLE GROUND CONDITIONS

Solidity delivers integrated helical pile foundation solutions through a fully controlled design, manufacture, and installation model, providing certainty in variable and constrained ground conditions.

At the Art Gallery of Swan Hill, Solidity designed, manufactured, and installed a foundation system capable of responding to the sites significant subsurface variability, including uncontrolled fill and buried obstructions, revealed during the sites early geotechnical investigations.

“We were dealing with uncontrolled fill and variable ground conditions, so traditional shallow foundations weren’t suitable,” explained Engineering Manager, Atbin Soleiman. “Our solution was to design and install helical piles that bypassed those layers and anchored into stable founding material.”

The scope included the installation of 177 screw piles for the gallery redevelopment. “Even with challenges like buried concrete and the need for pre-drilling in certain areas, we were able to stage the works and complete the installation within the tight program,” Atbin said.

The team also navigated site constraints including existing structures and heritage considerations, requiring careful coordination and

sequencing. “We had to work around existing elements on site while maintaining access for other trades, which meant staging the installation in multiple sections,” he added.

Beyond project delivery, Solidity’s strength lies in its vertically integrated model. “Solidity is a specialist manufacturer of helical piles and foundation solutions. We design, manufacture and install our systems using Australian steel, which gives us full control over quality and delivery,” As National Business Development Manager David McDonald explains,

This approach enables faster installation and reduced environmental impact compared to traditional methods. “Our system is significantly faster than conventional concrete piling and can offer cost efficiencies while maintaining performance,” McDonald said.

With a 50-year design life and minimal site disruption, Solidity’s work at Swan Hill ensures the gallery redevelopment is built on a foundation engineered for longevity and performance.

For more information contact Solidity, phone 03 8402 0189, email info@solidity.com.au, website www.solidity.com.au

CULTURAL NARRATIVE IN LANDSCAPE CONSTRUCTION AND PUBLIC SPACE DELIVERY

At the Art Gallery of Swan Hill redevelopment, AH Landscaping delivered a fully integrated and culturally responsive landscape package that extends beyond site finishing, positioning external works as a coordinated extension of architectural intent, cultural context, and environmental performance.

Led by Director Alex Hall, the team was engaged to deliver the full external scope, requiring alignment between civil interfaces, irrigation systems, hardscape construction, and planting design within a live, multi-trade construction environment.

“Our scope included everything from site preparation and planting through to paving, yarning circles, street furniture and a full irrigation system,” said Alex. “The goal was to create a landscape that feels connected to the gallery and its riverfront setting.”

Central to the design was a strong emphasis on place. Materials and plant selections were carefully chosen to reflect the natural environment, while the layout encourages movement, interaction, and a seamless transition between built and open spaces. The inclusion of yarning circles further reinforces the site’s cultural and community connection, offering spaces for gathering and reflection.

Sustainability also played a key role in delivery. “We implemented a water-efficient irrigation system tailored to the local climate, using drip irrigation and zoning to ensure plants receive exactly what they need,” Alex explained. Soil conditioning and mulching were also incorporated to retain moisture and reduce long-term water use, ensuring the landscape remains both resilient and low maintenance.

Working within a live construction environment presented challenges, particularly in coordinating with multiple trades and aligning with evolving timelines. “Flexibility and communication were critical. We worked closely with the builder and other contractors to ensure everything came together smoothly,” Alex said.

The result is a landscape that does more than frame the gallery, it invites people in. With open pathways, shaded areas, and carefully curated planting, AH Landscaping has created an environment that encourages exploration, connection, and community use. “Ultimately, the landscape helps make the space feel welcoming, functional and part of its surroundings,” Alex added.

For more information contact AH Landscaping, 78 Old Dookie Road, Shepparton VIC 3630