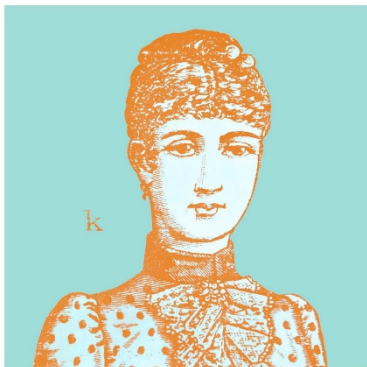


Report on Heritage Impact



public art and advertising signage
former Norco building,
Jonson Street, Byron Bay

Prepared by Dr Kate Gahan, June 2021



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Front cover image: Image 1, View of the mural and advertising sign for Space Yoga on the former Norco Building, Jonson Street, Byron Bay. Image Courtesy Theo Vairaktaris, 2021.

NOTE: Research undertaken for this report remains the Intellectual Property of Dr Kate Gahan. Reuse of historic information documented herein must acknowledge my authorship.

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1. About this report

This report retrospectively assesses the heritage impact of the installation a public art / mural work and advertising signage on a former Norco building, located on the corner of Jonson Street and Butler Streets, Byron Bay (aka 144 Jonson Street) – and on Lot 1, DP 804082; SP 83280; Lot 6, DP 258071.

The mural and signage works were undertaken by the owners of Space Yoga in February 2021. The mural was installed to address and prevent illegal graffiti activity on the wall, as shown at image 2 below. The signage identifying the location of 'Space Yoga' inside the former Norco Factory was installed at the same time as the mural and deliberately integrated as part of it. Notwithstanding that these works are already in place; this report outlines the heritage impact of:

1. The mural work on the physical fabric of the former Norco building;
2. The mural work on the heritage values of the former Norco building;
3. The signage on the fabric and heritage values of the former Norco building.



Above left: Image 2 shows the rear façade of the former Norco building on which the mural has been installed. **Above right:** Image 3 shows the front façade of the former Norco building, which this report has documented was built in 1929 to accommodate Norco's Bacon and Small Goods 'department' and packaging operations.

2. Conclusions drawn in this report

This report has concluded that:

1. Each of the works undertaken (listed above) are considered appropriate treatments to the heritage item (see details in table on page 9-12);
2. Each of the works undertaken has not resulted in an adverse heritage impact, rather overall the heritage impact has been positive (see details in table on page 9-12);
3. The current owners acted in good faith by undertaking these works to address a recurring illegal graffiti problem on the rear wall of the building;

4. This report has uncovered important new information about the history of this building and the heritage value of the former Norco complex at Byron Bay (see recommendation on page 13).

3. Heritage significance and listing of the former Norco building

The former Norco building located at 144 Jonson Street, Byron Bay, is listed on the Byron Shire Council LEP as an item of local environmental heritage; it is listed as the 'Norco Butter Factory'.¹ In 2005 the building was assessed as having historic, social and scientific (or archaeological) heritage values (see attached NSW State Heritage Inventory).² Research undertaken for this assessment has revealed this building was constructed in 1929 to accommodate Norco's Bacon and Small Goods department – which it operated in conjunction with its butter making enterprise; it was never used for butter production.³

This Norco building, though, once formed part of a greater complex of buildings established by the Richmond River Fresh Food and Cold Storage Company (then from 1904 the North Coast Co-operative Company) from 1895 onwards. In December 1925, the North Coast Co-operative Company became the Norco Co-operative, which continued to operate on the site of the current building until 1972.

Today the remaining buildings once operated by Norco are spread across three titles – including the building now occupied by Space Yoga. This building was constructed in 1929. A comparison of historic photographs (examples pictured below), and an aerial view of the Norco complex dating from 1966, clearly locates and illustrates this building in relation to other Norco buildings, and once centrally located within the Norco complex.

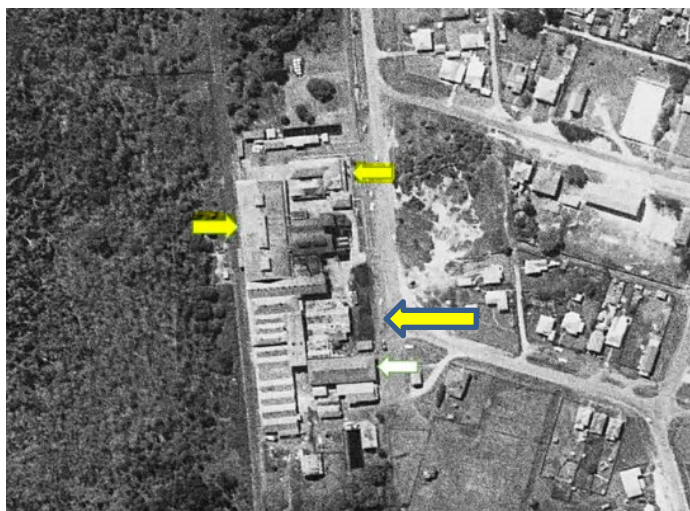


Image 3, aerial view of Norco Factory complex: the **top right arrow** shows the administrative building pictured in image five below. **The middle left arrow** shows the high vented building also shown in image five. **The third arrow, right & outlined in blue,** locates the former Norco building, constructed in 1929 to accommodate the bacon and small goods department, and which is occupied by Space Yoga. (The bottom arrow shows the building that is, today, occupied by Mitre 10 hardware. <https://slideplayer.com/slide/12654943/>

¹ <https://legislation.nsw.gov.au/view/html/inforce/current/epi-2014-0297#sch.5>

² https://www.hms.heritage.nsw.gov.au/App/Item/SearchHeritageItems?_ga=2.60558893.1401888697.1624145643-524836347.1607820089

³ NORCO EXPANSION (1929, October 19). *Northern Star (Lismore, NSW : 1876 - 1954)*, p. 14. Retrieved June 15, 2021, from <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article94096739>



Richmond Tweed Regional Library

Image 4 above: historic image of the Norco complex at Byron Bay c. 1930s. The building in the foreground is the Norco headquarters administrative building and the one indicated by the top right arrow in Image 3, shown on the previous page. The HQ admin-building fronted Jonson Street. Located at the rear of the Norco HQ building, and fronting the railway line, is the second-built butter factory. Constructed in 1926, this building is now owned by the Byron Bay Services Club.

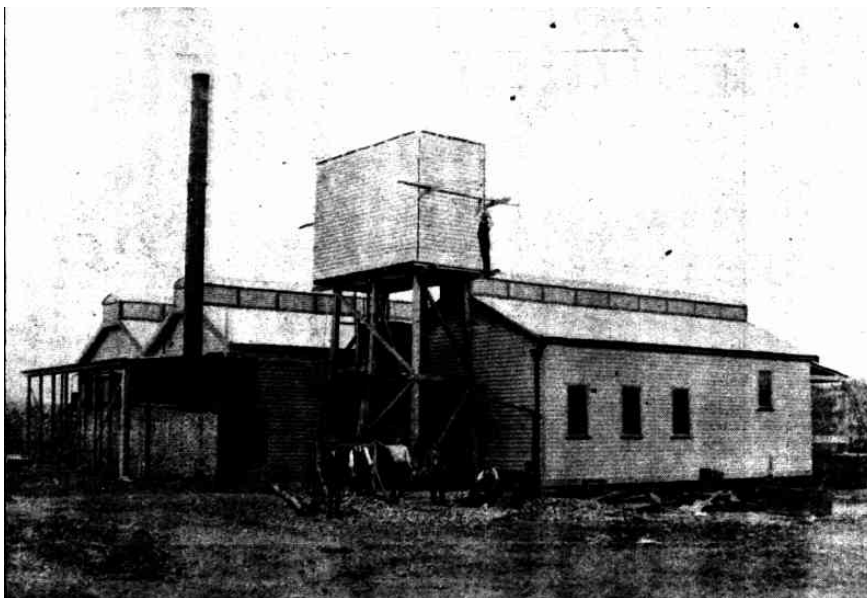


Image 5 left: The first butter factory buildings established on the Byron Bay Norco site in 1895 are shown here. These buildings were constructed from timber but demolished in 1925 to make way for the new butter factory. Later buildings were erected from masonry – which was more durable and had far greater resistance to fire.
<https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/162734159?searchTerm=butter%20factory%20byron%20bay#>

Summary of heritage significance of the Norco building/s at Byron Bay:

According to the NSW Heritage database former Byron Bay Norco Factory building is considered to demonstrate its historic, associative, research and rarity heritage values in the following ways:

Criterion (a) – historic – meaning the item is important in the course, or pattern, of the cultural or natural history of the Byron Shire region / the state of NSW.

This building was vital to the Northern Rivers economy for at least 50 years, until UK primary production began to be integrated into European markets after WWII. The success of this factory gave impetus to the growth of the town of Byron Bay.

Criteria (b) – associative – meaning the item has strong or special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in NSW's cultural or natural history (or the cultural or natural history of the Byron Shire area).

[The Former Byron Bay Norco building/s] is/are associated with many of the pioneer families of the district, who were directors or members of the board of the company (Armstrong, Alcorn, Brandon, Johnston, Clifford, Reading)

Criteria (d) – social / cultural – meaning the item has strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group in the Byron Shire / the state of NSW for social, cultural or spiritual reasons.

The factory has special significance for the dairying community of the Northern Rivers in that it guaranteed the livelihoods of almost four generations of dairying families.

Criteria e – research potential – meaning the item has potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of NSW's cultural or natural history, or the cultural or natural history of the Byron Shire area.

The factory is evidence of commercial activity, locally developed technology (technical development and automation of box making, canning, butter making) and town development.

Criterion (f) – rarity – meaning the item possesses uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of NSW's cultural or natural history or the cultural or natural history of the Byron Shire area).

It is evidence of a significant and now defunct secondary industry in the history of Byron Bay.

Criterion (g) – representativeness – meaning the item is important in demonstrating the

principal characteristics of a class of NSW's or the Byron Shire's cultural or natural places, or cultural or natural environments.

[The Former Byron Bay Norco building] is typical of buildings associated with dairy factories of the Far North Coast region, buildings which date back 70-80 years.

Top right: interior of the Bacon and Small goods factory at Byron Bay, c. 1950s

<https://slideplayer.com/slide/12654943/>



Middle: a display of cured meat and other small goods from the factory at Byron Bay, date unknown, image Courtesy of Norco.



Bottom right: contemporary aerial view showing the former Norco buildings that exist today (though all are not that visible). In addition to the former Bacon and Small Goods Factory or 'department' this includes the former HQ admin building (top right arrow), the 1925 butter factory (middle arrow) and the current day Mitre 10 building (bottom right arrow).

<https://slideplayer.com/slide/12654943/>



4. Heritage impact of works undertaken to the western / rear façade of the Norco Butter Factory building

Works undertaken + potential impact & Notes on reasons for works and actual heritage impact		positive / negative or neutral impact
1	The mural work on the physical fabric of the former Norco building	
<p>The Space Yoga mural has been created using Ironlak gloss acrylic spray paint, with a UV resistant protective clear over the top. It was completed by Theodore Vairaktaris and the Usher Group Art Team at a cost of \$16, 320 plus the cost of safety scaffolding. The mural covered an already painted surface, which prior to the installation of the mural had been partly painted by graffiti artists, illegally. (See image 1 above).</p> <p>The original fabric of the former Bacon and Small Goods building's western façade is rendered brick. It contrasts with the face brick finish of the front of the building, which fronted Jonson Street. The rear of the factory handled its transport operations and so faced the rail line, which Norco used to transport its goods – including pig carcasses to the Bacon and Small Goods department for processing. Further down the line was a sawmill that supplied Norco with the butter boxes it used to pack and transport butter, made at the adjoining butter factory (now owned by the Byron Services Club).</p> <p>The overlay of the current Space Yoga mural on the building's rendered brick surface will not create any additional impact on the fabric of the building – given it was already painted and over an existing rendered brick finish.</p> <p>Heritage impact on the fabric of building is therefore considered neutral. And this surface, at any point, could be returned to a blank painted finish. The installation of the mural is a good example of adapting heritage buildings to contemporary needs / desires, yet the building's history can still be 'read'.</p>		neutral

Works undertaken + potential impact & Notes on reasons for works and actual heritage impact		positive / negative or neutral impact
2	<p>The mural work on the heritage values of the former Norco building</p> <p>As outlined in the report above, the former factory building now occupied by Space Yoga was once part of a complex of Norco buildings. Several of these buildings survive – including the building occupied by Space Yoga (and other tenants) – (other extant Norco buildings include those owned / occupied by the Byron Bay Services Club, Mitre 10 & Repco).</p> <p>Research undertaken to prepare this report has revealed that the building occupied by Space Yoga was built in 1929 to accommodate Norco's 'bacon and small goods department'. The heritage assessment made of the building determined its heritage values as part of the Norco complex of buildings. As outlined above, it was assessed to have historic, associative, social / cultural, research potential, rarity and representative values. The bacon and small goods building reflect these values.</p> <p>The impact on the heritage values of the building occupied by Space Yoga is NOT in any way impacted by the mural, as these values are embodied by the building, or in others words the building is symbolic of these values and their associated history.</p> <p>Given the building's heritage vales are largely intangible, the mural does not inhibit the interpretation or understanding of these values, as demonstrated by the research undertaken for this report. By 'reading' the fabric of the building, in association with other primary source material, this report has established new understandings of the building. That being it has distinguished how this building was used independent of the other Norco buildings – including the (actual) former butter factory building, now owned by the Byron Bay Services Club. This facet of the building, and the Norco complex on Jonson Street, is <i>not</i> documented in existing heritage listing information.</p> <p>A mural does not take away the potential to read the building's fabric, as well as understand its known heritage values; OR indeed to read the building's fabric and reveal new understandings – in part the very reasons as to why it is heritage listed (e.g. research potential). As argued above, in this instance the mural has led to the new understanding of the building, which this report highlights.</p> <p>Byron shire's Public Art Policy includes in its objectives that local public art is fostered to:</p>	Neutral to positive

Works undertaken + potential impact & Notes on reasons for works and actual heritage impact	positive / negative or neutral impact
<p>+ strengthen the Byron Shire cultural economy through the employment, training and provision of professional development opportunities for local artists, designers and project managers;</p> <p>+ enable opportunities, through public art projects, for the celebration and interpretation of the Byron Shire's heritage and contemporary culture for both residents and visitors.⁴</p> <p>Further the policy outlines the distinction between 'types' of public art permissible in the shire and the nature of these. The former Norco Bacon and Small Goods Factory mural falls into policy's Community Art definition, which states it to be / include:</p> <p>A collection of work that arises from a community need and contributes to a narrative about the community for residents and visitors. These works of art are not to the scale and type as public art and are generally not subject to the commissioning process that is required of large public art works. <i>They may be commissioned by community groups</i> [my emphasis] in public spaces or provided by artists donating their skills/ art to the community. They are of a more temporary nature and <i>typically include such art as murals</i> [my emphasis] and small-scale mosaic projects involving community workshops or similar (p 3).</p> <p>The Policy also provides 10 guiding principles including in relation to the subject matter art works may encourage, this includes:</p> <p><i>Local Culture- Public Art will reflect the local cultural diversity, identities, issues, values and sites of significant cultural and natural heritage.</i></p> <p>Despite the building's historic use as a Bacon and Small Goods Factory, and its part in illustrating the evolution of Norco in the town and region, the mural appropriately interprets Byron Bay's contemporary cultural life through the image / face of a woman. The composition of the mural depicts the face in direct relationship to Byron Bay township and environs, as is symbolised by the light house and ocean & rainbow imagery. The style of the mural suggests the contemporary / alternative culture of the town and region – which is steeped in the recent past / half century, triggered by the Aquarius festival of the early 1970s. Aquarius also co-incided with the closing of the factory in 1972 – the layering of this style of mural and subject matter on the former Norco building suggests the layered history of the town and the region – including the changes it has seen socially, cultural and economically. The mural's image also symbolically highlights women as historic and contemporary 'characters' (aka residents) who have played (and continue to play) an important role in shaping the town / community.</p>	

⁴ <https://www.byron.nsw.gov.au/Council/Your-right-to-Council-information/Policies/Public-Art-Policy> p 2.

Works undertaken + potential impact & Notes on reasons for works and actual heritage impact		positive / negative or neutral impact
Moreover, it is evident that the installation of the mural on the western façade of the former Bacon and Small Goods Factory has addressed the matter of illegal graffiti on this surface. The owner has reported that this activity has ceased since the mural was installed. Prior to the installation of the mural the owner routinely painted over illegal, and often crude, graffiti on this wall – that is approximately every three months. This change helps to positively promote and maintain the heritage building and anecdotal reports and evidence indicates that the mural receives positive attention from passing locals and visitors – many selfies taken, and Instagram posts illustrate this.		
3	The signage on the fabric of the former Norco building (bacon and small goods department)	
The image of the mural at the front of this report shows that it integrates advertising signage for the applicant's business – a yoga studio. From a heritage perspective it is considered that the installation of this signage, and associated lighting, has a minimal impact on the heritage fabric of the building. The building itself has seen significant changes and modifications overtime. The small impact the installation / fixing of the sign to the surface of the façade is insignificant compared with the fact that adapting the building to a new, and viable, use will see it used, valued, and retained, overtime.		positive

Recommendations:

From a heritage management perspective, this report makes the following recommendations with respect to the former Bacon and Small Goods factory building at 144 Jonson Street, Byron Bay.

1. Byron Shire Council upgrade its listing documentation concerning the former Norco building at 144 Jonson Street Byron Bay to reflect the date of building's construction and its specialist use, along with the local / regional history of how pig husbandry and bacon and small goods production was an important adjunct to the creamery and butter factory at Byron Bay;
2. Byron Shire Council works with the owner of the former Bacon and Small Goods factory building at 144 Jonson Street, Byron Bay, to complete a Conservation Management Plan for the whole building – but which is mindful of current tenancies and contemporary needs, as well as positive heritage management practice and principles;
3. Byron Shire Council works with owners and tenants of heritage buildings to advise them on the understanding and practice of good heritage management principles concerning historic buildings and fabric, including such aspects as integrating public into a building's fabric or precinct.

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