

Media release

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Albany Town Hall bells to be turned back on

After several decades of silence, Albany Town Hall's historic clock bells will soon begin ringing out once again.

The clock – which was manufactured in the late 1800s by the makers of London's Big Ben – has not regularly chimed since the early 1980s, when a major upgrade to the town hall's theatre was completed.

The original clock mechanism does not easily allow the bells to be switched on and off, nor does it allow for the bells to chime only at certain hours of the day.

However, according to recent advice from specialist clock experts, both will be possible with adjustments to the clock mechanism.

Albany Mayor Dennis Wellington said having the town hall bells active at certain times would be a huge boost to the vibrancy of the Albany CBD in the lead up to the Anzac Centenary.

"Switching the bells back on will go a long way towards one of our main priorities at the moment, which is revitalising Albany's City Centre," he said.

"Hearing the bells ring once again is something that will bring back many happy memories for locals, and I'm sure it will be appreciated just as much by visitors."

The adjustments to the clock have been approved by the Heritage Council of WA and are expected to be complete May 2014.

The clock may stop keeping time at certain periods during the upgrade. The times the bells will be active are yet to be determined and feedback in this regard is welcomed.

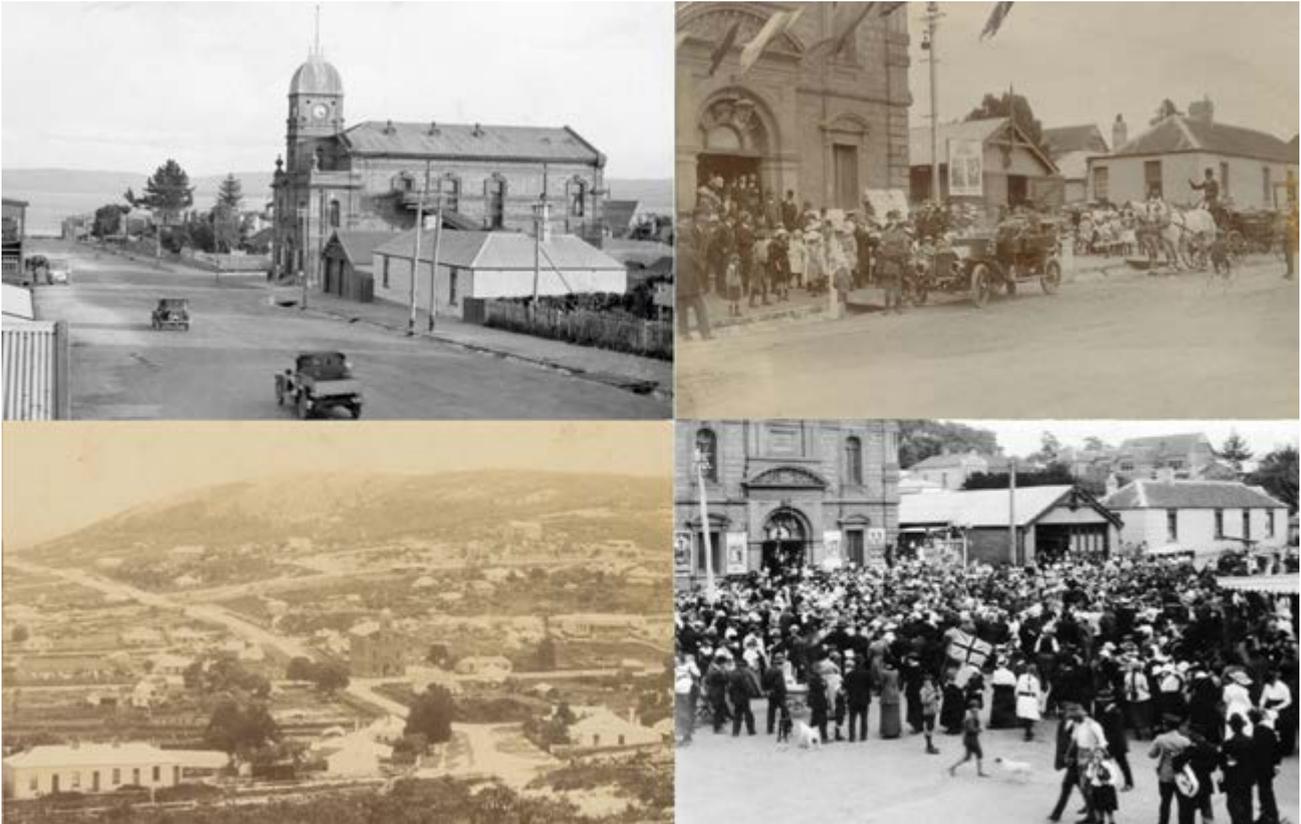
In a separate but related project, the clock in the old post office building on Stirling Terrace (currently UWA) will also be refurbished by the City of Albany.

This initiative aligns with the following objectives of the City of Albany's Community Strategic Plan: to maintain vibrant places and spaces, to be a sought after visitor destination and to have a strong connection with the community.

END

See next page for background information.

Albany Town Hall background



- For more than 125 years, Albany Town Hall has been a highly valued venue for municipal use, as well as cultural and community events, such as theatre, cinema, meetings, dances, art exhibitions, fashion shows and much more.
- The building was completed and opened in 1888. There was no clock in the original building.
- In early 1890, after considerable debate as to the respective merits of French and British clocks, a large clock with four faces was ordered from Potts & Co. Ltd. of Leeds, England (makers of Big Ben) at a cost of £425 including duty. The clock was installed in early 1891.
- The bells, comprising a strike bell, to strike the hour, and two bimbam bells, to strike the quarter hours, continued in regular operation through into the early 1980s.
- With the construction of the Albany Entertainment Centre in 2010 the Albany Town Hall was no longer the premier regional performing arts venue in the Great Southern.
- However the Hall has remained in use for select community events. In fact, usage of the Hall has steadily increased, with over 16,000 people passing through its doors for a range of community events and exhibitions in the past two years.