

Up Close +
Personal with

Deborah Binet

Associate

Cameron Chisholm Nicol

■ **What do you enjoy about being an architect?**

I find architecture a rewarding profession because not only is every project unique, but the range in scope of work through the stages of a project keeps things engaging. I appreciate good design and enjoy working to deliver well designed and well built spaces that respond to the client's brief. Most of all architecture is about teamwork, an aspect which I really enjoy. The success of a project depends on the contribution of each team member, from other architects, interior designers, consultants, builders, and the client. Each project is different so I am continually learning, from the process itself as well as from the people on the team.

■ **What is your current role and what does it involve?**

I am an Associate at Cameron Chisholm Nicol and currently the project architect for Heirloom, a multi-residential project in



Fremantle. I am also overseeing the Camilla Apartments in West Perth. We are a practice with around 60 staff with a broad base of repeat clients. We work in a number of sectors including multi-residential, commercial, education, health and aged care, sport and recreation, retail, defence and adaptive re-use. We are focussed on design excellence with a pragmatic approach. We also have an in-house mentor scheme which I established and manage. I think it is really important to consider the career development of young architects and graduates. In return we get invaluable

feedback from the next generation of architects which informs the strategic planning of our workplace.

■ **What have been your career highlights?**

My career highlight would have to be my role on the Perth Arena. It was a joint venture with ARM who is based in Melbourne, and I led the Perth team for the construction documentation phase of the project. It was a stimulating and challenging project with a series of tight deadlines. We had a large team of highly motivated young architects and interior designers,



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we worked hard and delivered on time. To walk into the finished building and see what we had accomplished was a very rewarding experience. It has won numerous prestigious awards, including the Australian Institute of Architects Sir Zelman Cowen Award for Public Architecture in 2013 and also ranked as the world's top venue for its size by Billboard magazine in 2014.

■ **Tell me more about Heirloom**

Heirloom is a complex and high profile project, prominently located on Queen Victoria Street which is the gateway into Fremantle. It involves the conversion of the heritage listed Dalgety Wool Stores into 183 apartments and a cafe. It is a great example of the adaptive re-use of what was a very dilapidated building, giving it a new life by people who will appreciate its character. It is currently under construction and is due for completion in early





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2017. I am on site a few times a week and enjoy working with the builder to resolve the issues that arise. They are working to a tight program and there are various building elements all proceeding concurrently, from structural work to finishes.

The Dalgety Wool Stores is a 4 storey building of historic significance. In its day it was integral to the community of Fremantle as well as the development of the wool industry in Western Australia. The design involves the creation of 3 blocks of apartments within the existing fabric of the building and removing portions of the roof sheet and flooring to create two large atrium spaces. The new elements have been carefully considered and are respectful of the existing fabric of the building. The apartment party walls are based on the existing grid and the existing materials are exposed and expressed where possible. The facades and many of the internal heritage elements are retained and repaired, extending

the life of the building. The building has beautiful jarrah structural elements and floorboards, the restoration of which has brought the material back to life. The project has been a catalyst for the invigoration of that part of Fremantle.

■ *What are the most challenging aspects of the Heirloom project from a design and construction perspective?*

We are working with a heritage building with unique characteristics, for example existing columns do not always align, the existing beams sag, as do the floorboards. It is a challenge to resolve the interface of the new with the existing on site whilst maintaining design integrity. The builder is also working at a rapid pace so we have to be very organised and rigorous in our approach.

■ *What are the challenges for women working in your industry?*

Women in senior levels in the construction industry are still under-represented, and I think support and flexibility needs to be considered to enable women to stay at work or return to work after maternity leave. The most important factor though is the availability of meaningful part-time work. This is why I think mentoring is invaluable as it gives you the tools and confidence to focus on what you would like to achieve and navigate your own career path.



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