

## Depot delivers for Council

By Glenda Hewitt

**The sale of the lease of the Council-owned Works Depot in the Artarmon Industrial Area (AIA) has delivered a great result for Willoughby City Council (WCC).**

In December 2006, WCC announced that it had signed contracts with the Charter Hall Group to purchase the 99-year leasehold of the Depot for what has been reported to be in excess of \$51 million.

WCC's General Manager, John Owen, says redevelopment of the site will bolster economic activity in the industrial area, and allow the council to use the lease income on other projects such as Artarmon Library and the Chatswood Youth Centre. No doubt, the deal also offers certainty for the building of the new \$150 million Civic Place in Chatswood, plans for which have been dogged by questions over funding. The refurbishment of the heritage-listed Griffin Incinerator in Bicentennial Park too will be able to proceed at full speed (this project was also a recipient of a recent Federal Government grant).

While Charter Hall has not yet provided details or a timeline, according to the Council the 16,000m<sup>2</sup> site will be redeveloped as a new bulky goods retail centre. As few suitable sites for bulky goods development are available on the lower north shore, it would appear that demand for the site zoned bulky goods was strong. Charter Hall has developed a number of other 'homemaker' type centres throughout the country.

"The commitment to a project of this size by a company such as Charter Hall will act as a catalyst for development and growth in Artarmon," said Mr Owen.

With a useable area of approximately 25,000m<sup>2</sup> and parking for over 550 cars, the redevelopment also has the potential to significantly increase the traffic flows in and out of the AIA, particularly on weekends, when these developments are usually at their busiest.



Above & below: Views of the distinctive saw tooth roof of the building, corner Reserve Rd & Frederick St.

In a win for the draft heritage listing of the building, the existing form will be retained, and during redevelopment, asbestos in the roof and siding will be removed. The present building, with its distinctive saw tooth roof, similar in structure to others which can be still seen on the former ABC site, was constructed by Federated British Engineering Ltd in 1950. Travelling cranes manufactured by Federated British remain in several bays of the roof structure.

Council acted with some foresight, it now appears, in purchasing the building in the early 1980's, at a time when heavy engineering and industry was beginning to move out of the AIA. The building was bought as a replacement site for the former works depot, which until then operated from what is now the Chatswood Chase shopping centre site.

The Council's Works Depot will now move into a purpose built building in the East Chatswood industrial area.

