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**KNOX AND DOWNS, BAAKA PROJECT  
REID STREET, WILCANNIA**

**CONSERVATION AND ADAPTIVE REUSE OF HERITAGE ELEMENTS  
INTO ABORIGINAL CULTURAL CENTRE**

*Heritage Impact Statement on Design Proposal*

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**Attachment 1** - Extract from 2017 Wilcannia Heritage Survey (Former) Knox & Downs Store, 44 Reid Street, corner of Myers Street

**Attachment 2** – Curriculum Vitae, Elizabeth Vines OAM

## 1.0 BACKGROUND AND SUMMARY HISTORY

### 1.1 Background

The site of the Knox and Downs Store is at the key intersection of Reid Street and Myer Street in the centre of Wilcannia in western NSW. The shop/store building on this site was originally a well detailed Victorian stone building with elaborate parapet, and encircling verandah supported on cast iron columns. The building dated from the 1890s, but in 2002 a fire severely damaged the building. The building had a large cellar, and this has cleaned out and then temporarily filled in for future excavation in the development.

Prior to the 2002 fire, the store made an important streetscape contribution to the character of Wilcannia and was one of a group of buildings (including the Court House, Gaol, Post Office and Queens Head Hotel) that have survived relatively unchanged since their original construction in the 1890s. The fire left the verandah, front parapet and west side walls standing, but this was unstable and gradually the structure collapsed. The parapet was subsequently demolished due to its unstable condition, with a resultant loss of structural integrity and architectural detailing of the building. The building site has been a visual eyesore now for many years in Wilcannia and there has been a long time ambition to find a new use and clean up the negative impact that this has had on the main intersection of Wilcannia. The proposal for a cultural centre in this significant and highly visible location is a very welcome proposal for the town of Wilcannia.

Note that this report makes reference to drawings prepared by Kaunitz Yeung architects, dated 3 July 2020, with the following drawing numbers:

A100-A146, A201-A218, A301-305, A401-A406, A501-A504, A601,602, AH 101-103, AH110, AH201.

These drawings are those submitted for the Planning Application with the Central Darling Shire.

The author of this report, Elizabeth Vines, OAM, Conservation Architect and Heritage Advisor for the Central Darling Shire, is qualified to provide this report as per Curriculum Vitae in Attachment 2 of this report.



*Early photo of Reid Street frontage*



*Early photo of Reid Street Myers Street intersection*

**Early photos of Knox and Downs building - source via Anthony Pease**



*Early photo of Knox and Downs building - source via Anthony Pease*



**Prior to the fire**



**Following the fire with parapet remaining**



Following the fire with hoardings which were erected along both frontages.



Condition in December 2019 - once hoarding has been removed

## 1.2 Existing Heritage Listings and Conservation Management Plan 2001

The Knox and Downs site is listed in the Central Darling Shire Local Environment Plan and scheduled as an item of Local Significance.

In 2007 a Conservation Management Plan was prepared for the site. The elements on the site identified as having heritage significance were as follows

### “3.2.1 External Elements

*The surviving elements of original building fabric from the store are as follows:*

- *The verandah columns - these are all Stewart & Harley cast iron elements from Adelaide.*
- *The surviving sandstone and brick of the building itself – on the west elevation.*

### 3.2.2 Internal Elements

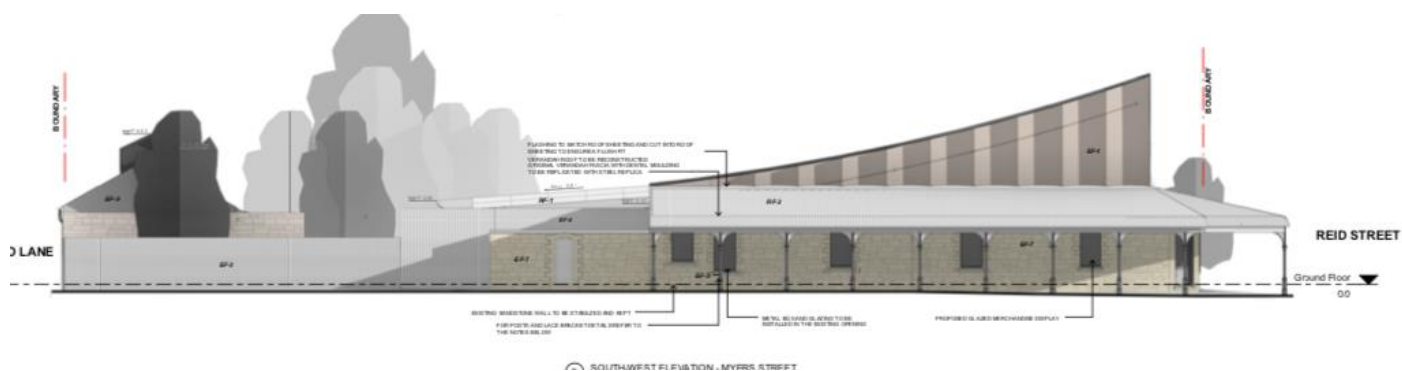
*There are no internal elements of significance which survive after the fire.*

### 3.2.3 Site Elements

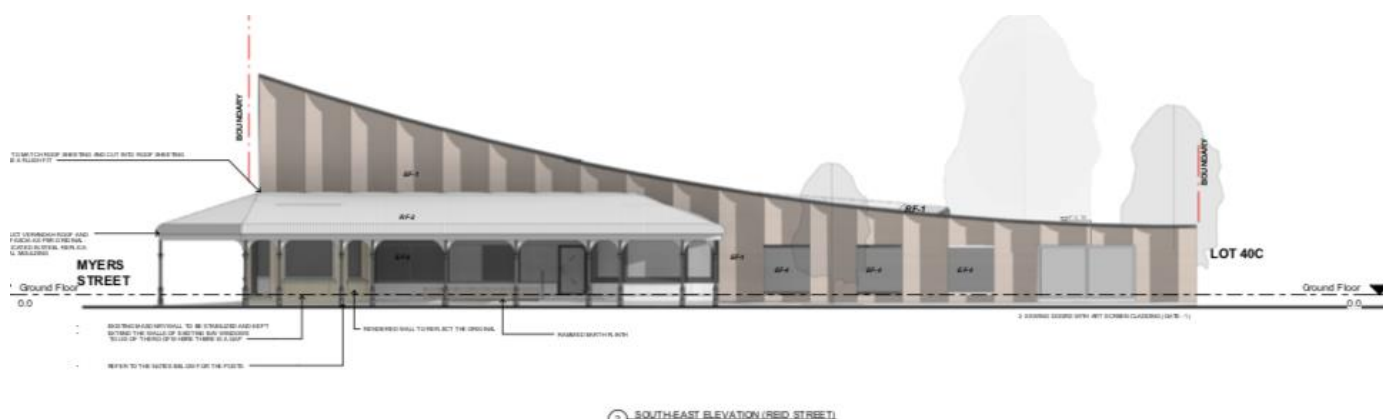
*At the rear of the site, there is a stone outbuilding, which survives substantially intact.*

### 1.3 Proposed Development and Overall Design Approach

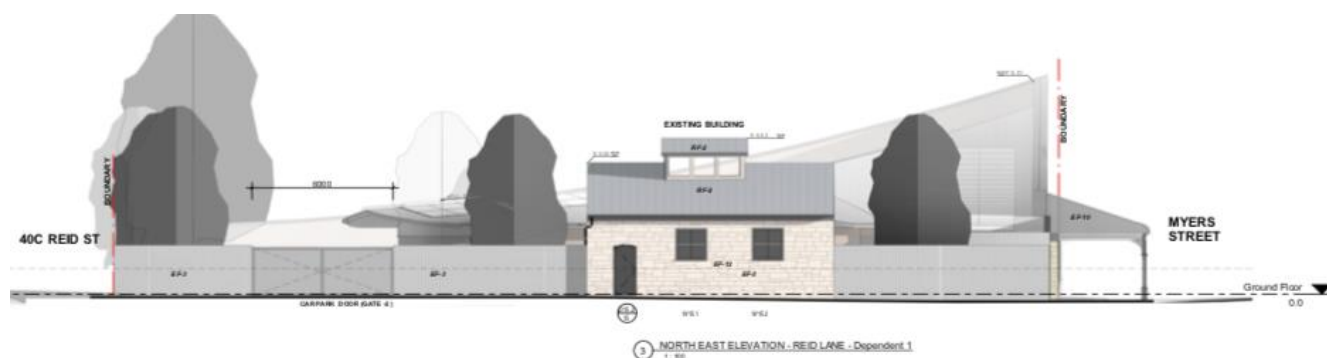
The Knox and Downs site is to be developed as the Baaka Aboriginal Cultural Centre. Given the heritage significance of elements outlined above, the proposed development has carefully considered how to incorporate these physical elements and the story of the building into the new cultural centre complex. The design approach which has been developed by the architect David Kaunitz is for a contemporary building set behind the original stone façade elements, with the reconstruction of the original verandah. The conservation of the rear stone building as an art workshop is also considered a key heritage component of the project. An important design issue is that the building expresses the vibrant contemporary Barkandji culture and the centre aims to be a “headline destination” for visitors in this part of Western NSW.



MYERS STREET ELEVATION - PROPOSED



REID STREET ELEVATION - PROPOSED



REID LANE ELEVATION - PROPOSED - SHOWING STONE BUILDING

## 2.0 KNOX AND DOWNS STREET FRONT BUILDING - ADAPTIVE REUSE OF SURVIVING HERITAGE ELEMENTS



*Reid Street Frontage – November 2019 - the corner bay window element is to be retained*

The development proposal has incorporated the following original heritage elements into the design

- Perimeter verandah constructed with cast iron verandah columns (16 existing, 19 required), retention of Myers Street stone wall, retention of Reid Street shopfront bay window, internal/external stone wall to north east elevation and partial reuse of cellar area.

The rest of the building behind the heritage façade is a steel, glass, and rammed earth contemporary structure. A rammed earth perimeter wall is to be constructed which forms a key part of the design approach – the use of locally sourced rammed earth is a contemporary solution to the cultural centre.

The design approach for the heritage elements as proposed is as follows:

- **Reconstruction of the perimeter verandah** to its original plan along the Reid and Myers Street frontage.

This verandah work requires the fabrication of 3 now missing columns, and repairs, and repainting of a total of 19 columns. The bullnose roof shape and configuration is to be reinstated, together with cast iron brackets, with the fascia element to be in steel (incorporating original dentils mouldings also in steel – see picture below)



*Detail of verandah with dentil mouldings*

After consideration the form of the verandah is being altered/ adapted on the Reid Street frontage to incorporate a hip end to the verandah to accommodate the volume of the building behind. The Myers Street frontage reconstructs the original verandah straight end.

- **Myers Street stonewall** – this is to be retained and repaired. The timber windows are currently damaged beyond reuse and a contemporary steel frame insert is proposed to provide for a window display area. Reconstruction of the timber windows is not proposed as these would not be functional for the new use, and would be very costly. Adaptation of the opening for a new use is the preferred approach.



*Myers Street Frontage – November 2019 - this wall is to be retained*



*Interior wall on Myers Street, after cleaning out and temporarily refilling the basement – this wall will be concealed internally but exposed externally*

Construction of rammed earth external walls are to be erected as the “inner skin” to the original stone walls, with the external stone wall flashed directly into this wall on the Myers Street frontage. Note that this involves the demolition of a small section of parapet, to provide suitable waterproofing to the connection of both walls with the verandah roof going across the top of the stone wall.

- **Retention/ reflection of the original shopfront layout** on the Reid Street elevation - this has been achieved through the retention of one bay window form (on the Myers Street corner) with rendered finish to echo original detailing and the inclusion of a second bay window in the original location (it is now demolished) but in a contemporary format/ detail.



*Early photo of shopfront (left) and only remaining section of bay window (right) on Reid/Myers Street corner.*

The proposed Reid Street frontage plan layout will reflect the plan of the matching RHS bay window - but in contemporary detail.

- **Internal/external stone wall to NE elevation and partial reuse of cellar area**

These are considered additional aspects of the design which retain and reflect original heritage elements. The opening up of a section of the original basement section will allow this to be used as a special “keeping place” component of the design and its history interpreted in the interpretation program for the building.

## HERITAGE ADVISORS RESPONSE TO THIS DESIGN PROPOSAL AND APPROACH

Given the degree of decay of the building structure, retention of these parts of the original fabric is seen as an appropriate heritage solution. Reconstruction of the original building has never been considered an appropriate heritage approach due to loss of original fabric and limited original elements that survive. (See Section 4 of this report). Rather, adaptive reuse of these elements, incorporated into a contemporary design solution is considered an appropriate design and heritage decision.

### 3.0 REAR STONE BUILDING – PROPOSED ART WORKSHOP



2007 condition

#### Approach to building conservation /adaptation

This building provides an opportunity for a well-considered and simple heritage conservation project, which will provide an art workshop for practicing artists. It is proposed to conserve the stonework (rebuilding sections where required), reroof and insulate the roof of the building, repair the roof lantern, and install evaporative air conditioning. The roof could also accommodate solar panels if required (on the lane face of the roof).

Close consultation with the structural engineer has resulted in a strengthening proposal for the roof and walls, which will not be visually intrusive to the interior or exterior. This was after the rejection of an original proposal by an engineer, which proposed a very visually intrusive proposal. The original timber floor is in poor condition and set close to the ground and is to be removed. A decision has been made to install a paved floor, which will be practical for the building use. This will allow the walls to “breathe” and be a continuation of the external verandah floor paving and paving used elsewhere.

#### HERITAGE ADVISORS RESPONSE TO THIS DESIGN PROPOSAL AND APPROACH

Key to the success of the reuse of this building will be the appointment of a stone contractor who is familiar with sandstone buildings and weak lime mortar repairs. The need for a suitable experienced contractor has been clarified in the tender documents. It is essential that no new works undertaken result in any rising damp to the existing stone walls (hence paving to the floor without a concrete slab beneath).

Careful attention to minimising the visual intrusion of the engineers steel bracing has been provided with the structural solution. A timber picture rail will ensure that horizontal internal steel straps are concealed.

The timber floor is not considered an essential or significant element of the building, and the flooring solution proposed will allow for functionality together with walls being allowed to breathe. It is a practical solution to the use proposed which will involve painting and other art practices.

## 4.0 HERITAGE IMPACTS

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### Generally

There have been many alternatives to the approach to the development of this site and the adaptive reuse of this heritage listed site. These are as follows – together with the response explaining the rationale for the approach.

**1 - reconstruction of original building** – this may have been possible if undertaken immediately after the fire nearly 20 years ago, but the level of deterioration and decay has made this option not financially viable or feasible.

**2 - partial reconstruction of the floor plan of the building** – this would have resulted in a building, which did not respond to the brief for a flexible cultural centre, and in terms of its heritage significance could not be justified. The floor plan has never been documented as a part of its significance, which needs to be retained.

**3 - retention only of those elements outlined as significant in the Conservation Management Plan** namely *“the verandah columns, the surviving sandstone wall to the Myers Street frontage, and rear stone outbuilding, which survives substantially intact”* – this was considered the best option and has involved consideration of how to incorporate these elements into a new and innovative building for the proposed use. The advisor has been involved in all the Project Control Group meetings and has provided detailed input on the design and documentation as it has evolved.

### Quality of Conservation Works

It is essential that the key trades for the heritage components are experienced tradesmen. This is particularly relevant for the stonemason for the Myers Street stone wall and the rear stone shed. Experience in use of lime mortar, repointing and colour matching of mortar is critical. Selection of contractor and sub contractors should be carefully considered to ensure that heritage experience is part of the skill set of the contractor.

## 5.0 – CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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This project has always involved careful consideration of a balance of conservation of identified significant heritage elements and the need for a new and dynamic cultural centre.

The role of the heritage advisor throughout the project has been to scrutinise the details of how the original elements are retained and conserved.

The adaptive reuse of the buildings on the site, has always been a high priority for the community in Wilcannia. It is considered that the design as proposed and submitted for development approval will not have negative heritage impacts and will contribute positively to the historic character of Wilcannia.

## EXTRACT FROM 2017 WILCANNIA HERITAGE SURVEY (Former) Knox & Downs Store, 44 Reid Street, cnr of Meyers Street

### HERITAGE LISTING – CENTRAL DARLING SHIRE LOCAL ENVIRONMENTAL PLAN



**HISTORY AND DESCRIPTION:** The original building on this site was constructed by Donaldson, Coburn and Knox Limited after they took over the older firms of Stone & Corey and E. Rich & Co Limited store in 1899. It replaced the store known as “The Federal Store” that formerly occupied the prominent corner block. After several partners left and then returned the company was reformed as Knox and Downs in 1912. Advertising of the period shows that the name “Federal Store” was retained for some years.

The building was completely gutted by a fire in September 2002, and now only part of the facades facing Reid and Myers Street remain and are in very poor condition. The walls were constructed of sandstone, with painted brick quoins and brick surrounds to openings – and sections only survive. The original front elevation, when in good condition, incorporated double bay windows and a bull-nosed verandah runs along both principal street elevations with a splayed corner. Cast iron columns, manufactured by Stewart & Harley of Adelaide, are used as the posts along this verandah. The building was originally roofed by three separate gable roofs, partly visible behind the parapet. The parapet was pushed over due to the lack of safety in 2006 and now forms part of the rubble on the site.

The building was originally an important example of a substantial corner store in Wilcannia and served the West Darling district as a major retail supplier of ‘everything’. It reflected the development of Wilcannia and the region in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and the importance of Wilcannia in the Murray-darling River trade.

Currently there are proposals being investigated for rebuilding on this site. An engineer's report prepared in May 2010 confirmed that the cellar and ground floor walls had lost their ability to take any load. Therefore it is likely that a new building is the only outcome for this site, and this should follow the principles for new development outlined elsewhere in this report.

**STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE:** The Knox and Downs building was originally an important example of a substantial corner store in Wilcannia and served the West Darling district as a major retail supplier of ‘everything’ from 1899. It reflected the development of Wilcannia and the region in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and the importance of Wilcannia in the Murray-darling River trade. The current very poor condition of the building makes retention and any reconstruction very problematic.

### HISTORIC THEMES

3. – Developing the local and regional economies: Commerce, Transport
4. – Building settlements, towns and cities: Building the township of Wilcannia

**RECOMMENDATIONS:** This building forms part of the recommended Reid Street Conservation Area. Given the poor condition of the existing remains of the building, construction of a sympathetic new building (preferably for community purposes) is supported. Any new building should incorporate a post supported verandah and reinforce the historic character of Reid and Myers Street.



*View of Store prior to 2002 fire, date unknown - (Source: Picture Australia, rt76350)*



*View of Store, 2005*

## **SOURCES:**

Godden Mackay Heritage and Cultural Tourism Study (1998) – Item no 089  
*Knox & Downs Store, 44 Reid Street, Wilcannia, Conservation Management Plan, June 2007, McDougall & Vines Conservation and Heritage Consultants*

Godden Mackay Heritage and Cultural Tourism Study (1998) – Item no 097

Ms Elizabeth Vines is an award winning conservation architect. She is a partner in the firm McDougall & Vines, an Adelaide based heritage practice which has built up extensive experience and a record of achievement in conservation architecture and heritage town rejuvenation throughout Australia. Elizabeth consults to a wide range of Government authorities and local councils throughout Australia, in the Asian Region. She is a past President of Australian ICOMOS (2012 – 2015), Adjunct Professor at Hong Kong University and Deakin University Melbourne. She studied architecture at Melbourne University and Carleton University, Ottawa, Canada. She works on urban revitalisation programs for historic precincts and restoration projects on significant historic buildings throughout Australia and Asia. Elizabeth is committed to the practical reuse, improvement and rejuvenation of town centres and historic buildings and is a passionate advocate for heritage conservation issues.



### Qualifications:

- B. Arch (First Class Honours), Melbourne University, 1977 (winner of Stephenson Turner Medal for Architecture)
- Medal of the Order of Australia for Services to Heritage Architecture in Australia and Asia (awarded June 2009)
- 2020 Presidents Medal, South Australian Institute of Architects

### Positions held:

- Partner, McDougall & Vines, Conservation and Heritage Consultants 1986 – present
- Past President Australia ICOMOS (2012 – 2015)
- Heritage Advisor, Central Darling Shire and City of Broken Hill – both ongoing
- Adjunct Professor at Deakin University, Melbourne, Australia, and Adjunct Professor, Architectural Conservation Program, University of Hong Kong

### Australian projects:

- Over forty years of experience in all aspects of architecture, including heritage conservation, heritage precinct planning, urban design, domestic and commercial projects, and expert witness and court work on complex heritage matters. Projects which focus on heritage and townscapes contexts, commenced in Australia in Victoria in Maldon in 1977 (Australia's first declared "Notable" town) and have been located in cities and towns throughout Australia since that time. Her Adelaide based practice has provided expert advice to many Australian Local Governments, including extensive consultancy work on heritage matters for the City of Broken Hill and Central Darling Shire. In particular her firm has undertaken many heritage surveys and made recommendations on heritage management frameworks for many local government clients.
- Project architect for numerous award winning conservation, adaptation, and restoration projects on significant historic buildings and streetscape upgrades.
- Conservation specialist in teams of consultants, negotiating solutions on complex heritage sites.

### Awards:

- Cathy Donnelly Heritage Awards 2011 and 2005, presented by the National Trust (NSW) for work by a female heritage architect in New South Wales, Australia
- Broken Hill Regional Art Gallery, overall winner, National Trust (NSW) 2005 awards, for individual heritage project over \$500,000 in NSW.
- Broken Hill Heritage and Cultural Tourism Program - Year of Built Environment National Award for Building Regional Communities - (2004); National Trust of NSW State - Wide Conservation Award (2004); UNESCO Asia Pacific Awards (2003)
- Heritage Ministers Award for the Port Adelaide Heritage Management Program (2003)
- RAIA (SA Chapter) - Leigh Street Heritage Upgrade - Merit Award 2001
- UNESCO Asia Pacific Awards (2000)– Conservation of Ohel Leah Synagogue, Hong Kong (2000), and also the Hong Kong Institute of Architects Award 1998 - (with SACON International and Hassell Architects)
- Civic Trust (South Australia) Heritage Restoration Award, Conservation Works at Institute Building, Norwood (1994)
- Civic Trust (South Australia) Heritage Restoration Award Hebart Hall, Luther Campus, North Adelaide (1993)
- Merit Award for Outstanding Urban and Community Design, Ballarat Conservation Programme - RAIA (Vic Chapter) Award (Jacobs Lewis Vines - 1981)

- Robin Boyd Environmental Award for “Maldon Conservation Project” - RAlA Historic (Vic. Chapter) Award (Jacobs Lewis Vines - 1979)
- Stephenson and Turner Medal for Architecture, (1976), Colonial Sugar Refining Co Ltd Prize (1972) and Nell Norris Scholarship (1971) – all at Melbourne University.

#### **Publications:**

- *Streetwise Design - A Practical Guide for New Development and Adaptive Reuse in Asian Liveable Heritage Cities* published by Think City Sdn Bhd, Malaysia, 2018
- *Streetwise Asia - A Practical Guide for the Conservation and Revitalisation of Heritage Cities and Towns in Asia*, (2005), published by UNESCO, the World Bank and Deakin University, Australia. Translated into Chinese in 2008.
- *Streetwise - A Practical Guide for the Revitalisation of Commercial Heritage Precincts in Australian Cities and Towns*, 1996, for the National Trust (NSW)
- *Broken Hill – A Guide to the Silver City*, 2010, publication by the Broken Hill City Council.
- Author of many other publications including numerous professional journal articles and conservation reports on individual buildings and heritage precincts.

#### **Training programs and expert witness**

- Expert witness for planning appeals for a variety of private and government clients throughout Australia.
- Facilitator and coordinator of numerous training programs throughout Australia and Asia relating to conservation planning and cultural tourism for heritage areas and precincts.

#### **Lecturing and conference presentations**

Elizabeth regularly participates as a speaker (often as key note speaker) at many international and Australian heritage and conservation conferences. Elizabeth teaches conservation courses at the University of Hong Kong and Deakin University and has guest lectured in the Conservation Courses at the University of Hawaii, the University of Carolina USA, Universities in Shanghai and Taiwan, and the Universities of Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide. Contact details + 61 419 816 525  
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