

# Grand future forecast for Ipswich heritage building

CHRIS HERDE

ONE of Ipswich's historic office buildings will receive a new lease on life after revealing a few secrets during a \$2 million refurbishment.

Almost 125 years old, the original home for the Ipswich & West Moreton Building Society, at 45 East St, has been upgraded to A-grade office space but with heritage features retained inside and out.

Owner Bill George, who bought the property from Bendigo Bank in 2005 for \$2.189 million, said it was his first major heritage project.

"State Heritage and Ipswich City Council Heritage were both involved in giving us the green light with what we were going to do," he said.

"They had a bit of a say in the colours and the signage and they wanted to know what we were retaining. They were a big help."

Heritage aspects to be retained include several cast iron columns transported from England when the building was constructed.

They had been hidden behind partition walls and were only revealed during the renovations.

Original windows have been saved and restored by a team in Toowoomba.

The building also contains three strong rooms, one of which had not been entered for years. When the room was opened, Mr George was disappointed to discover it contained old files and not anything more valuable.

"You always like to have a bit of mystery about something," he said. "But they could have left a coin there just to tease you."

Trident Corporation was hired to develop and implement a refurbishment and leasing strategy for the property, Ben Schodel, from Blades Project Services, project managed the works and Hutchinson Builders was the building contractor.

Working with Ipswich City Council's heritage architect,



HERITAGE FEEL: Owner Bill George (left) and Trident Corporation's Neill Read are pleased with the fitout of the Ipswich & West Moreton Building Society building, at 45 East St. Picture: Jono Searle

the works also included a full internal stripout of the previous tenant's fitout, painting the façade of the building, installing a new air-conditioning system, new toilets and a new lobby foyer.

A new internal lift to level one was commissioned, as was new ceilings and lighting and rectifying the use of the existing timber windows.

Trident's Neill Read said 45 East St was a prominent Ipswich building.

"In a city littered with old buildings, this is one of the major CBD buildings and it was important to get it right," Mr Read said.

"The external façade and some heritage internal features have been maintained, such as high ceilings and case-

ment windows.

"These features have created a very light open space with contemporary finishes to the standards required by State Government and other blue-chip tenants."

The building is being marketed for lease to whole building occupiers or smaller occupiers, with tenancies ranging from 100sq m to 1000sq m

at \$415sq m gross.

The refurbishment is expected to be completed in October.

Mr Read said he had already carried out three inspections.

"We have had a lot of interest in the building," he said.

"Outside it's historic and inside it's an A-grade office with historic features throughout."