Introduction to the Wheeler Centre Venue

The Wheeler Centre entrance at 176 Little Lonsdale St, Melbourne, can be accessed from a number of different directions: from Swanston Street, Russell street or from the QV building and car park opposite. The following description is from Swanston Street as you travel along Little Lonsdale Street, via a narrow bitumen path on the left side. The footpath runs alongside the rough stone wall of The State Library of Victoria. Then as you draw closer to the entrance, there are parking spaces on your left, parallel to the road. Here the footpath dips to accommodate the car park entrance and waist height steel bollards, separate the car parks from pedestrians.

The Wheeler Centre entrance has nine concrete steps from the road to the front door landing. The stairs are 5 meters across bookended by glass panel balustrades under long metal grab rails, one on either side. A 6 metre high contemporary rectangular arch, frames the whole structure. The sidewalls have thick pale green glass. The right hand side glass has the Wheeler centre logo, which is a white letter W made from a series of concentric V’s that cross in the centre like bird wings, on a square green background. The words, The Wheeler Centre are written in black below, along with the words Books, Writing, and Ideas written in smaller green letters, one word below the next.

To utilize the ramp access to the building, continue past the base of the stairs to the left for another 15 metres, flanked on the left with a 1.5 metre high wrought iron fence. At the end, you turn left, back on yourself, to move up the gentle incline of the ramp, which runs alongside the wall of the building, parallel to the road.

Three-quarters of the way up, the ramp makes a 90-degree turn to the right, for a few paces, then back to the left to complete the journey to the top landing. There are metal grab rails that run the length of the ramp on either side. Turn right at the top of the ramp to enter the building.

On the landing at the top of the stairs and extending to the top of the ramp on the right, is a strip of hazard tiles. As you travel forward to enter under an arched alcove, glass sliding doors separate in the centre, to open into the Wheeler Centre foyer.

Once in the foyer, approximately 4 metres from the door, directly in front of you, sits a long wooden reception desk, slightly offset to the left of centre. The shape of the right hand side of the desk, angles away 45 degrees and if keep to your left, leads to a large elevator, recessed in the back wall of the room. A little further along to the right of the elevator is the ambulant and accessible toilet, labelled gender neutral and fragrance free. There are also Male / Female toilets on the same level in addition to the accessible toilet.

Continuing to the right past the toilets, there is a 3 metre wide entrance to a corridor, which leads to a carpeted staircase. From here, one set of stairs leads down to a café and The Moat, a smaller venue in the building. There is also a set of male and female toilets on this lower level. The other set of stairs leads up to offices and the administration area.

When you first enter the foyer and turn left, you will face a set of heavy metal double doors with glass panels. These open into the Performance Space.

The doors swing inwards toward you and are usually already in the ‘open’ position, in preparation for performance, or will be operated by an usher.

The Performance Space is a long narrow carpeted space with 8 arched windows down the left side. The high ceiling has a series of art-deco pendent lights hanging along the centre line.

The single block of 250 chairs has no central aisle. Access, is from the corridors which run down either side of the seating bank. Approximately 27 rows of chairs, of around 10 chairs per row, all face a stage platform at the far end of the room. The chairs are non-fixed plastic molded seats, with out arms, with curved metal frames supporting the sides. This chair configuration is the most common set up, for panel discussions. There may be different configurations for different types of events. Three quarters of the way down the room a stack of room-divider panels, concertina back against the wall on either side. When pulled across and locked into the fixed wall position the performance space can be reduced, to a more intimate space.

The Stage is a platform 6 metres deep by 8 metres wide. It is raised 500 mm from floor level.  There are 4 stairs to the stage with a railing on the left-hand side.

The stage is wrapped with a 2metre high black boarder along both sides and across the back. For The Wheeler Centre panel discussions, three freestanding wooden “w”s, the Wheeler Centre logos, create the backdrop. A series of square red, short backed, armchairs sit in a semi circle in front them, with a couple of circular side-tables spaced intermittently between them. Over the stage hang black theatrical stage lights pointed at the stage as well as two black speaker boxes, one on either side.