

## LISTING REPORT

|                                    |                                                       |                                                                    |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|
| CITY/SUBURB/TOWN<br><b>GOSFORD</b> | NAME OF IDENTIFICATION<br><b>GOSFORD CITY LIBRARY</b> | ADDRESS OR LOCATION<br><b>118-120 Donnison Street,<br/>GOSFORD</b> |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|

|            |                                       |                    |                           |
|------------|---------------------------------------|--------------------|---------------------------|
| LGA:       | Central Coast Council                 | ABORIGINAL NATION: | DARKINJUNG (Land Council) |
| POSTCODE:  | 2250                                  | LOT/DP:            | Lot C DP 69497            |
| COMMITTEE: | Built Heritage Conservation Committee | GRID:              |                           |
| AUTHOR:    | Merril Jackson OAM                    | LISTING DATE:      | 17 April 2024             |

### STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Gosford City Library is a significant product of the post-war Modern Movement architecture that demonstrates the notable historical phase of local governance and administration and the development of infrastructure dedicated to civic education and recreation.

Gosford Library is of **historical significance** as it demonstrates the 20<sup>th</sup> mid-century shift of architectural styles and construction practices in NSW. The modest-in-scale Gosford City Library is important evidence to illustrate the pattern of civic Brutalist library buildings erected in NSW during the mid-1960s to early 1970s. The building also has **associative significance**, as its designers included prominent architects *Alan Williams & Associates* and engineering consultants *Ove Arup & Partners*, as well as various other well respected building professionals.

Gosford City Library retains an exceptional degree of **aesthetic, creative and technical values** evident in quality Brutalist movement applications undertaken by recognised mid-century industry professionals. The building exhibits a mid-century Japanese influence that distils the simple modernist style and creates external and internal composure in the cityscape. The construction of Gosford Library provides strong evidence of the Brutalist architecture collaboration of the architect, engineers, builder, joiner and prefabricated concrete artisan.

The library is highly regarded as a cultural hub providing lifelong learning and service as a community gathering space for all age groups. The building retains a high **social and cultural significance** to the city centre and region as a popular community hub within Kibble Park

Gosford City Library is a two storied and mezzanine level structural example of Brutalist architecture that is locally **rare** on the Central Coast, NSW. The concrete fabrication of Gosford Library was the work of Rinaldo Umberto Fabbro of Fabbrostone Pty. Ltd., and is one of an increasingly rare class of surviving structures with technical evidence of Fabbro's Brutalist concrete artisan work in NSW.

The Brutalist architecture is **representative** of the utilitarian aesthetic movement, with the unique Japanese aesthetic and inspired design of Gosford City Library capturing an architectural ideology relative to the mid-century modern civic structures with a social purpose.

## DESCRIPTION

Gosford City Library is a purpose-built public library of Brutalist architecture and an inspired Japanese aesthetic, the building comprising of a basement, ground floor and mezzanine level space.

In the late 1960s, Gosford City library was established to enhance the streetscape and activate a central social and cultural hub to create a civic heart township centre. The hip-roof bears a two-tiered pitch defined by an unexpected defining cleft of central clerestory windows to increase natural light. The exterior features mottled toned brown bricks, concrete, aluminium and glass. During 2018, a metal roof and gutter replaced the former terracotta tiled roof.

The Wunderlich Ltd. of 307 Canberra Avenue, Fyshwick ACT were likely the company that supplied the roof tiles for Gosford Library, this roofing tile known to be a standard Australian tile used during the 1960s era.

The upper floor incorporates pre-cast and in-situ concrete panels, each exterior surface exhibiting an exposed aggregate finish. Timbers featured in the interior were recorded within Construction and Wood Craftsmanship journals in 1970 as Tasmanian Oak (Windows), Oregon sawn boarding (Concrete finish) tongue and grooved Western Red Cedar boarding (roof), and exposed Douglas Fir Board and laminated timber beams.

The siting of the library on the southwest corner of Kibble Park ensured ample curtilage with foundations clear of stormwater drains and the extended branch of the Gosford channel (creek). The library frontage is positioned on a gentle gradient slope with the setting complementary to the spaciousness of the communal Gosford City's 'Civic Heart' park open space reserve.

Embedded in the 1960s physics and structural design, the upper-level structure overhangs the lower level to create space under the beam without supportive upright pillars. The structure comprises of a reinforced concrete frame, the columns revealing the 'board formed' debossed timbered finish concreted piles produced in-situ. The beam corners are angled, in preference to a standard sharp 90 degree.

The library features a purpose-built loading dock to accommodate the 1960s expansion of public library Bookmobile service, delivering books to readers across the Gosford Shire since 1956 The purposefully designed ramp access was designed for direct level access to the upper first floor library, where adult books were shelved. The original flooring finishes for exterior and interior sections included quarry tiles 8"x8", vinyl tile, and carpet. The Hardy Joinery window fittings feature clear anodized aluminium sashes in Tasmanian oak frames. Lower ground floor infill walls feature clinker bricks.

Gosford Library is surviving evidence of a purpose-built civic Brutalist public library in NSW. It demonstrates exceptional significance directly associated to outstanding artisans, architectural and building industry professionals of NSW and the ACT. Gosford Library is modest in scale as compared to other grander scaled Brutalist libraries, i.e., Macquarie University Library.

## HISTORY & CONTEXT

Designed in 1967, Gosford City Library was completed in 1969 during the boom years of construction in NSW. The purpose-built civic library in Kibble Park Gosford retains a continual pattern of human use. Literary Institutes were constructed for working-class men and promoted social, intellectual, and moral improvement that could only be accessed via annual public subscriptions. Progressive legislated government policy of the 20<sup>th</sup> century enabled free public library services to all genders and age ranges throughout NSW. Gosford City Library is a civic building erected in response to the rising popularity and importance of a dedicated public place that encouraged education and recreation.

Gosford School of Arts was the first Literary Institute located in Mann Street, South Gosford, officially opened by Sir Henry Parkes in April 1889. This educational cultural and social hub was designed to gentrify and educate the men of the district on a user-pay subscription fee basis. A long period of civic provision of educational facilities for cultural and social purpose followed, with the former restricted to male patronage shifting to include women and children, though paying library fees remained. The library within the Gosford School of Arts ceased to operate during 1938.

The NSW Library Act of November 1939 encouraged local governments to establish a free public library service to people regardless of gender and age throughout NSW. Despite initial financial support, World War II halted the official Library Act 1939 proclamation until January 1944. On August 16, 1948, a Library service commenced in the Council Chambers in the Gosford township, this library scheme implemented with a 1 shilling per head imposed to the shire residents.

The first purpose-built library in Mann Street designed by Sydney-based architect, Loyal Gordon Figgis was approved in 1949, and publicly opened on December 4, 1951. This library was sited upon vacant land between the Royal Hotel and Gosford Council Chambers. Miss Phyllis Bennett MBE, a staunch advocate of a public library for Gosford Shire, was the first to join the Gosford Shire Library and receive a borrowing card. Bennett supported the public library and made valuable contributions throughout her lifetime, at times serving as a library committee member.

### **Gosford Shire Library on the Kibble Estate**

Gosford Channel (Creek) flowed from Gosford Broadwater into the township, with a branched channel winding its way through the Kibble Estate. Aboriginal cultural and non-Aboriginal history exist on this site. Bordered by Donnison Street (south), Eliza Street (east), Mortimer Lane (west) and William Street (north), Gosford City Library sits purposefully on the far southwest corner of Kibble Park, this small footprint siting having allowed ample space to create a large carpark to service the township.

The name Kibble Park attributes former property owner, James Kibble, a former blacksmith of Donnison Street, Gosford, landlord, Shire Councillor, multi-time Mayor and one time President of Erina Shire Council; the period of his residency in the Gosford district spanned the years from 1885 to 1924. After Kibble's death on November 6, 1944, Gosford Shire Council secured the Kibble Estate in 1947 at minimal cost, this later reported in 1969 as \$7,000.

After a rapid post-war population growth to the Gosford Shire and a significant influx of new residents during the mid 1960s, it was decided to pursue alternate premises for Gosford Library that had occupied, then later neighboured, the Council Chambers in Mann Street since 1948. Kibble Park Estate was seen as an opportunity to combine the social purpose of a library on expansive land that could also combat the parking needs of the Gosford township. Gosford Shire Council Minutes in 1966 confirm the Shire Clerk recommended the 'provision of adequate accommodation for the main library at Gosford as a matter of urgency'.

A site for the new Gosford Library was considered in early 1966, the Council opting for 'a new library building on the Kibble Estate, (Lots 6-8) as the first unit of a civic centre development'. Surrounded to the east and north by an extensive carpark, the Gosford Library was the only civic structure to feature within the Kibble Park Estate and planned as a focal point of social engagement, education, literacy, learning, community involvement and active engagement.

By 1967, a Library Building Committee was established. This committee appointed Sydney architectural firm, Allan Williams and Associates to design Gosford Library. Council also obtained the services of Charles Hardy & Sons, and D. S. Thomas and Partners as building service engineers, their associations leading to secure a further distinguished network of leading building industry professionals from Canberra and Sydney. These professionals included Master Builder, A. W. Edwards Pty. Ltd., Consulting Structural Engineers Ove Arup & Partners, Hardy's Joinery Pty Ltd and Fabbrostone.

On November 10, 1967, the Library Building Committee meeting at the Council Chambers considered the architectural plan for Gosford Library developed by Alan Williams & Associates, the Committee highlighting:

'the proposed square design of the building was suitable .....and that this geometry was the most economical as to site occupation and construction costs. It was also considered that the proposal to provide for future expansion by means of a mezzanine balcony was the most economical both as to site occupation, cost, and original design. The Committee was of the opinion that the mezzanine floor should if possible be part of the original construction, as this would result in a considerable saving of cost and would avoid disruption of the library service at a future time.

Some adjustments were recommended by the committee, including a senior citizens centre. With the architectural design approved and subcontractors decided, the construction commenced.

The new Gosford Shire Library on the Kibble Park Estate was officially opened by the Shire President, Les McCarthy, on November 24, 1969, the costs associated were purported as not exceeding the anticipated budget of \$227,000. The construction of Gosford Library as a 'civic centre' in 1969 was a precursor for developing other branch libraries across the Central Coast.

Within a decade, the designated Senior Citizens centre within the Gosford Shire required larger premises for their activities as the space within the Gosford Shire Library was no longer sufficient (See Image 24). In 1978, a small building on the opposite side of Eliza Street was constructed, designed to complement the adjacent library as an extension civic facility, to accommodate the growing needs of the local Senior Citizens.

### **Recent history of Gosford Library and demolition approval in September 2023**

Several years prior to the Central Coast Council amalgamation, the Gosford City Council engaged David Scobie, Heritage Consultant and Architect to compile and list local heritage assets. This project commenced on 29 July 2013, and involved a local heritage research panel to assist with heritage assessments. Scobie's *'Central Coa(s)t Council (Southern Region) Heritage Review: Final report*, August 2016, included the recommendation for the Council to heritage list Gosford City Library. This recommendation was not followed up, and the site was not listed on the Central Coast LEP.

In 2016, Gosford Library was identified by the Australia Institute of Architects (NSW Chapter) as a significant building designed by Allan Williams and Associates and listed within the Australian Institute of Architects Register of Significant Buildings.

During 2017 to 2018, Gosford City Library received an injection of \$100,000 for upgrades inclusive of replacing the 1969 tiled roof with a metal roof and gutter.<sup>1</sup> The Central Coast Mayor, Jane Smith indicating there were no impending plans to demolish the building.

Kibble Park has been proposed for a revitalisation project alongside development plans for a waterfront masterplan to reactivate Gosford City. Initial plans in 2020 proposed the retention and repurposing of the library, due to the indication that the building has social and architectural merit in the history of Gosford. However, in late 2023, demolition of the Gosford Library was approved by the council, to the dismay of some of the local community .

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<sup>1</sup> Jackie Pearson, interview: Central Coast Council Mayor Jane Smith, December 12, 2017, in: 'New regional library and a regional performing arts centre are closer to fruition', *Coast Community News*, December 14, 2017, p.5.

## SITE



Subject site and lot indicated within red border (Six Maps)

# COSFORD TOWN BLOCKS

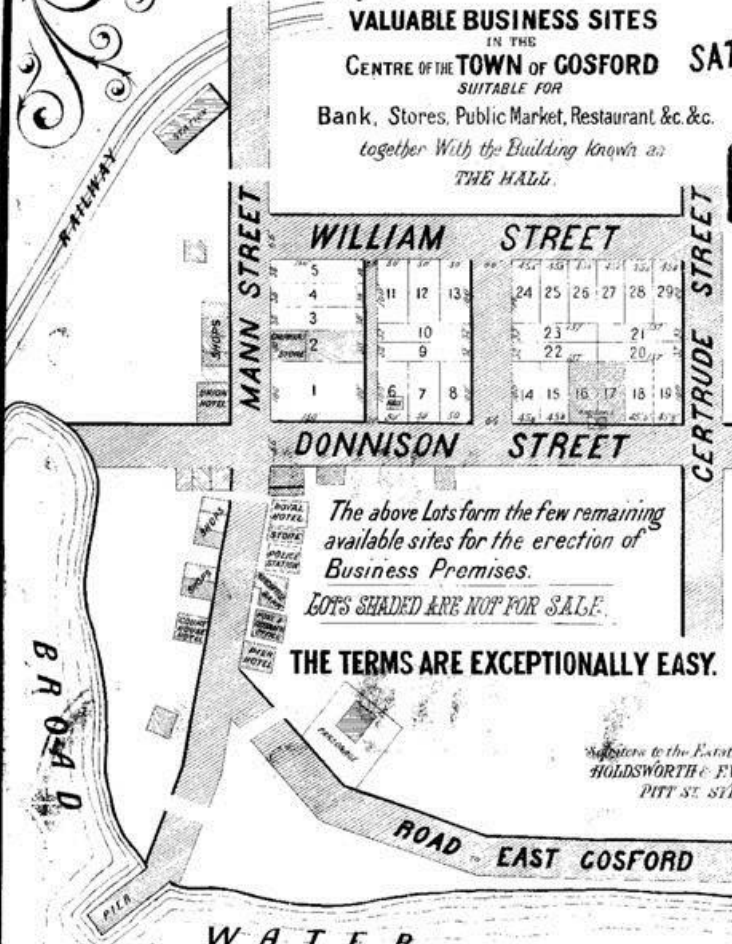
*IN THE ESTATE OF THE LATE W<sup>m</sup> ALISON ESQ., DECEASED.*

## BUSINESS SITES

To be Sold by Public Auction on the Ground

**VALUABLE BUSINESS SITES**  
IN THE  
CENTRE OF THE TOWN OF COSFORD  
SUITABLE FOR  
Bank, Stores, Public Market, Restaurant &c. &c.  
together With the Building known as  
THE HALL.

**SATURDAY**  
**DEC. 12<sup>th</sup>** at 1.30 p.m.  
by  
**BOYD AND KING**  
96 Pitt Street.  
**AUCTIONEERS**



*The above Lots form the few remaining available sites for the erection of Business Premises.*  
*LOTS SHADED ARE NOT FOR SALE.*

**THE TERMS ARE EXCEPTIONALLY EASY.**

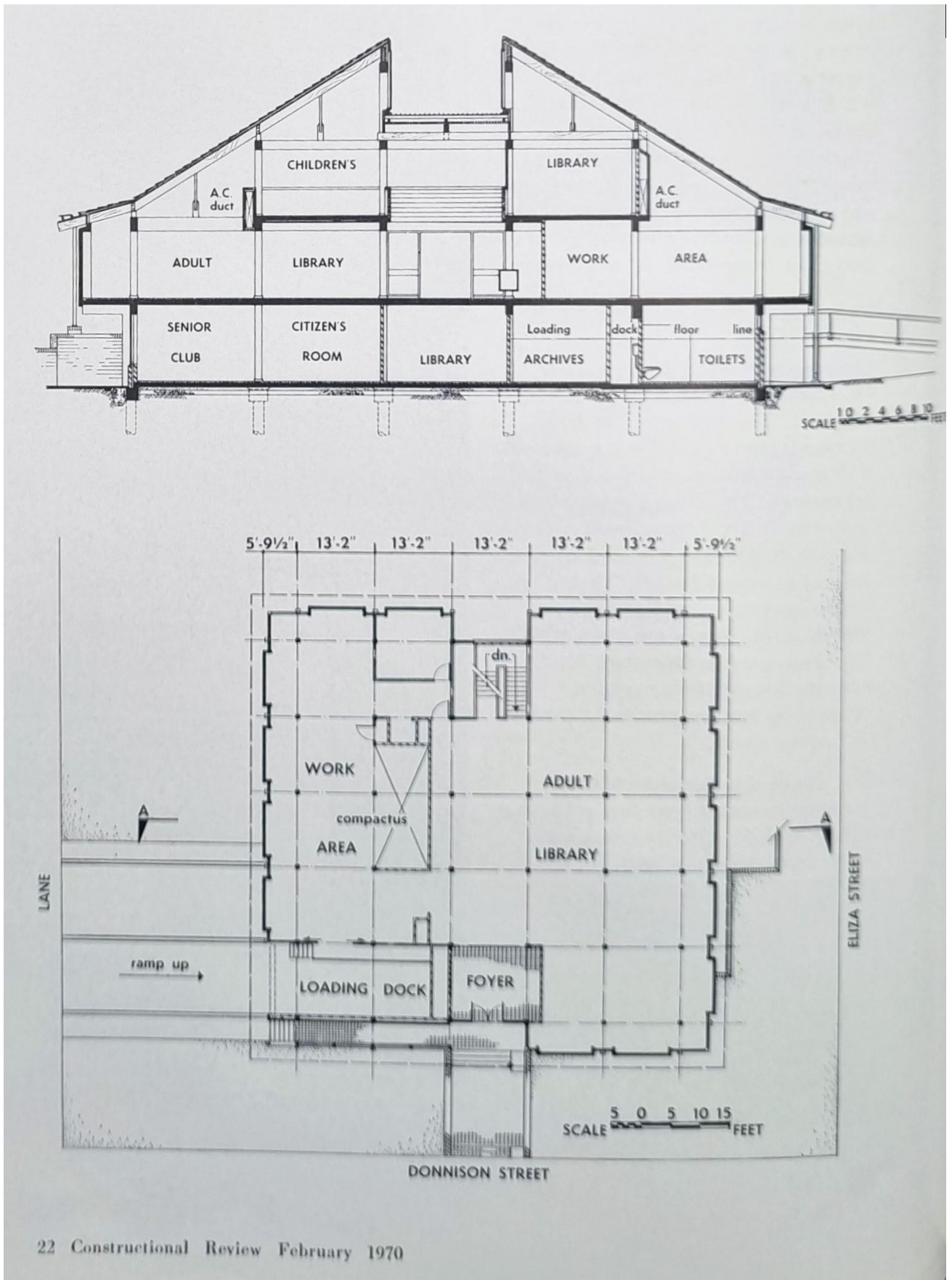
**Special Steamer**  
**on**  
**Day of Sale**

*Agents to the Estate*  
**HOLDSWORTH & EVANS,**  
PITT ST. SYDNEY.

  
TP/63/94

Early subdivision of subject site, Balmain Observer and Western Suburbs Advertiser  
(<https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/132245268>)

## ARCHITECTURAL DRAWINGS



**Location:** Gosford, N.S.W.

**Architects:** Alan Williams & Associates

**Consulting Engineers:** Ove Arup & Partners

**Builder:** A. W. Edwards Pty. Ltd.

**Precaster:** Fabbrostone Pty. Ltd.

#### **Structural Details**

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|                          |                                                                          |
|--------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Foundations</b>       | Variable, including fill, soft silty clay and slurry.                    |
| <b>Footings</b>          | 14 in. diameter piles driven to approximately 20 ft. below ground level. |
| <b>Column grid</b>       | 13 ft. 2 in. x 13 ft. 2 in.                                              |
| <b>Column size</b>       | 9 in. x 9 in.                                                            |
| <b>Basement floor</b>    | 6 in. flat slab with 3 in. blinding concrete on 6 in. hard-core.         |
| <b>Ground floor</b>      | Beams and 7½ in. slab.                                                   |
| <b>Mezzanine floor</b>   | Beams and 4½ in. slab.                                                   |
| <b>Concrete strength</b> | 3,500 p.s.i.                                                             |

#### **Finishes**

|                |                                                                                                               |
|----------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Floors</b>  | Carpet, quarry tile, vinyl tile,                                                                              |
| <b>Windows</b> | clear anodised aluminium sashes in Tasmanian oak frames.<br>Infill walls at lower ground floor—clinker brick. |

|             |                                                              |
|-------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Cost</b> | (Including air conditioning and library fittings) \$213,374. |
|-------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|

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EARLY IMAGES





2023 IMAGES



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