

MINOR REPAIRS—DOORS AND WINDOW HARDWARE

This technical note provides information about repairs to door and window hardware approved under General Exemption.

Background

Door and window hardware includes door knobs and handles, keys, locks and latches, bolts, picture hooks and rails, servants' bells, brackets, hinges and sash fasteners. A great range of architectural and building hardware is found in Queensland. Early door and window hardware was both functional and decorative and was formed in mild steel, cast iron, brass (including florentine bronze finish), copper, timber, crystal and ceramics. Some was locally made but much early hardware was imported, mostly from Britain.

Repairs under General Exemption

Under General Exemption, repairs to door and window hardware must be based on the principle of doing as little as possible and only as much as necessary to retain and protect the element. Repairs must match existing in material, size and profile and there must be no damage to significant fabric.

Repairs must not involve a high proportion of the original hardware. Repairs to door and window hardware approved under General Exemption include:

- repairing or reconditioning original hardware into working order
- reinstating missing hardware to match original, if known
- removing paint from painted-over hardware such as key plates and covers
- installing temporary locks to retain security
- installing locks to upgrade security.

Removal of original hardware is not approved under General Exemption—always retain original and install modern hardware adjacent.

Maintenance and cleaning

Regular and consistent maintenance will avoid the need for costly repairs and replacements. It will also conserve significant original fabric.

Check that hardware elements operate properly. Identify the material(s) in the hardware and the finish and clean appropriately. For recommended cleaning for door and window hardware refer to Technical note: Building Maintenance—cleaning.

Record repairs, replacements and additions

Record all repairs, replacements and additions made to door and window hardware.

Damage

Identify and fix the cause of the damage before proceeding with repairs to hardware. Damage to hardware may be a result of:

- painted-over elements
- normal wear and tear
- vandalism or break-and-enter.

Painted over elements

Door hardware may have been covered with thick layers of paint throughout the life of the building, covering the original finish and hindering the operation of the hardware.

Normal wear and tear

Normal wear and tear on hardware may result in broken or faulty locks latches, and lock cylinders, or original keys may be lost. Hinges and screws fixing locks and handles in place may loosen and hinder the operation of the hardware.

Vandalism or break-and-enter

Vandalism and forced entry to the building may damage window and door hardware.

Methods of repair

Removing paint from hardware

Often the first step in the reconditioning of existing hardware is the removal of layers of paint to reveal the surface of the metal and to free moving parts. Carefully remove the hardware from the door or window before repairing. Apply a paint stripper appropriate to the substrate material and remove the paint from the hardware with a small wire brush and steel wool. Do not use caustic baths to remove paint. Remove any rust from the moving parts or springs and lightly smear with fine oil.

This process may also remove the original finish. In the case of cast iron, treat the metal surface with metal primer or rust inhibitor and match original finish. Brass components will tarnish naturally, do not polish or lacquer.

Repairs

Retain original hardware. If original hardware is not functioning have it repaired or reconditioned by a specialist locksmith. If necessary have a specialist locksmith remove and replace the hardware. Ensure that it is carefully removed, retaining any fastenings such as screws for reuse and noting the various components and their location. Neatly fit the repaired hardware back into the original position.

Do not remove original hardware

Do not remove and replace original hardware even if it cannot be brought into working order. Install new hardware adjacent to the original as inconspicuously as possible.

Replacement hardware

If hardware is missing but details are known, it is often possible to find an exact match at second-hand suppliers or specialist locksmiths. The replacement hardware should match exactly in style, finish and size. Neatly fit the hardware into the original position.

The finish of second-hand items may be revived but the patina of age found on original items must be retained.

Reproduction hardware

Replacement of hardware with modern reproductions is not allowed under General Exemption.

Fixing methods

Always retain and reuse original screws when temporarily removing hardware. Match existing if lost. Second-hand suppliers may be able to provide matching fixings or new fixings may be a suitable match.

Other things to be aware of

Window sashes

Take care removing sash fastenings—it can be difficult to replace them in their original alignment.

Fanlights

Fanlight operators and spring-loaded catches can be repaired or reconditioned at specialist locksmiths. Cord operated fanlights can be renewed with new cords and eyes.

Security

Do not remove hardware and replace it with new more secure modern versions. Leave the original hardware in place and install new hardware without damaging the fabric. Unobtrusive key-operated locks may be added to windows.

Fixing of metal security screens where none exist is not approved by General Exemption.

Electronic security systems may be installed if there is no damage to the fabric.

References

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Miles, J. 1995, *Conserving the Queensland House* (brochure series, nos. 1–12) National Trust of Queensland, Brisbane.

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