



UPGRADE IS SET IN SYDNEY STONE

James Gorman

SLABS of sandstone are beginning to taking shape as stonemasons work to restore and upgrade the fine details on Sydney Town Hall.

A window cut into the hoardings of the work site, has allowed passers-by the opportunity to watch as large blocks of Pyrmont sandstone are chipped, chiselled and carved into intricate fixtures that will be placed on the columns of the clock tower.

Kris Krawczyk, stonemason and director of Traditional Stonemasonry Company, won the contract to commence working on the clock tower last year, however it is not the first time his company has maintained the historical building.

Mr Krawczyk has been a professional stonemason for more than 30 years and adapted his trade from sculpting. "I came here as a sculptor to Australia and really with the family

I needed to support them so I had to do something, so stonemasonry was the closest to sculpting," Mr Krawczyk said.

Work on the tower will take some time due to the intricate details the sandstone blocks require.

"It will be approximately a year-and-a-half upgrade to do the tower only and then there will be another contract on offer to do the rest, so it will be a quite a long job in total."

For the tower there will be seismic bracing for the top of the building but to do that it needs to be restored, so the restoration is happening to the whole tower. "From a solid block it takes about 11 or 12 working days. One person works on one block from beginning to end."

Due to the details that are required to sculpt stone, stonemasonry has become a trade reserved for the patient and highly skilled, but due to

the expense and time required, very few new buildings use the format.

"Builders don't have the requirements to work in such detail with stone, you need the skills and you need the right tools," he said.

"Not everyone can carve stone, there are a lot of masons who can do straight stuff but not the curves. It's a sort of art, but no one can afford it anymore because it's time-consuming and costly. We've mainly done restoration work for the last 27 years."

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Stonemason Kris Krawczyk at the Sydney Town Hall.