



# REGISTER OF HERITAGE PLACES - ASSESSMENT DOCUMENTATION

## 11. ASSESSMENT OF CULTURAL HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

The criteria adopted by the Heritage Council in November 1996 have been used to determine the cultural heritage significance of the place.

### 11.1 AESTHETIC VALUE\*

*Customs House (fmr)* is a fine example of the Federation Free style. The design of the building exhibits a sense of authority appropriate to its original use as a customs house. (Criterion 1.1)

Situated on the corner of Cliff and Phillimore Streets, *Customs House (fmr)* is a landmark building. This street intersection defines the entrance to Victoria Quay, the Fremantle Port Authority and the Aquaculture Centre. (Criterion 1.3)

The place contributes to the character of an important commercial and maritime precinct. In terms of scale, proportion and materials, the landmark quality of *Customs House (fmr)* is enhanced by its aesthetic link with *Phillimore Chambers* (1899), which is located on the south-east corner of the Cliff and Phillimore Street intersection. (Criterion 1.4)

Together with *His Majesty's Hotel* (c.189,1903), *McIlwraith Building* (former Adelaide Shipping Co. and also known as Scottish House; c.1898), *Phillimore Chambers* (1899), *Dock Buildings*, and *P & O Building* (1903), *Customs House (fmr)* makes a positive contribution to the early twentieth century streetscape along Phillimore Street. While the individual buildings are clearly distinguishable, their scale and heavy masonry qualities, together with the consistent use of stonework, brickwork and parapeted facades, combine to provide a unifying theme. (Criterion 1.4)

### 11.2. HISTORIC VALUE

*Customs House (fmr)* demonstrates the growth and development of customs operations in Western Australia. It functioned as the main branch of the Customs Department of Western Australia from 1908. (Criterion 2.1)

Although customs operations had been located in Fremantle from the 1830s, *Customs House (fmr)* was the first purpose built customs building in Fremantle in 1908. (Criterion 2.2)

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\* For consistency, all references to architectural style are taken from Apperly, Richard; Irving, Robert and Reynolds, Peter *A Pictorial Guide to Identifying Australian Architecture: Styles and Terms from 1788 to the Present*, Angus & Robertson, North Ryde, 1989.

*Customs House (fmr)* illustrates the rapid development of the maritime-related nature of the Phillimore Street precinct in the early twentieth century, following the construction of the new harbour and the relocation of the railway station. (Criterion 2.2)

*Customs House (fmr)* is associated with Hillson Beasley, Chief Architect of the Public Works Department, 1906-1917, and W. B. Hardwick, Architect of the Public Works Department of Western Australia. (Criterion 2.3)

*Customs House (fmr)* is a fine example of the design standards of the Western Australian Public Works Department in the early twentieth century. (Criterion 2.4)

### **11. 3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE**

*Customs House (fmr)* has the potential through archaeological excavation to yield information about the physical layout and the technology employed at the customs depot, as well as the goods that passed through the first major transshipment point in the colony between 1829 and 1879. The place also has the potential to yield information about the material culture of the passengers that used the first railway station in Fremantle between 1880 and 1906. (Criteria 3.1 & 3.2)

*Customs House (fmr)* has the potential through archaeological excavation to yield information on the activities carried out within a federal Customs House between 1908 and 1986. (Criteria 3.1. & 3.2)

### **11. 4. SOCIAL VALUE**

*Customs House (fmr)* is a reminder of the local community's fight to protect the architectural character of Fremantle during the regeneration campaign that was instigated by the defence for the America's Cup in the 1980s. (Criterion 4.1)

*Customs House (fmr)* is highly valued by the local art community. Its use as an Arts Centre resulted from the arts community's lobbying for accommodation during the America's Cup Challenge. (Criterion 4.1)

*Customs House (fmr)* has had a long and close association with the maritime history of Fremantle and recognition of its past use contributes to the community's sense of place. (Criterion 4.2)

## **12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE**

### **12. 1. RARITY**

*Customs House (fmr)* has rarity value as one of a few surviving purpose-built customs houses in Western Australia; others include the Customs Houses at Broome (1886), Cossack (1895), Geraldton (1935) and Albany (1966). It has a more elaborate scale and design to the custom houses at Broome and Cossack. (Criteria 5.1 & 5.2)

### **12. 2 REPRESENTATIVENESS**

*Customs House (fmr)* is a representative example of the early twentieth century work of the Public Works Department of Western Australia. (Criterion 6.2)

### **12. 3 CONDITION**

Overall, *Customs House (fmr)* is in sound condition; however, there is considerable evidence of dampness on the interior and exterior walls.

### **12. 4 INTEGRITY**

*Customs House (fmr)* retains a moderate degree of integrity. Although no longer used for its original purpose, physical evidence remains of each of the three major phases of development. Tenants have made no structural alterations and evidence of the former occupants survives in details such as the direction board inside the portico entrance and near the Phillimore Street entrance. This signage illustrates the use of both these openings as public entrances.

### **12. 5 AUTHENTICITY**

Despite the refurbishment of finishes and changes to electrical fittings, the original detailing within each section of the buildings is largely intact. *Customs House (fmr)* retains a high degree of authenticity.

### **13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE**

Attached are key sections of the supporting evidence prepared by Kelly Aris, Helen Burgess and Gaye Nayton, 'Conservation Plan Customs House (fmr)', (prepared for the Department of Contract and Management Services, June 1998).

#### **13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE**

For a discussion of the documentary evidence refer to the report by Kelly Aris, Helen Burgess and Gaye Nayton, 'Conservation Plan Customs House (fmr)', (prepared for the Department of Contract and Management Services, June 1998).

#### **13.2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE**

For a discussion of the physical evidence refer to the report by Kelly Aris, Helen Burgess and Gaye Nayton, 'Conservation Plan Customs House (fmr)', (prepared for the Department of Contract and Management Services, June 1998).

#### **13.3 REFERENCES**

Kelly Aris, Helen Burgess and Gaye Nayton, 'Conservation Plan Customs House (fmr)', (prepared for the Department of Contract and Management Services, June 1998).

#### **13.4 FURTHER RESEARCH**

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