



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.

The wording of this document has been adapted from Independent Order of Rechabites Hall Conservation Plan with amendments and/or additions by HCWA staff and the Register Committee.

PRINCIPAL AUSTRALIAN HISTORIC THEME(S)

- 3.17.2 Banking & lending
- 8.1 Organising recreation
- 8.5.3 Associating for mutual aid
- 8.6 Worshipping

HERITAGE COUNCIL OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA THEME(S)

- 404 Community services & utilities
- 405 Sport, recreation & entertainment
- 408 Institutions

11.1 AESTHETIC VALUE*

Rechabite Hall is a distinctive example of the Inter-War Free Classical style typical of Edwin Summerhayes' later city buildings. Both internally and externally, the materials, scale and form of *Rechabite Hall* demonstrate a competent use of classical elements and detailing, exhibiting the skill of the designer. The façade, entry foyer and hall are particularly fine examples of 1920's Free Classical architecture. (Criterion 1.1)

Rechabite Hall contains several fine internal architectural features, including the mosaic tile floor and tile dado of the entry hall, the well preserved main jarrah staircase with its fine balustrades, and the upper foyer and fine vaulted ceiling of the main hall, which are extensively lined with pressed metal embossed with decorative patterns, of high artistic quality. (Criterion 1.1)

Rechabite Hall is a key component of the eastern streetscape of William Street between Roe and Newcastle Street. (Criterion 1.3)

Rechabite Hall is a local landmark, enhanced by its central location within the William Street streetscape, located at the northern gateway to the city centre.

* 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.

The façade of *Rechabite Hall* differs markedly from its neighbours and its scale, proportions and detailing are more typical of the larger buildings south of the railway. (Criterion 1.3)

11. 2. HISTORIC VALUE

The construction of *Rechabite Hall* in 1924, as part of the remarkably coherent William Street streetscape, expresses the confidence of the Northbridge area, and clearly shows the development that occurred north of the city following the 1890s goldrush and the building of the Horseshoe Bridge over the railway in 1902. *Rechabite Hall* is one of the few buildings of classically inspired architecture to be erected north of the railway line. (Criterion 2.1)

Rechabite Hall was purpose built for the Independent Order of Rechabites, one of 15 friendly societies that have been registered in Western Australia, which had a large following during the early decades of the 20th century and continues with smaller numbers. (Criterion 2.2)

As a provider of mixed-use facilities housing a variety of commercial uses and having notable ethnic diversity, *Rechabite Hall* is indicative of the development of Northbridge during the 20th century, and the character for which Northbridge is recognised today. (Criterion 2.2)

Rechabite Hall is the last of the major works designed by Edwin Summerhayes, an influential architect of the goldrush period in Coolgardie, and in early 20th century Perth. Summerhayes was responsible for the design of various commercial premises and residences in Coolgardie and Perth including the Coolgardie Town Hall (1898); the Coolgardie Mining Exhibition Building (1898) and Kobeelya, Katanning (1902). (Criterion 2.3)

11. 3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE

11. 4. SOCIAL VALUE

As an old time dance hall in the 1920s and 1930s, *Rechabite Hall* represents an early beginning to the entertainment function that characterises Northbridge in the late 20th and early 21st century. Its function as a hall, providing performance and entertainment space, is also specifically relevant to the wider precinct which has operated as a 'Cultural Centre' since the turn of the 20th century. (Criterion 4.1)

Rechabite Hall has played a significant role in the social life of Northbridge, as a venue for balls, dance exhibitions, church services, conferences, annual meetings, school productions and an election polling station. (Criterion 4.1)

As a purpose built venue, *Rechabite Hall* represents the prosperity and impact of Friendly Societies on the Western Australian community during the early decades of the 20th century. (Criterion 4.1)

12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE

12. 1. RARITY

Rechabite Hall is one of only a few remaining major buildings in Western Australia by well-known architect, Edwin Summerhayes. (Criterion 5.1)

Rechabite Hall is the only remaining Friendly Society building of four contemporaries that existed in the Cultural Centre vicinity, including the

Temperance Hall, Ancient Order of Oddfellows and the Ancient Order of Foresters building, all of which exhibited a formal street façade and large ornate hall or assembly area. Most also incorporated retail outlets at the street frontage. The Ancient Order of Foresters Building on Francis Street was also designed by Summerhayes. (Criterion 5.1)

12.2 REPRESENTATIVENESS

Rechabite Hall is representative of the predominance of temperance and friendly societies in the 1920s and 1930s in Western Australia and the impact such societies had on the Western Australian community at the time. (Criterion 6.2)

12.3 CONDITION

Rechabite Hall is generally in sound condition. Damage following a fire in 1980 was left mostly unrepaired until works to the ground floor ceiling in 1998 to repair dangerous or visibly burnt timbers. There has been a general lack of adequate maintenance since the 1980s.

12.4 INTEGRITY

Rechabite Hall maintains a moderate level of integrity. The street level shops have been in continual use as shops, and despite several years of occupation as a store and offices, *Rechabite Hall* has reverted to its original function as a social venue, being occupied by a performing arts group.

12.5 AUTHENTICITY

Rechabite Hall maintains a moderate level of authenticity. The first floor rooms and hall have retained a high level of original detailing including hardware, pressed metal ceiling and timber joinery. Evidence of the fire is visible and there have been some severe damage to the hall finishes. There is also considerable evidence of later intrusive alterations. The northern shop and basement have had internal modifications which are superficial but do not allow a reading of the original spaces. The southern shop, however, has retained most original detailing, including its spatial layout, and has shopfittings dating from the 1950s.

13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

Attached are key sections of 'Independent Order of Rechabites Hall Conservation Plan', prepared by the Building Management Authority in November 1994.

Key sections used: 1.1 Documentary Research (pp11-32), 1.2 Physical Evidence (pp33-64), 1.3 Analysis of Documentary and Physical Evidence (p65), 2.2.3 Graded Zones of Significance (plans) (pp 81-2).

13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

For a discussion of the Documentary Evidence refer to 'Independent Order of Rechabites Hall Conservation Plan', prepared by the Building Management Authority in November 1994.

13.2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

For a discussion of the Physical Evidence refer to 'Independent Order of Rechabites Hall Conservation Plan', prepared by the Building Management Authority in November 1994.

13.3 COMPARATIVE INFORMATION

For a discussion of the Comparative Information refer to 'Independent Order of Rechabites Hall Conservation Plan', prepared by the Building Management Authority in November 1994.

13.4 REFERENCES

'Independent Order of Rechabites Hall Conservation Plan', prepared by the Building Management Authority in November 1994.

13.5 FURTHER RESEARCH
