



**HERITAGE  
COUNCIL**  
OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

## 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.

#### PRINCIPAL AUSTRALIAN HISTORIC THEME(S)

- 3.4.5 Tapping natural energy sources
- 3.5 Developing primary production
- 3.11 Assisting Indigenous people into the cash economy
- 3.12 Feeding people
- 3.16 Struggling with remoteness, hardship and failure
- 3.23 Catering for tourists
- 5.6 Working in the home
- 5.7 Surviving as Indigenous people in a white-dominated society
- 5.8 Working on the land
- 6.6 Educating Indigenous people in two cultures
- 7.6.12 Conserving Australia's heritage
- 8.3 Going on holiday
- 8.6.7 Running missions to Australia's Indigenous people
- 8.12 Living in and around Australian homes
- 8.14 Living in the country and rural settlements
- 9.3.2 Bringing up children
- 9.7.3 Remembering the dead

#### HERITAGE COUNCIL OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA THEME(S)

- 102 Aboriginal occupation
- 103 Racial contact and interaction
- 104 Land allocation and subdivision
- 106 Workers (esp Indigenous, women)
- 301 Grazing, pastoralism and dairying
- 306 Domestic activities
- 311 Hospitality industry and tourism
- 408 Institutions
- 506 Tourism
- 602 Early settlers
- 603 Local heroes and battlers

## 11.1 AESTHETIC VALUE\*

*Ellensbrook* is a good example of nineteenth century vernacular-style domestic architecture using local materials including field granite, locally quarried limestone, paperbark roofing material, hand-split timber slabs, driftwood and a timber roof beam from the rig of a small ship. (Criterion 1.1)

*Ellensbrook* retains its isolated natural setting, with the built features located in a picturesque grassed clearing adjacent to Ellen Brook, behind the coastal dune system on the west coast of the Leeuwin Naturaliste National Park, creating a cultural landscape in harmonious relation to the natural environment. (Criterion 1.3)

## 11.2. HISTORIC VALUE

*Ellensbrook* is indicative of the often harsh conditions endured by early European colonists in the southwest, demonstrated by the place's remote setting amongst natural bushland, simple architectural form including original slab timber huts, limited scale and number of built features, and family grave site holding the remains of three infant children. (Criterion 2.1)

*Ellensbrook* demonstrates the crucial role that women played in enabling the European settlement of the State, with the initial settlement of the place financially sustained by Ellen Bussell's dairying industry for many years in a period when she was also raising a family of young children (thirteen born, nine survivors), and the pastoral enterprises of the place being substantially operated by women from the 1870s into the 1920s. (Criterion 2.1)

*Ellensbrook* is located on the site of a traditional Nyungar camping ground, with nearby Meekadarribee Cave being an Indigenous sacred site (Site SO2656, Permanent entry in Register of Aboriginal Sites). Nyungar employees were essential to the survival and success of the Bussell family enterprise throughout the family's occupation of the place, beginning with assisting to construct the homestead after most likely guiding the initial exploratory venture to the site. (Criterion 2.1)

The 1874 sale of Fanny Brockman's cattle and the contents of her home, the essential materials of her successful pastoral business, in order to finance the debts of her absentee husband's failed shipping and trading endeavours, is indicative of gender relations in the nineteenth century. (Criterion 2.1)

*Ellensbrook* was the first European settlement in the Margaret River area, and was important in establishing the dairying and pastoral industries in the region. (Criterion 2.2)

Residents of *Ellensbrook* were involved in the earliest tourism development of the Margaret River area, with both Fanny Brockman and Edith Bussell proactive in the protection and marketing of local caves as a tourist attraction, and tourists

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

For consistency, all references to garden and landscape types and styles are taken from Ramsay, J. *Parks, Gardens and Special Trees: A Classification and Assessment Method for the Register of the National Estate*, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1991, with additional reference to Richards, O. *Theoretical Framework for Designed Landscapes in WA*, unpublished report, 1997.

were accommodated at *Ellensbrook* from the late 1890s until the 1910s, and again in the 1950s. (Criterion 2.2)

From 1899 to 1917, *Ellensbrook* operated as Ellensbrook Farm Home for Aboriginal Children (Site SO2598, Permanent entry in Register of Aboriginal Sites), the first and until 1911, only official government home in the State for Indigenous children, accommodating at any one time up to eleven Aboriginal children of mixed descent who, for various reasons, were not accepted by larger private missions, most of whom were from the northwest including some with Chinese and Malay parents. The place trained them to read, write and earn a living within European society, and is indicative of colonial policies towards the Indigenous population of the State, but was unusual in that Edith Bussell appears to have maintained a family-type relationship with at least some of the children who grew to adulthood in her care, as three of them were beneficiaries of her estate following her death in 1939. (Criterion 2.2)

*Ellensbrook* is an excellent example of family, community and institutional efforts to conserve an historic place, having deteriorated almost beyond repair through over twenty years of disuse before privately funded conservation efforts by owners Lennox and Frances Terry (1950-56) and John Norman (Jack) Williams (c.1967-79) and a National Trust conservation program (1984-1990) restored the place for use as a museum. (Criterion 2.2)

*Ellensbrook* illustrates the development of heritage ethos in Western Australia with the gifting of the Ellensbrook homestead, and one acre of land, to the National Trust of Australia (WA) in 1978, and the receipt of funds from the Australian Heritage Commission between 1984 and 1990 for restoration works.<sup>1</sup> (Criterion 2.2)

*Ellensbrook* was built by Alfred and Ellen Bussell in 1857 as their residence and the heart of their pastoral enterprises, and continued to be owned, and mostly occupied, by direct descendents of the Bussell family until 1956. (Criterion 2.3)

*Ellensbrook* is associated with Alfred Bussell, a member of the first generation of European colonists in the southwest who arrived in the state as a teenager in 1830 then resided at *Ellensbrook* from 1857 to 1865. Becoming a prominent southwest pastoralist in the second half of the nineteenth century, he also served as a Member of the Legislative Council from 1872 to 1874, and a Justice of the Peace. (Criterion 2.3)

*Ellensbrook* is associated with Ellen Bussell (nee Heppingstone), one of the first generation of white Western Australians, born in Augusta in 1833, who was extremely respected throughout the southwest during her lifetime as an industrious, energetic and generous woman whose hard work and good management were essential to the success of the Bussell family settlement in the area. (Criterion 2.3)

*Ellensbrook* is associated with Francis (Fanny) Brockman (nee Bussell), oldest child of Alfred and Ellen, who lived at the place as a child and managed the place on her own as a pastoral and dairying enterprise from 1871 to 1877. (Criterion 2.3)

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<sup>1</sup> Ellensbrook Conservation Plan. Prepared in collaboration between *Heritage TODAY* and the National Trust of Australia (WA), August 2004, pp. 2-3.

*Ellensbrook* is associated with Edith Bussell, second child of Alfred and Ellen, an astute businesswoman who lived at the place from c.1878 until the late 1920s operating it as a pastoral homestead, dairying enterprise, tourist accommodation and home for Aboriginal children, and who by the late 1920s had obtained freehold title to the homestead and 900 acres of surrounding land despite having been unable to inherit any land at her father's death in 1882 due to restrictions on female property ownership at that time. (Criterion 2.3)

*Ellensbrook* is associated with Lennox Terry, grandson of Alfred and Ellen, and his wife Frances, who owned the place from 1950 to 1956, during which time they initiated crucial restoration works to save the deteriorating buildings, and continued to live there until 1964. (Criterion 2.3)

Sam Isaac, who together with Grace Bussell became a hero of the colony due to his part in the rescue of survivors from the wreck of the *Georgette* in December 1876, worked for the Bussell family at *Ellensbrook* through the 1860s and 1870s, and also lived at the property in this period, before being granted 100 acres freehold land in the area as a reward for his rescue efforts. (Criterion 2.3)

Ticket-of-leave man William Chiswell constructed the original slab timber buildings at the place in 1857 together with the Bussells. (Criterion 2.3)

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

The incremental development of the place, with each phase demonstrating more sophisticated construction techniques, provides evidence of the gradually expanding capacity of the colony through the second half of the nineteenth century. (Criterion 3.2)

*Ellensbrook* is likely to contain in-situ archaeological deposits with the potential to contribute to a wider understanding of the role of women, interactions between European and Indigenous populations, and the lifeways of early settlers and Indigenous people in the southwest. (Criterion 3.1 & 3.2)

The 1950s dam, flume and waterwheel constructed to generate electricity for the homestead, although eventually replaced with a fuel generator as they did not work effectively, demonstrate an innovative attempt at local design to solve a technological problem. (Criterion 3.3)

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

*Ellensbrook* is valued by the local and wider communities as a significant reminder of the early European history of the area associated with the important Bussell family, as demonstrated by its numerous heritage listings, 1978 gifting to the National Trust, and the establishment of two volunteer community groups specifically to ensure its protection, that is, Friends of Ellensbrook and later Ellensbrook Property Committee. (Criteria 4.1 & 4.2)

## **12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE**

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

*Ellensbrook* is a rare example of a residence using paperbark for a significant part of its construction, providing the original roofing material and caulking for the timber slab sections. (Criterion 5.1)

*Ellensbrook* contains the only known extant remains of an attempt at domestic production of hydro-electricity, and the only waterwheel in the State known to have been constructed to power a private residence. (Criterion 5.1)

*Ellensbrook* is a rare example of a domestic scale Indigenous institution that operated prior to the introduction of *The Aborigines Act 1905 (WA)*, and a rare example of a government-run Indigenous institution from this period. (Criterion 5.2)

## 12.2 REPRESENTATIVENESS

*Ellensbrook* is an excellent example of an early rural settler's residence constructed in stages to a simple design using local materials. (Criterion 6.1)

*Ellensbrook* is a good representative example of the isolated lives of early settler women in the southwest, their dedication to home and family, and the often trying circumstances in which they lived. (Criterion 6.2)

*Ellensbrook* is a representative example of an early residence of the prominent Bussell family, who operated many properties in the southwest in the nineteenth century. (Criterion 6.2)

## 12.3 CONDITION

The place is in good condition following substantial restoration works in the 1980s and ongoing maintenance by the National Trust and Department of Conservation and Land Management/ Department of Environment and Conservation.

Archaeological excavations undertaken by the University of Western Australia in 1994 identified a high degree of site disturbance due to continued use of the site.<sup>2</sup> However, less disturbed deposits are likely to remain in-situ at some locations.

## 12.4 INTEGRITY

The place has high integrity. Its original function as a remote rural residence is clearly discernable.

## 12.5 AUTHENTICITY

The place has high authenticity. Remaining elements date almost entirely from the nineteenth century, including paperbark roofing beneath the c.1890s corrugated iron roofing. Replacement fabric added during conservation works, such as hand-split timber slabs to replace rotted original slabs, is in keeping with the original and has been sensitively integrated into the original structures. Rooms constructed to accommodate Aboriginal children between 1899 and 1917 have been demolished. No evidence remains of the dairy, believed to have been constructed at least in part across Ellen Brook near to the homestead, although Meekadarabee Cave, used by the Bussells for cool-storing dairy products, remains extant as a natural feature that is a reminder of the dairying period. There is no trace of early gardens, which are believed to have been simple, and no vegetable gardens remain. Remnants of the Tea Tree hedge planted to protect the vegetable gardens remained until recently, however these were destroyed by fire in November 2011 so are no longer extant.

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<sup>2</sup> *Archaeological Excavation of Ellensbrook, Western Australia 1994 Archaeology Practical Report, Part One & Two.* University of Western Australia, Crawley, 1994, p. c-1 – c-3.

### 13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

This document has been based on 'Ellensbrook Conservation Plan', prepared by Heritage TODAY for the National Trust in August 2004, with amendments and/or additions by HCWA staff and the Register Committee.

#### 13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

For a discussion of the documentary evidence, refer to 'Ellensbrook Conservation Plan', prepared by Heritage TODAY for the National Trust in August 2004.

Although Ellensbrook Farm Home for Aboriginal Children was not established formally until c.1899, Edith Bussell was taking in children up to ten years earlier. From as early as 1890 the Aborigines Protection Board was providing funding for the board and clothing of Aboriginal children in the Busselton area, and it is presumed that this funding was directed to *Ellensbrook*.<sup>3</sup>

#### 13.2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

For a discussion of the physical evidence, refer to 'Ellensbrook Conservation Plan', prepared by Heritage TODAY for the National Trust in August 2004.

The report on archaeological excavations by the University of Western Australia in 1994 suggests *Ellensbrook* has the potential to yield a rich archaeological assemblage. Material recovered during these essentially test excavations, included ceramics, glass, building materials, flaked stone and glass artefacts, and shellfish remains dating to various periods of *Ellensbrook*'s occupation. The latter items indicate the continuation of Indigenous cultural practices at the site during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries providing valuable insights into aspects of culture contact in this region. <sup>4</sup>

#### 13.3 COMPARATIVE INFORMATION

For a discussion of the comparative information, refer to 'Ellensbrook Conservation Plan', prepared by Heritage TODAY for the National Trust in August 2004.

Additional comparative information is provided as follows:

The HCWA database includes 228 residences, homesteads, cottages or pastoral workers' quarters at places established prior to 1860, of which 74 are Registered. Of these, 178 are outside the metropolitan area (48 Registered). Without accessing each individual record, it is not possible to determine which of these retain original pre-1860 residences and which are early sites at which only later residential buildings remain extant.

Mid nineteenth century homesteads, in areas where settlement was established in the 1830s (eg Albany, York, Guildford), are more substantial than *Ellensbrook* as they were not constructed in isolation as *Ellensbrook* was. *Ellensbrook* therefore has more in common with a number of 1830s and 1840s residences in these areas, constructed during the earliest phase of European settlement.

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<sup>3</sup> Hetherington, Penelope *Settlers, Servants & Slaves: Aboriginal and European Children in Nineteenth-century Western Australia*, UWA Press, Crawley WA, 2002, p.134.

<sup>4</sup> *Archaeological Excavation of Ellensbrook, Western Australia 1994 Archaeology Practical Report, Part One & Two*. University of Western Australia, Crawley, 1994.

The eclectic nature of building materials and techniques used at *Ellensbrook* makes simple comparison across the HCWA database difficult. Most early residences by necessity used local materials and vernacular design and unskilled labour in their construction. Depending on the locality, combinations of timber, earth, and stone were common. The earliest stages of construction at *Ellensbrook* use slab timber, bush poles and driftwood, caulked and roofed with paperbark, which is indicative of the place's coastal location. While the place has some similarities with wattle and daub construction, used commonly in early southwest residences (eg. P00394 *Sandilands*, Geographe, 1840s; P00019 *Patrick Taylor's Cottage*, Albany, 1833; P00344 *Leschenault Homestead*, Bunbury, c.1846; all RHP), vertical staves/slabs can be classified as a construction technique in itself, and the coastal soil at *Ellensbrook* was likely unsuitable for wattle and daub construction.

Other pre-1860 rural residences on the Register that are of similar scale are:

- P00424 *Wonnerup House and Grounds*, Wonnerup (c.1859), in which the pre-1860 sections are limestone, brick and shingle;
- P00702 *Ferndale*, Ferndale-Ballingup (1859), mud brick and corrugated iron;
- P01485 *Hall's Cottage*, Mandurah (1833), local stone;
- P01763 *Old Blythewood*, Pinjarra (1845), brick and shingle;
- P02360 *Turner Cottage*, Serpentine (1856), brick and shingle;
- P02585 *Bejoording Homestead Complex and Central Square*, Bejoording (c.1859 residence), mud brick and corrugated iron;
- P03522 *Slater Homestead*, Goomalling (c.1856), local stone, brick and corrugated iron;
- P03569 *Enderslea*, Chittering (c.1853), rendered stone and corrugated iron; and,
- P14880 *Gwambygine Farm and Pool*, York (c.1837), rammed earth, brick and corrugated iron.

*Ellensbrook* is an excellent example of an early rural settler's residence constructed in stages to a simple design using local materials.

The only other residence in the HCWA database noted to include paperbark in its construction is P03948 *Springdale Homestead*, Ravensthorpe (1904), which uses paperbark timbers for its frame and is clad with corrugated iron. This place is not on the Register or Current Assessment Program.

*Ellensbrook* is a rare example of a residence using paperbark for a significant part of its construction, providing the original roofing material and caulking for the timber slab sections.

Women and children were a crucial part of the workforce on early European settlements in the State, although they are infrequently noted as such in historical records.<sup>5</sup> Records from *Ellensbrook* are unusually comprehensive in their

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<sup>5</sup> Hetherington, Penelope *Settlers, Servants & Slaves: Aboriginal and European Children in Nineteenth-century Western Australia*, UWA Press, Crawley WA, 2002, p.24.

description of the life and role of women at the place. The incremental development of *Ellensbrook* is indicative of the trying domestic conditions for women in the early colonial period, as they raised large families in few rooms, and kitchens or even fireplaces were not included in the earliest sections of many homes. A 2006 analysis of the correspondence and diaries of early settler women in the southwest identified *Ellensbrook* as an excellent representative example of the values and way of life of these women.<sup>6</sup> The early residences of other women in the study (Georgiana Molloy, Francis Bussell Snr, Anne Turner) are no longer extant. They are represented in the HCWA database as sites (P04973 Molloy's House, Augusta; P03462 Turner's Cellar & Fig Tree; P04725 The Adelphi site, Karridale (Bussell residence); P04937 Bussell home site, Augusta), none of which are recommended for consideration for the Register. P05337 *Cattle Chosen*, Busselton, where Francis Bussell Snr moved after the failure of settlement at Augusta, has been entered on the State Register.

- P05337 *Cattle Chosen*, Busselton, which includes an 1840 residence constructed on the 1834 property for John and Charlotte Bussell. John Bussell was an older brother of Alfred Bussell. The place continues to be owned by direct descendants of John and Charlotte Bussell to the present (2009).

*Ellensbrook* is a good representative example of the isolated lives of early settler women in the southwest, their dedication to home and family, and the often trying circumstances in which they lived.

There is one other extant residence in the HCWA database associated with the Bussell family:

- P00394 *Sandilands*, Busselton, a wattle and daub residence constructed as a wayside inn in 1840 by Charles Bussell, a younger brother of Alfred Bussell.

P00114 *Walcliffe House*, Prevelly, a larger stone, shingle and corrugated iron residence was also associated with the Bussell family being constructed for Alfred and Ellen Bussell. They moved here from *Ellensbrook* in 1865 on its completion, and the place continued to be the main residence of their family until it was sold in the 1890s. The State Registered *Walcliffe House* was destroyed by fire in November.

P02955 Broadwater Homestead, Busselton, is also sometimes attributed as an early residence of Alfred and Ellen Bussell, but although they did live in the Busselton area at a property named 'Broadwater' prior to their move to *Ellensbrook*, the extant building now known as 'Broadwater' most likely dates from the late 1870s, and has been substantially altered. As such, the place has been deemed Below Threshold for entry into the Register.

*Ellensbrook* is a representative example of an early residence of the prominent Bussell family.

Anna Haebich's study *Broken Circles: Fragmenting Indigenous Families, 1800-2000* notes that between 1842 and the 1970s, there were some seventy-one

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<sup>6</sup> O'Connor, Penny, 'Women's values and valuing women: The challenge for heritage assessments', in *Contested Terrains – Proceedings of the 23<sup>rd</sup> Annual Conference of the Society of Architectural Historians of Australia and New Zealand, 29 Sep – 2 Oct 2006*.



institutions, settlements and missions providing care at various times for Aboriginal children and youth in Western Australia, of which only eight operated in the nineteenth century, including *Ellensbrook*. Most of these were larger institutions than *Ellensbrook*. The most comparable of them was P00017 *Camfield House*, Albany, operating as 'Annesfield' from 1852 to 1871 in the home of Anne and Henry Camfield, who had no children of their own. In 1904, before *The Aborigines Act 1905 (WA)* caused an escalation in the number of institutions for Indigenous children by authorising the forced removal of 'half-caste' children from their Aboriginal families, *Ellensbrook* was one of only four institutions in the State for Indigenous children, the others being Beagle Bay, Sunday Island and Swanleigh.<sup>7</sup> P03630 *Beagle Bay Mission Church* and P14470 *Swanleigh Precinct* are both on the Register.

*Ellensbrook* is listed by Haebich as the first government institution for Indigenous children, but after Annesfield had been privately established government funding was made available to support the endeavour<sup>8</sup>, and it is possible that the church-operated institutions of the nineteenth century may also have received some financial support from the government. The next government-run institutions noted by Haebich were Moola Bulla, East Kimberley (1911-54), *Carrolup Native Settlement*, Katanning (1915-22, 1938-52, RHP, P10592) and *Mogumber Farm, Moore River* (1918-51, RHP, P3618).<sup>9</sup>

*Ellensbrook* was the first official government home in the State for Indigenous children, being established formally from 1899, and the only government home for Indigenous children until 1911. It is a rare example of a domestic scale Indigenous institution that operated prior to the introduction of *The Aborigines Act 1905 (WA)*.

The HCWA database notes only two other places that include an extant waterwheel (both Registered):

- P00106 *Cape Leeuwin Waterwheel*, Augusta, was constructed in 1895 and used until 1925 to pump fresh water to the nearby lighthouse. It is larger than the waterwheel at *Ellensbrook*.
- P00429 *Millbrook Farm*, Yallingup, includes a waterwheel, mill race and dam wall constructed in 1922 to power a saw mill, which was used until 1938 and is believed to be the only waterwheel constructed in the State to power a saw mill.

Three examples of hydro-electricity production are noted in the database:

- P06344 *Wellington Dam*, Collie (1933, 1945, 1960), including a 1956 2KW Hydro-electric plant (RHP);
- P11402 Hydro-electric Scheme Ruins, Pemberton (1930s), of which only walls and sections of piping remain; and,

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<sup>7</sup> Haebich, Anna, *Broken Circles: Fragmenting Indigenous Families, 1800-2000*, FACP, Fremantle, 2000, p.229.

<sup>8</sup> Register documentation for P00017 *Camfield House*.

<sup>9</sup> Haebich, Anna, *Broken Circles: Fragmenting Indigenous Families, 1800-2000*, FACP, Fremantle, 2000, p.229.

- P9589 *Main Pump Station, Kununurra* (1982), constructed as part of the Ord River irrigation scheme, where the primary purpose of the place was pumping water for irrigation rather than production of electricity (RHP).

Wellington Dam and the Ord River scheme are believed to have been the only examples of public production of hydro-electricity in the State.<sup>10</sup>

*Ellensbrook* contains the only known extant remains of an attempt at domestic production of hydro-electricity, and the only waterwheel in the State known to have been constructed to power a private residence.

#### 13.4 KEY REFERENCES

'Ellensbrook Conservation Plan', prepared by Heritage TODAY for the National Trust in August 2004.

*Note: the above document incorporates information from the earlier reports commissioned by the National Trust, including:*

- '*Conservation Study: Ellensbrook Margaret River Western Australia*', Oline Richards, 1992;
- '*A Nyungar Interpretation of Ellensbrook and Wonnerup Homesteads*', Len Collard, 1994;
- '*Ellensbrook Conservation Plan*', Kevin Palassis, 1992;
- '*Archaeological Excavation of Ellensbrook, Western Australia*', University of Western Australian, 1994;
- '*Ellensbrook, An Interpretative Strategy*', Michael Tooby, no date; and
- '*Ellensbrook Interpretative Plan*', Sarah Murphy, 2000.

O' Connor, Penny, 'Women's values and valuing women: The challenge for heritage assessments', in *Contested Terrains – Proceedings of the 23<sup>rd</sup> Annual Conference of the Society of Architectural Historians of Australia and New Zealand, 29 Sep – 2 Oct 2006*.

#### 13.5 FURTHER RESEARCH

Further research regarding the influence of Ellen Bussell on the local Nyungar people, particularly in relation to official marriages and recorded births, should be undertaken.

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<sup>10</sup> HCWA Register documentation for P06344 *Wellington Dam*.