



REGISTER OF HERITAGE PLACES- ASSESSMENT DOCUMENTATION

11. ASSESSMENT OF CULTURAL HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

The criteria adopted by the Heritage Council in September, 1991 have been used to determine the cultural heritage significance of the place.

11.1 AESTHETIC VALUE

Collie Post Office (fmr) displays the stylistic traits of Beasley and the design skills of his successor, Hardwick. (Criterion 1.1)

Despite the shift of emphasis of activities within the town, the post office still makes an important contribution to the Throssell streetscape. (Criterion 1.3)

11.2. HISTORIC VALUE

The initial postal building (1908) is associated with the development of the Collie coal fields and the establishment of the town. The extension (1925), is associated with the introduction of the telephone exchange in Collie. Taken as a whole, the post office has a long association with the history of the town. (Criterion 2.2)

11.3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE

11.4. SOCIAL VALUE

Like most country post offices, *Collie Post Office (fmr)* has established a strong tradition as a focal point in community life. The building has considerable social significance for the local community. (Criterion 4.2)

12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE

12.1. RARITY

The original post office and quarters was representative of post offices of the 1900s, but the later sympathetic extension gives the building some rarity. (Criterion 5.1)

12.2 REPRESENTATIVENESS

12.3 CONDITION

Collie Post Office (fmr) is in sound condition.

12.4 INTEGRITY

Although no longer used as a post office or for postal services, the current usage of the place as a restaurant permits access to the building by the public and, as such, still provides a venue for social intercourse. *Collie Post Office (fmr)* retains a moderate degree of integrity.

12.5 AUTHENTICITY

There have been alterations and remodelling to the internal fabric of *Collie Post Office (fmr)* which reflect the change in functional requirements. Aside from the removal of some of the post boxes, the external fabric of the place is intact and the place retains a moderate degree of authenticity. Alterations and remodelling to the interior in conversion of the place from postal facility to restaurant has diminished the authenticity of the interior but features such as the postal counter could be reinstated if required.

13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

Collie Post Office (fmr) is a single-storey brick and iron building constructed, in 1908, and replaced earlier postal facilities in Collie that were no longer adequate to cope with an increasing amount of postal business.

Coal was discovered on the banks of the Collie River in the 1890s, and a settlement developed adjacent to the mining area. The town of Coalville was officially declared in 1897, but was formally renamed Collie in 1899. The State Government was anxious to develop a viable coal industry and gave private companies in Collie every encouragement, including building a railway link to Brunswick Junction (1898), and committing the Government to an extensive purchasing program.

As with all country towns, the postal service was an important link to the commercial and administrative centre at Perth, and families elsewhere. A postal receiving office was introduced at Collie Coal Field on 26 June 1897, and then a post and telegraph office was established on 1 August 1897. The first portion of the current post office was built in 1908. Designed by the government architect, Hillson Beasley, the construction contract for the post office and adjoining staff quarters was let on 4 January 1908, to Perth building contractors Franklin and Finlay, for £668.

The introduction of telephone services in Collie resulted in the postal building being extensively modified. A contract was let on 5 March 1925, to S. & J. Blakemore for £2,166; the staff quarters was 'removed and rebuilt' at the back of the site and a telephone exchange built in its place. Although the postal building was expanded and internally modified, W. B. Hardwick, the government's principal architect, maintained the style, materials and details of the original building. (Hardwick had joined the WA Public Works Department as a draftsman in 1894, and thus he had first hand experience of the style and details of Temple-Poole, Grainger

and Beasley, before being appointed principal government architect in 1916.) The enlarged building was no longer picturesquely asymmetric, but instead symmetrically well proportioned.

At the time of construction, the post office site was at the intersection of Collie's principal streets, but subsequent development of the town shifted the 'centre' of the town further west. Despite this gradual decline of physical centrality, the post office has maintained its social importance within the town.

Since 1926, the building has been subject to a number of minor alterations. At some stage, the steps and arched porch to the telephone exchange, on the right hand of the Throssell Street elevation, was bricked up and glazed. However, the brickwork and window frame were designed to match the existing.

Collie Post Office (fmr) was sold by Australia Post in 1993, when a decision was made to relocate its postal operations to the corner of Steere and Johnston Streets, the commercial centre of Collie. Subsequent re-development of the place for use as a restaurant has been carried out with consultation from the Heritage Council of W.A.

13.2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

The initial portion of *Collie Post Office (fmr)* (1908) was designed and built during the term of Hillson Beasley, government architect from 1905 -1916, although the design follows in the tradition of small suburban post offices established by his predecessor, George Temple-Poole. The Brisbane and Aberdeen Streets post offices (1897), in Perth, are similar in scale and construction materials and feature a small arched entry porch and arched windows. However, *Collie Post Office (fmr)* also exhibits the hallmark of Beasley's small public buildings: the strong visual contrast between red face brickwork and stucco banding. The corrugated iron roof is typical of many small public buildings, built at a time when terracotta tiles were relatively scarce, and expensive.

W. B. Hardwick designed the 1925 extension of the building to be in sympathy with the original. The result is a coherent, seamless design, making it difficult for a person unaware of the history of the building to recognise the additional fabric. Only the twin gablets indicate the additional roof structure.

The later infill of the telephone exchange entry porch has been handled in a similarly sympathetic manner. Internally there have been later alterations, including the introduction of air conditioning.

The alterations involved in the re-development of *Collie Post Office (fmr)* for use as a restaurant include: removal of front counter and associated shelving and removal of all but two rows of existing post office boxes; remodelling of kitchen and storage areas to required standards; provide toilet facilities as required; new, and remodelling of, openings to interior and exterior fabric to accommodate the change in function and general upgrade of services. These alterations primarily involve the interior, the external fabric remaining intact.

13.3 REFERENCES

Pope, B. 'Post Offices owned by Australia Post, in Western Australia', (for the National Trust of Australia (WA), 1992).

National Trust Assessment Exposition.