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)

- 2.1 Living as Australia's earliest inhabitants
- 3.10.1 Assisting Indigenous people into the cash economy
- 3.26 Providing health services
- 4.4 Living with slums, outcasts and homelessness
- 4.5 Making settlements to serve rural Australia
- 5.7 Surviving as Indigenous people in a white-dominated society
- 6.6 Educating Indigenous people in two cultures
- 7.2.3 Working to promote civil liberties
- 7.6.6 Providing services and welfare
- 7.8 Establishing regional and local identity
- 8.5 Forming associations
- 8.12 Living in and around Australian homes
- 8.14 Living in the country and rural settlements
- 9.2.1 Being children

HERITAGE COUNCIL OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA THEME(S)

- 103 Racial contact and interaction
- 306 Intellectual activities, arts and crafts
- 402 Education and science
- 404 Community Services and Utilities
- 406 Religion
- 407 Cultural activities
- 601 Aboriginal people

11. 1 AESTHETIC VALUE*

Gnowangerup Noongar Centre (fmr) is a good example of a simple Federation Bungalow style four-room cottage, featuring symmetrical front elevation, French

* 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Canberra, 1991, with additional reference to Richards, O. *Theoretical Framework for Designed Landscapes in WA*, unpublished report, 1997.

doors from the front rooms onto the verandah, high-pitched hipped roof, turned verandah posts and a curved verandah valance. (Criterion 1.1)

Gnowangerup Noongar Centre (fmr) contributes to an historic precinct of civic buildings at the centre of Gnowangerup around the two main cross-streets, Yougenup Road and Aylmore Street. (Criterion 1.3)

11. 2. HISTORIC VALUE

Gnowangerup Noongar Centre (fmr) was constructed c.1913 as a residence for Gnowangerup's first Baptist minister, in an era when railway links to the area were expanding and the town was becoming an established rural settlement with increasing social and community services. (Criterion 2.1)

Gnowangerup Noongar Centre (fmr) was established in 1972 as a Noongar Centre to provide social services and community support to the local Aboriginal population, who had not previously been permitted a meeting place within the town boundaries, in an era when 30% of Gnowangerup's population was listed as Aboriginal, most of whom had seasonal or no employment, and whose morale was reported to be 'at an all-time low'. (Criterion 2.1)

Gnowangerup Noongar Centre (fmr) was an influential initiative in the early 1970s as a centre to provide social services for Aboriginal people, employing Aboriginal staff, with a view to ultimately handing the project entirely to Aboriginal management, and demonstrates Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal co-operation outside of a government agency. (Criterion 2.2)

Gnowangerup Noongar Centre (fmr) was the first rural centre of its type established by the New Era Aboriginal Fellowship and a model for later NEAF centres and other Aboriginal services developed from the mid-1970s. (Criterion 2.2)

Gnowangerup Noongar Centre (fmr) was purchased for use as a Noongar Centre in 1972 by the New Era Aboriginal Fellowship, a prominent movement for Aboriginal equality and empowerment founded in 1969 in the wake of the 1967 referendum acknowledging full citizenship for indigenous Australians. Many active members of the Fellowship who were involved in the Gnowangerup project became regionally and/or nationally recognised for their social contributions, including Dr Fiona Stanley, Dr Roger Dawkins, Robert French, Kim Beazley Jnr, Fred Chaney Jnr, Ken Colbung, Peter Farmer, Bernie and Winnie McHenry, Richard Wilkes and Aden Eades. [1] (Criteria 2.2 & 2.3)

Gnowangerup Noongar Centre (fmr) was constructed in c.1913 as a residence for Edward James Clugston, a prominent figure in local social affairs and public bodies from his arrival in the town in c.1907 until his departure in 1919. He served as the first minister of the Gnowangerup Baptist Church from 1913 to 1919. (Criterion 2.3)

Gnowangerup Noongar Centre (fmr) is believed to have been constructed by C.J. (Charles) Parker & Son, who made the bricks for the place at the local brickworks they operated from c.1910 and were substantially responsible for the town's few brick buildings from this period. (Criterion 2.3)

---

[1] A new era / New Era Aboriginal Fellowship**.** Imprint Perth [W.A.] :The Fellowship, 1970-1976.

Gnowangerup Noongar Centre (fmr) was the family residence of the Hendry family, local store keepers, from c.1934 to 1972. (Criterion 2.3)

11. 3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE

---

11. 4. SOCIAL VALUE

Gnowangerup Noongar Centre (fmr) is highly valued by the Noongar community of Gnowangerup as a place in ownership by Aboriginal people that was the venue for community meetings and socials, provision of medical and legal services, homework support, preparation of lunches for school children, and the headquarters of the Gnowangerup Noongar Corporation, until 1989 when a new building was constructed adjacent and services relocated. (Criterion 4.1)

Gnowangerup Noongar Centre (fmr) contributes to the Gnowangerup community's sense of place as a former community centre and as one of a few surviving older residences in the town, as demonstrated by community efforts to save the place from demolition when it was condemned in 1994, and more recent restoration works and efforts to reopen the place as a heritage museum and Noongar 'keeping place'. (Criterion 4.2)

12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE

12. 1. RARITY

Gnowangerup Noongar Centre (fmr) is rare as a brick residence in Gnowangerup dating from before World War Two, when timber was cheaper and more commonly used for residential building in the area. (Criterion 5.1)

Gnowangerup Noongar Centre (fmr) is rare in Western Australia as a place established as an innovative social and community support project for the local Aboriginal population in the early 1970s, particularly with its multiple emphasis on creating social space as well as providing services, its involvement of Aboriginal staff, and its goal of eventual transfer to complete Aboriginal management. (Criterion 5.2)

12. 2 REPRESENTATIVENESS

Gnowangerup Noongar Centre (fmr) is a good representative example of a simple Federation Bungalow style four-room cottage, which was extremely popular as a housing design in both rural and emerging suburban areas in the Federation period. (Criterion 6.1)

Gnowangerup Noongar Centre (fmr) is a good representative example of a residence adapted for use as a community facility. (Criterion 6.1)

12. 3 CONDITION

The place is in very good condition. Conservation works in 2006-2009 have predominantly addressed all major issues identified in the Conservation Plan requiring attention.

12. 4 INTEGRITY

Gnowangerup Noongar Centre (fmr) has moderate to high integrity. Its original function as a residence is discernible, although it has not been used for this purpose since 1972.

12. 5 AUTHENTICITY

Gnowangerup Noongar Centre (fmr) has high authenticity. Some detail has been lost and minor alterations made, but overall the early layout and detailing remains.

The original bull-nose verandah was removed c.1979-81 and a skillion replacement installed. The current bull-nose verandah is of recent construction to reinstate a form more sensitive to the original design of the place.

13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

This document has been based on 'Old Noongar Centre Gnowangerup Conservation Plan', prepared for Gnowangerup Aboriginal Corporation by David Heaver and Associates with Robin Chinnery Historian in October 2005, with amendments and/or additions by State Heritage Office staff and the Register Committee.

13. 1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

For a discussion of the documentary evidence, refer to Old Noongar Centre Gnowangerup Conservation Plan', prepared for Gnowangerup Aboriginal Corporation by David Heaver and Associates with Robin Chinnery Historian in October 2005.

In 2006, the Heritage Council was notified of proposed conservation works in accordance with recommendations of the conservation plan. It was planned to restore the place for use as a Heritage Cultural Centre, keeping place or local museum.

In May 2009, the works have predominantly been completed, addressing all major issues identified for attention in the Conservation Plan. Lotterywest funding is currently being sought for works to finalise the refurbishment, including stabilisation of soil conditions around the building, various environmental aspects such as power and water, and fitout to equip the building as a Heritage Cultural Centre.

In May 2009, the place has yet to re-open with its new function.

13. 2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

For a discussion of the physical evidence, refer to Old Noongar Centre Gnowangerup Conservation Plan', prepared for Gnowangerup Aboriginal Corporation by David Heaver and Associates with Robin Chinnery Historian in October 2005.

Works of 2006-2009 included reinstating a bullnose verandah to the front elevation, re-roofing, creation of a staff tearoom in the extreme rear section of skillion additions, creation of a high opening from the central corridor to the northeast room of the original house and a new door from the northeast corner of the rear skillion section. Skylights have also been introduced in the lobby and the rear skillion addition.

The place is now in very good condition.

13. 3 COMPARATIVE INFORMATION

For a discussion of the comparative information, refer to Old Noongar Centre Gnowangerup Conservation Plan', prepared for Gnowangerup Aboriginal Corporation by David Heaver and Associates with Robin Chinnery Historian in October 2005.

The HCWA database notes only two other residences associated with the Baptist Church: P11912 McCreery's Hardware Store & House (fmr), Dalwallinu, a c.1920 brick and iron residence originally used as the Dalwallinu Baptist church and manse, and P02646 Baptist Manse, Wagin, for which no details are available. As

Baptist churches in the pre-World War One period generally did not provide housing for their ministers, with many ministers recorded as living camped in church grounds, Baptist residences from this period are uncommon.

Gnowangerup Noongar Centre (fmr) was built on private land owned by the Baptist minister, close to the Baptist church, and as such was not strictly constructed to provide religious housing. It does not appear to have continued in use as a Baptist residence after the initial minister, Edward James Clugston, left Gnowangerup in 1919.

Of the 451 places in the HCWA database with a current use noted as 'other community hall/ centre', twenty were originally constructed as single storey residences. Two are Registered:

- P01681 *Katherine Susannah Pritchard's House*, Greenmount, in use as an artist-in-residence facility, in which the original residence section is a c.1896 four-room weatherboard cottage.
- P02468 *Welbourne House,* Guildford, a c.1840s handmade-brick cottage registered as part of the adjacent P02466 *Fairholme Group* and used to provide services for intellectually disabled adults.

Two are noted as Federation Bungalow in style:

- P01434 Sloan's Cottage, Kwinana, a 1911 limestone and iron four-room cottage, used for a community museum and meeting place.
- P10564 Dempster's Home Caridr, Gooseberry Hill, a large c.1918 rendered masonry and tile residence in landscaped gardens.

Eleven were constructed in the Federation period (1890-1915).

Gnowangerup Noongar Centre (fmr) is a good representative example of a residence adapted for use as a community facility.

The HCWA database notes one other place as having been constructed by C.J. Parker:

- P01098 Residence, Gnowangerup (later used as Gnowangerup Hospital), brick and iron, 1918.

Similar organisations to the New Era Aboriginal Fellowship (NEAF)

The New Era Aboriginal Fellowship (NEAF) was founded in 1969 as a means to further the recognition of Aboriginal people as equals with their fellow Australians and to assist them in attaining equality in the areas of justice, housing, education, employment, and health as well as enabling participation in all levels of administration and government. The NEAF sought to improve living standards for Aboriginal people at a local level by improving conditions on reserves and assisting Aboriginal people over a wider area with legal, medical and employment issues. There do not seem to be any similar organisations operating in Western Australia around this time.

In 1956, the Aboriginal Fellowship (AAF) was founded in New South Wales as a partnership between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. The primary role of the AAF was to campaign for social and legislative reforms and to improve the

quality of Aboriginal education. There were also campaigns to oppose racial discrimination in schools, pools and cinemas in country towns in New South Wales. Membership of the AAF was diverse and included both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people, including artists, writers, trade unions, and members of the Christian Church and the Jewish Community. While the AAF's objectives were also tied to attaining equality for Aboriginal people, its campaigns were aimed to instigate change at a broader state level [2]

13. 4 KEY REFERENCES

Old Noongar Centre Gnowangerup Conservation Plan', prepared for Gnowangerup Aboriginal Corporation by David Heaver and Associates with Robin Chinnery Historian in October 2005.

13. 5 FURTHER RESEARCH

---

[2] The Time was ripe : a history of the Aboriginal-Australian Fellowship (1956-69) / edited by Faith Bandler and Len Fox