



**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)

- 2.4.3 Migrating to escape oppression
- 2.4.5 Changing the face of rural and urban Australian through migration
- 3.6 Recruiting labour
- 3.8.7 Building and maintaining roads
- 4.2 Supplying urban services (power, transport, fire protection, roads, water, light & sewerage)
- 4.4 Living with slums, outcasts and homelessness
- 4.6 Remembering significant phases in the development of settlements, towns and cities
- 5.2 Organising workers and work places
- 7.7 Defending Australia

HERITAGE COUNCIL OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA THEME(S)

- 101 Immigration, emigration and refugees
- 106 Workers (including Aboriginal, convict)
- 107 Settlements
- 108 Government Policy
- 203 Road transport
- 501 World wars and other wars
- 502 Refugees
- 507 Water, power, major transport routes

11.1 AESTHETIC VALUE*

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Canberra, 1991, with additional reference to Richards, O. *Theoretical Framework for Designed Landscapes in WA*, unpublished report, 1997.

Main Roads Migrant Camp (fmr), Narrogin includes three good examples of Nissen Huts, basic semi-cylindrical corrugated iron prefabricated, transportable buildings. (Criterion 1.2)

Main Roads Migrant Camp (fmr), Narrogin is an important demonstration of the type and style of prefabricated, temporary housing structures provided in the post-World War II period by the State and Commonwealth Government. (Criterion 1.2)

11. 2. HISTORIC VALUE

Main Roads Migrant Camp (fmr), Narrogin demonstrates the global efforts of the United Nations (UN) and the International Refugee Organisation (IRO) to resettle displaced persons, refugees and former military personnel forces throughout Europe and other parts of the world following World War II. (Criterion 2.1)

Main Roads Migrant Camp (fmr), Narrogin is representative of the Australian Government's policy, as a consequence of World War II, to increase its population in order to reduce the country's vulnerability against attack and increase its defences. (Criterion 2.1 & 2.2)

Main Roads Migrant Camp (fmr), Narrogin is representative of the Australian Government's efforts, in the immediate post-World War II period, to rebuild and improve its economy through an increased population and focus upon production and State-built infrastructure. (Criterion 2.1 & 2.2)

Main Roads Migrant Camp (fmr), Narrogin is representative of the housing and employment of the many displaced and refugee persons who came to Western Australia following World War II. As an employment camp, *Main Roads Migrant Camp (fmr), Narrogin* is representative of the Australian Government's agreement with the Preparatory Commission of the International Refugee Organisation (PCIRO) to accept, resettle and provide employment for refugees and displaced persons in Western Australia. (Criterion 2.1 & 2.2)

The development and growth of the Main Roads Department at *Main Roads Migrant Camp (fmr), Narrogin* during the twentieth century is representative of the increased use and ownership of motor vehicles across Western Australia during that time and particularly the need to construct new, safe roads throughout the region from the 1950s. (Criterion 2.1 & 2.2)

11. 3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE

Main Roads Migrant Camp (fmr), Narrogin has the potential, through archaeological investigation, to provide information about the structure and operation of the former migrant camp in relation to the operation of the Main Roads Department, both locally in Narrogin and more widely in Western Australia. (Criterion 3.2)

Main Roads Migrant Camp (fmr), Narrogin has the potential, through archaeological investigation, to reveal information about the life and activities of the migrant workers housed at the temporary migrant camp, and potentially how these migrants transitioned from being displaced people or refugees into the Narrogin and wider Western Australian community. (Criterion 3.2)

11. 4. SOCIAL VALUE

Main Roads Migrant Camp (fmr), Narrogin is valued by the people and families who resided at the place when it operated as a camp for migrant workers. (Criterion 4.1)

Main Roads Migrant Camp (fmr), Narrogin is highly valued by the community of Narrogin, as representative of the arrival of many migrant people and families to the district in the 1940s/50s. These families had a significant impact on the culture and demography of the town, and generations of these families still remain residents of the district today. (Criterion 4.1)

12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE

12.1. RARITY

Main Roads Migrant Camp (fmr), Narrogin is rare for containing the only known extant Nissen Huts in Western Australia that were used to house migrants during the post-World War II period. (Criterion 5.1)

Main Roads Migrant Camp (fmr), Narrogin is rare as a place associated with the housing and employing of migrant workers in the immediate post-World War II period, which has been highlighted by the local government as being of cultural heritage significance. While there may be other similar places (site of, or extant), very few have been recognised by the local government, thereby indicating the importance of *Main Roads Migrant Camp (fmr), Narrogin*. (Criterion 5.2)

12.2 REPRESENTATIVENESS

Main Roads Migrant Camp (fmr), Narrogin is representative of the type and design of temporary housing provided to migrants and migrant workers in the immediate post-World War II period upon their arrival in Western Australia. (Criterion 6.2)

12.3 CONDITION

Main Roads Migrant Camp (fmr), Narrogin ranges in condition from good to poor.

Hut 1 is in good condition, and is in the best condition of the three huts. It has been used as a social club in the recent past, which has ensured its condition and maintenance.

Hut 2 is in good condition, although some of the internal flooring, which is made up of timber planks, is uneven and damaged.

Hut 3 is in fair to poor condition. While the hut is generally in fair condition, some elements are in poor condition, such as: the uneven bitumen flooring, the rear wall, and termite damaged timber, and rusted iron panels.

12.4 INTEGRITY

Main Roads Migrant Camp (fmr), Narrogin continues to be used by Main Roads Western Australia, and therefore has high degree of integrity.

The three Nissen Huts have a fair degree of integrity. Although, the huts are no longer used for housing and are now used for storage purposes, few modifications have taken place and their original function could be understood through interpretation.

Some trees and mature vegetation exist in close proximity to the three huts, providing understanding of the original environs of the former camp.

12.5 AUTHENTICITY

Main Roads Migrant Camp (fmr), Narrogin ranges in authenticity from high to medium.

Hut 1 and Hut 2 have a high degree of authenticity. Most of the fabric appears to be in original state and there have been few modifications.

Hut 3 has a moderate degree of authenticity. While the hut is generally in original condition, a number of the corrugated iron panels have been replaced (both with other corrugated iron panels and ad hoc with timber).

13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

The documentation for this place is based on the heritage assessment completed by the State Heritage Office in April 2014, with amendments and/or additions by the State Heritage Office and the Register Committee.

13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

Main Roads Migrant Camp (fmr), Narrogin, comprises three prefabricated, transportable corrugated iron Nissen Huts (c. 1948/49) set in an operational Main Roads industrial and manufacturing facility.

Following the end of World War II, Australia went through a phase of reconstruction and growth aimed in particular at rebuilding and improving its economy.¹ In Western Australia, post-war economic development was supported by strong population growth, which between 1947 and 1954 grew by 27.32% (an increase of 137,291 people).² This population growth was not simply the result of natural increase (birth rate minus death rate), but was supplemented by a significant increase in immigration.

The increase in immigration was a conscious decision taken by the Australian Government, which, as a consequence of the World War and particularly the Japanese advancement in 1942, felt that a larger population would reduce the country's vulnerability against attack and increase its defences.³ A significant shift in immigration policy was made, and Australia relaxed its 'White Australia Policy' (the common term for the *Immigration Restriction Act 1901*), which looked to limit non-white immigration to Australia by preferencing Europeans who were able to communicate in English satisfactorily. This new, less exclusive policy, adopted in 1947, was aimed particularly at Europeans who, as a consequence of the war, had been displaced (could not or would not return to their homeland), were refugees (fleeing from their homeland for political reasons) or were formerly members of the armed forces.⁴

In 1946, immediately following the conclusion of World War II, the United Nations established the International Refugee Organisation (IRO) to assist in the resettlement of displaced persons, refugees and former military personnel forces throughout Europe and other parts of the world. In July 1947, the Australian

¹ Jackson, John, 'Changing Patterns of Post-War Immigration to Western Australia', in Johnston, Ruth (ed), *Immigrants in Western Australia* (University of Western Australia Press, Nedlands: 1979), p. 18.

² Government of Western Australia, Department of Treasury and Finance, 'An Economic History of Western Australia Since Colonial Settlement: 175th Anniversary of Colonial Settlement 1829-2004', (Research Paper: 2004), p.20., Ghosh, R. N, 'Economic Development and Population Growth in Western Australia since 1945), in Stannage, C. T (ed), *A New History of Western Australia* (University of Western Australia Press, Nedlands: 1981), p.287.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Jackson, 'Changing Patterns of Post-War Immigration to Western Australia', in Johnston, *Immigrants in Western Australia* (1979), p. 18., Appleyard R. T., 'Displaced Persons in Western Australia: their industrial location and geographical distribution, 1948-1954', in *University Studied in History*, Vol II, No. 3 (September 1955), p.62.

Government entered into an agreement with the Preparatory Commission of the IRO (PCIRO) to accept the immigration of refugees and displaced persons.⁵

One of the stipulations of this agreement, which allowed the Government to maximise the economic benefit of these immigrants, was that the Commonwealth would provide regular employment for all persons arriving as part of this scheme for at least one year.⁶ This allowed the Commonwealth and State Governments to allocate the immigrants into jobs which would help strengthen the economy and increase production. In Western Australia, labour shortages particularly affected industries located in country areas, such as the railways, timber mills, country hospitals and public works projects, and so many migrants were placed in these sectors.⁷

Once PCIRO migrants started arriving in Western Australia from 13th February 1948, it was the responsibility of the Department of Labour and National Service to place them in employment.⁸ By September 1948, the Department had allocated 200 immigrant workers to Western Australia's Main Roads Department for the construction of new roads.⁹ By the end of the year, the distribution of these workers around the state had begun, with a number being sent to the Main Roads depot in Narrogin.¹⁰

During the late 1940s and early 1950s, hundreds of immigrants came to the town of Narrogin to complete their PCIRO work placement. In addition to the Main Roads Department, the Government Railways and Municipal Council in Narrogin also utilised immigrant workers.¹¹ The vast majority of these migrants lived in a 'tent city' which sprung up at the southern end of the town. The Main Roads workers, Railway workers and Council workers each resided in separate camps. The Main Roads camp, known as *Main Roads Migrant Camp (fmr), Narrogin*, was the southern-most camp, located between the Great Southern Highway, Mokine Road and Gibson Street.¹² In 2014, *Main Roads Migrant Camp (fmr), Narrogin* is used by Main Roads Western Australia as the Wheatbelt South Region Headquarters.

As the Main Roads camp was planned only for temporary occupation (while the migrants completed their allocated period of employment) the facilities erected at

5 Appleyard, 'Displaced Persons in Western Australia', in *University Studied in History*, Vol II, No. 3 (September 1955), p.63., Australian Government, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, '283 Agreement with the International Refugee Organisation, 21 July 1947', sourced from <http://www.info.dfat.gov.au/info/historical/HistDocs.nsf/d30d79e4ab5621f9ca256c8600163c0d/34de11e5815c539dca256b7e00810cb6?OpenDocument>. Accessed on 11 December 2013.

6 Australian Government, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, '283 Agreement with the International Refugee Organisation, 21 July 1947', sourced from <http://www.info.dfat.gov.au/info/historical/HistDocs.nsf/d30d79e4ab5621f9ca256c8600163c0d/34de11e5815c539dca256b7e00810cb6?OpenDocument>. Accessed on 11 December 2013.

7 Appleyard 'Displaced Persons in Western Australia', in *University Studied in History*, Vol II, No. 3 (September 1955), p.68.

8 Ibid.

9 SRO Records, Consignment No. 541, Item No. 1957/5355, Commonwealth of Australia Department of Labour and National Service Deputy Director, 'Allocation of displaced persons due to arrive in Western Australia', and Undersecretary for Lands and Immigration, 'Notes of meeting in regards to Displaced Persons held on Wednesday 29th September 1948', and Edmonds, Leigh, *The Vital Link: A History of Main Roads Western Australia 1926-1996* (University of Western Australia Press, Nedlands: 1997), p. 112.

10 White, Maurie, *Memorial II: Narrogin and World War II* (Narrogin, WA: 1993), p. 120.

11 Ibid., pp. 119, 120.

12 Ibid., p. 120.

the camp were intended only to be temporary. By late-1949 the camp consisted of tents, mostly without floorboards, an open air fire used for cooking, a small open water tank for washing, and a single latrine.¹³ It was recognised that better facilities were required, particularly as women resided at the camp, and plans were made for the erection of three timber and corrugated iron huts (despite the fact that corrugated iron was in short supply); one for recreation, one for cooking and for use as a bathroom.¹⁴

In an already existing atmosphere of building material and labour shortages, Main Roads used prefabricated, transportable structures for the camp's buildings. Three Nissen Huts, basic semi-cylindrical corrugated iron buildings, remain located at *Main Roads Migrant Camp (fmr)*, Narrogin in 2014, which are believed to date from this period of immigrant occupation. It is not known if they were constructed in c. 1949 as camp facilities or at another time for residential purposes.

Nissen Huts were used en-masse throughout Australia during the post-World War II period for immigrant housing. The bending of corrugated iron sheets into the Nissen Hut shape increased the strength and stiffness of the materials, meaning that it was able to resist greater force than an otherwise flat surface.¹⁵ The Nissen Huts were imported from Britain from 1948 and were quick and easy to erect. These qualities were particularly appropriate for migrant housing in Western Australia, as there was an extreme lack of public housing available after the war.¹⁶ Although there are very few records relating to the location, or former location, of Nissen Huts in Western Australia, it was reported that hundreds of Nissen Huts were shipped to the State in the post-war period, and so it is likely that they were used at many different locations. Some places where Nissen Huts are known to have been used for migrant accommodation are: Albany and Collie Commonwealth Hostels, Graylands and Swanbourne Reception Centres, Wexcombe Government Railway Camp and Kelmscott Water Department Camp.¹⁷

The main role of the migrants at the Main Roads Camp in Narrogin was to aid in the construction of new roads in the district. As the use and ownership of motor vehicles became more popular across the State, new roads had to be constructed, and existing roads brought up to a better standard, to accommodate the increased traffic. In 1950, the *Commonwealth Aid Roads Act 1950* allocated funds towards the construction of new roads, which aimed to aid the development

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- 13 SRO Records, Consignment No. 1691, Item No. 1958/0607, Commonwealth of Australia Department of Labour and National Service Regional Director, 'Medical Report on Narrogin Camp, 23rd September 1949'.
- 14 SRO Records, Consignment No. 1691, Item No. 1958/0607, Main Roads Assistant Engineer, 'Immigrant Women – Narrogin Camp, 6 October 1949'.
- 15 Jorgenson, James L, and Chern, Chingmiin, 'Bending Strength of Deep Corrugated Steel Panels' (North Dakota State University, Fargo, North Dakota: u.d.). Sourced from https://mospace.umsystem.edu/xmlui/bitstream/handle/10355/27438/Bending_Strength_of_Corrugated_Steel_Panels.pdf?sequence=1. Accessed on 28 April 2014.
- 16 'Hundreds of Nissen Huts to be Imported Here', *Sunday Times*, 21 November 1948, p. 6., '£11 Million Plan To Building Huts For Migrants', *The Canberra Times*, 9 April 1949, p. 4., Elston, K., *History of Nissen and Quonset Huts* (unpublished report held by State Heritage Office, Perth: 2011), p. 7.
- 17 'Accommodation for British Migrants: Graylands Housing Plan for British Migrants', *The West Australian*, 18 July 1951, p. 3., 'Housing for Migrants', *The West Australian*, 24 February 1951, p. 9., 'Pipe-line Workers: Nissen Huts for Migrants', *The West Australian*, 14 July 1951, p. 9., Elston, K., *History of Nissen and Quonset Huts* (unpublished report held by State Heritage Office, Perth: 2011), p. 8.

of the country and State by making transportation more efficient.¹⁸ Narrogin, once a major railway centre along the Great Southern Railway, subsequently became an important regional centre in the road network, and the improvement and maintenance of its surrounding roads was of utmost importance.

While Main Roads had established the depot in Narrogin in the late 1920s, it was not until the 1950s, and the pressing need to construct new, safe roads throughout the region, that the depot became a regional centre, to be manned by permanent staff. Office staff were housed in accommodation in the town centre.¹⁹

The location of the Main Roads Camp (as well as the Railway and Council Camps) on the outskirts of town meant that the migrant workers, their wives and families were often marginalised from the general population of Narrogin. Initially this meant that migrants only socialised with other migrants, however, as time passed, the migrants were slowly absorbed into the local community through events such as Christmas socials, dances (with traditional national costume), increased English literacy and local employment in other occupations.²⁰

Over time, the temporary nature of the migrant camps in Narrogin, led to much concern over their condition and quality, particularly as by 1952-53 migrants had been residing in the camps for several years. The 'semi-slum camp conditions' led most migrants to leave the camp sites as soon as they were able, to acquire a house in town or move to another centre.²¹

The Railway Camp, was much more substantial in size than the Main Roads Camp, and comprised tents each adjacent to its own small kitchen and toilet bucket, the workers were issued bedding, blanket and many established small vegetable and flower gardens. The Main Roads Camp, being the smallest of the three, is presumed to have had fewer amenities than the other camps, and was described as only being made up of tents, corrugated iron structures and Nissen Huts.²²

Although it has not been absolutely established when *Main Roads Migrant Camp (fmr)*, Narrogin stopped housing migrant workers, evidence suggests that the last migrant workers were asked to vacate the Main Roads site in 1955. At this time, at least nine Nissen Huts remained at the Main Roads site,²³ and the intention was for the 'huts', which were being used as the temporary living accommodation, to be dismantled and removed.²⁴

¹⁸ Edmonds, *The Vital Link* (1997), pp.112, 113.

¹⁹ Edmonds, Leigh, 'History of Road Development and Main Roads Dept in the Narrogin Region' in *Western Roads*, May 1996, pp. 8, 9.

²⁰ Evans, Kerry, 'Questions of Identify, Nationality and Citizenship: A Study of Four Migrant Women', *Limina: A Journal of Historical and Cultural Studies*, sourced from http://www.archive.limina.arts.uwa.edu.au/_data/page/186553/5evans2.pdf Accessed on 17 March 2014., 'Entertainment for Migrants', *The West Australian*, 25 December 1949, p. 9.

²¹ 'Migrants in Rail Camp Have Needs', *The West Australian*, 20 November 1952, p. 6., 'Body Formed To Help Migrants In Narrogin', *The West Australian*, 22 October 1953, p. 10.

²² White, *Memorial II: Narrogin and World War II* (1993), p. 121.

²³ Landgate (2014) Narrogin Townsite [Aerial Photograph]. 1:7920. Project No Z21B.00, Run 3, Frame 15. 5. 4. 1955.

²⁴ SRO Records, Consignment No. 1691, Item No. 1958/0607, Main Roads Engineer, 'Narrogin Depot', 3 August 1955.,

It appears that not all of the Nissen huts were removed, as by 1957 they were again being used by Main Roads to house a welder employed by the Department and his family.²⁵

By 1959, the activities of the Main Roads Department in Narrogin had expanded significantly, and a new brick office building was constructed for the twelve employees.²⁶ Since this time, the three former migrant camp Nissen huts have been used for storage.

Despite significant expansion of the Main Roads Department in Narrogin over the late-twentieth century and early-twenty first century, in 2014, three Nissen Huts remain located at *Main Roads Migrant Camp (fmr), Narrogin*.

13.2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

Main Roads Migrant Camp (fmr), Narrogin, comprises three prefabricated, transportable corrugated iron Nissen Huts (c. 1948/49) set in an operational Main Roads industrial and manufacturing facility.

Site

Located to the southern end of the Town of Narrogin, *Main Roads Migrant Camp (fmr), Narrogin* is a triangular shaped site, bounded by Gibson and Mokine Streets, to the south and west, and by bushland to the east.

The former camp site is used by Main Roads Western Australia as the Wheatbelt South Region Headquarters. The site comprises a 1959 brick and tile office building, a number of corrugated iron modern sheds used for workshops and storage purposes, some grass to the northern tip of the site, and some remnant bushland to the south and along the eastern borders.

On the southern boundary, along Gibson Street, there are three extant Nissen Huts. No other structures or physical evidence (on the surface) remains at the facility that suggests it was once a migrant camp, but there may be subsurface deposits. All three Huts are located in a line adjacent to each other and sit close to the rear southern fence line that faces Gibson Street, and remain in their original location. For the purpose of this physical description they have been labelled, west to east, as Huts 1, 2 and 3.

All three Huts match the general measurements and construction style attributed to the prefabricated semi-cylindrical corrugated iron buildings known as Nissen Huts.²⁷ They are makeshift in nature and have their own unique alterations and modifications that appear to have been carried out on an ad-hoc basis when maintenance was required.

²⁵ SRO Records, Consignment No. 1691, Item No. 1958/0607, Main Roads Department Engineer, 'Secretary. M. R. D', 10 March 1957., SRO Records, Consignment No. 1691, Item No. 1960/0189, Municipality of Narrogin, 're:- Main Roads Camp – Narrogin', 18 July 1955.

²⁶ SRO Records, Consignment No. 1691, Item No. 1958/0607, Commissioner of Main Roads, 'Minister for Works', 20 April 1959., Edmonds, Leigh, 'History of Road Development and Main Roads Dept in the Narrogin Region' in *Western Roads*, May 1996, p. 12.

²⁷ Many buildings commonly referred to as 'Nissen' Huts are actually 'Quonset' or 'Romney' Huts. As a brief overview of these terms: 'Nissen Huts' were invented during World War I by Major Peter Nissen in Britain. These structures were produced in 16 foot, 24 foot and 30 foot spans. 'Quonset Huts' were designed in USA in 1941 by George A Fuller and Co at the request of the US Navy. It featured a unique steel-arched rib and was produced in spans of 16 and 20 foot. 'Romney Huts' were designed by British Directorate of Fortifications and produced during World War II. They were 35 foot wide, with sliding doors at both ends. Elston, K., *History of Nissen and Quonset Huts* (unpublished report held by State Heritage Office, Perth: 2011), pp. 2, 3, 4.

The basic structure of every Hut is the same and consists of a steel frame (known as the ribs) bolted to jarrah bearers laid on the ground. Timber purlins are then attached to the ribs using hook bolts. The end panels are fixed into position and the spans of corrugated iron are bolted together and placed over the steel frame. The corrugated sheeting is lastly bolted to the timber purlins. However, in the case of the huts at *Main Roads Migrant Camp (fmr), Narrogin*, the two end wall panels, flooring, windows and doors appear to have been constructed from whatever material were on hand at the time. The ongoing basic maintenance appears to have followed this same ad-hoc 'patch and nail' technique.

Measurements of each Hut are noted in the below table, with a physical description following for each Hut.²⁸

| Hut Number | Span (width) | Distance between ribs | Total length | Nature of ribs | Attachment of cladding |
|------------|--------------|-----------------------|--------------|----------------|-----------------------------|
| 1 | 16ft 5inch | 5ft 8inch | 29ft 7inch | Steel T Shape | Hook bolt to timber purlins |
| 2 | 17ft 5inch | 5ft 8inch | 33ft 6inch | Steel T Shape | Hook bolt to timber purlins |
| 3 | 16ft 6inch | 5ft 8inch | 27ft 3inch | Steel T Shape | Hook bolt to timber purlins |

Hut 1

Hut 1 sits some 20 metres away from Huts 2 and 3 amongst a group of trees and mature vegetation. Its location underneath the mature trees may suggest that it is in its original location as trees were often planted around the Huts to provide shade. Hut 1 is in the best condition of all three Huts and has the highest level of authenticity. This is mostly attributed to Hut 1 being used, up until recently, as the Depot's Social Club headquarters.

As a result of its previous social use, the Hut is connected to electricity, has lighting, a ceiling fan and an air conditioning unit, most of which are attached to the timber purlins.

The end panels remain in good condition and consist of horizontally laid sheets of corrugated iron bolted to timber framing, with two double pane sash windows in the rear wall and two double pane windows in the front wall located on either side of the front door. Both sets of windows front and back are covered by steel security grid bars. The front door appears to be lightweight particle board and reads 'Emergency Equipment', that also interprets another former use of the Hut as a storage shed.

The curved side walls of Hut 1 do not reach ground level but rest on a timber plinth that is bolted to the steel frame. The floor is a concrete slab that is cracking and uneven at some points. The external front and rear end walls have evidence

²⁸

Most Hut types (Nissen, Quonset, Romney) are traditionally measured in feet and inches and are described by the span measurement (width), the 'distance between ribs' that make up the length of the Hut (being the distance between each steel frame), the nature of the ribs and how the corrugated iron cladding is attached. For the purposes of this assessment, total floor length has also been included. Nissen Huts typically have a span of 16ft, a 6ft 5inch distance between ribs, a steel T shape rib nature and cladding is usually hook bolted to timber purlins. Elston, K., *History of Nissen and Quonset Huts* (unpublished report held by State Heritage Office) (2011), p.2.

of rust in certain areas, such as around the window frames and the panels above the door, which may indicate the mixing of incompatible materials from maintenance works.

Hut 2

Hut 2 sits alongside Hut 3 with a distance of around 5-10 meters between them. It is currently used as a storage shed for disused Main Roads' signage. The construction of the cylindrical core is the same as Hut 1, however, Hut 2 sits on raised timber stumps and timber planks have been utilised for the flooring. The flooring is uneven and damaged in some sections. The end wall panels are in fair condition and consist of vertically laid sheets of corrugated iron bolted to timber framing. The front wall panel has double pane glass louvre windows (that sit within a double timber and metal frame) that are offset to one side of the front panel. The front timber panelled door is located on the opposite side and sits within a timber door frame. The door was at one stage painted white, now fading, and has a sign painted in black letters that reads 'Recycled Signs'. A concrete step sits at the base of the timber panelled front door. The end panel has one single glass louvre window that sits within a timber and metal frame.

Hut 2 is in good condition but a poorer state than Hut 1, with ad-hoc sheeting replacement methods evident on the front panel and a gaping hole in the area above the front door from missing sheeting.

Hut 3

Hut 3's construction method of the cylindrical core is the same as Huts 1 and 2, but is overall in the poorest and most makeshift condition. The floor is graded bitumen that is now mostly uneven and falling away at the rear, leaving a gap between the ground level and bottom of the hut. The bottom of the corrugated wall panels, on all sides of the Hut, have residual black markings from when the bitumen was sprayed on.

The front panel has a large door located on the right hand side that is of a timber frame construction with recycled corrugated iron panels, now rusted, with long strap pointed metal hinges. The front windows are the same as Hut 2's double pane glass louvre windows (that sit within a double timber and metal frame). Unlike Huts 1 and 2, the end wall panel does not contain any windows and is in a poor state of disrepair. The jarrah frame is clad with a mixture of horizontal corrugated iron paneling and painted (internally only) timber that is nailed together on an ad hoc basis, with many sections missing resulting in gaping holes. Termite damage is evident in the timber used in the end wall panel.

Hut 3 contains some timber shelving and old road signs, but is otherwise empty. In the recent past it was also used for storage.

13.3 COMPARATIVE INFORMATION

Main Roads Migrant Camp (fmr), Narrogin, comprises three prefabricated, transportable corrugated iron Nissen Huts (c. 1948/49) set in an operational Main Roads industrial and manufacturing facility.

Although the arrival of migrants in the immediate post-World War II period had a significant and irreversible impact upon the history and development of Western Australia, few places which were part of, and which represent, this story have been recognised for their cultural heritage significance. This could be attributed to the temporary nature of these places. Many of these places if extant, as many no

longer are, have been repurposed and are no longer strongly associated with this migrant history.

The metropolitan located Graylands²⁹ and Swanbourne Migrant Reception Centres³⁰ and regionally located Northam Reception Centre³¹ and Holden Immigration Camp,³² also in Northam, are probably the most well-known place associated with the arrival of post-World War II migrants in Western Australia. These places were repurposed ex-army facilities, which required very little change to be converted into migrant accommodation. Excluding Northam Reception Centre, which is entered in the State Register as *Northam Army Camp*, none of the above places are entered in the State Register of Heritage Places or the HCWA Assessment Program.

Although each provided temporary accommodation for incoming immigrants, the role of these four immigration centres different quite substantially. Graylands and Swanbourne Centres accommodated mainly British migrants, as well as other (non-British) Europeans 'in-transit' to another location, and provided substantially better quality housing and food than the regional centres. The two centres at Northam – Northam Reception and Holden Immigration – provided accommodation for non-British European immigrants, and Holden even provided accommodation for wives and children.³³

The above facilities differed in purpose to that of *Main Roads Migrant Camp (fmr)*, *Narrogin* in that the camp at Narrogin was an employment-based camp, for migrants who were working on a specific State Government project.

Little research has been conducted into employment-based camps, such as construction camps established by the Government Railways, Water Department, Main Roads and the Public Works Department in the post-war period. This is likely to be because of the temporary and moveable nature of these places, which resulted in little above ground evidence being left behind.

Known construction camps from this period include Kelmscott Water Department Camp,³⁴ Wexcombe Government Railway Camp,³⁵ as well as Railway Migrant Camp³⁶ and Council Migrant Camp³⁷ both in Narrogin. None of these examples include extant above ground fabric, apart from the former Railway Camp in Narrogin which retains some building foundation and archaeological remains.

²⁹ Not entered in the State Heritage Office database.

³⁰ Place 23433 Site of Swanbourne Migrant Reception Centre (fmr). This place has not been reviewed by the Heritage Council's Register Committee.

³¹ Entered in the State Register of Heritage Places as P6126 *Northam Army Camp*

³² Place 18655 Holden Immigration Holding Centre (site). This place has not been reviewed by the Heritage Council's Register Committee.

³³ Nonja Peters, Fiona Bush and Jenny Gregory, *Graylands & Swanbourne Migrant Reception Centres* (Centre of Western Australian History, University of Western Australia, Nedlands: 1996), pp. 9, 15., Heritage Council of Western Australia, State Register of Heritage Places – Assessment Documentation, P6126 *Northam Army Camp* (2000), pp. 8-9., and Nonja Peters, Fiona Bush and Jenny Gregory, *The Holden Immigration Camp Northam* (Centre for Western Australian History: 1993), p. 23.

³⁴ Place 18973 Migrant Park. This place was reviewed by the Register Committee in 2013 and determined not to warrant assessment for the State Register.

³⁵ Formerly Red Hill, now the suburb of Stratton. This place is not entered in the State Heritage Office database,

³⁶ Place 4759 Railway Migrant Camp (site). This place has not been reviewed by the Heritage Council's Register Committee.

³⁷ Place 3445 Unemployed Men's Camp (site). This place has not been reviewed by the Heritage Council's Register Committee.

None of the above places are entered in the State Register of Heritage Places or the HCWA Assessment Program.

No other extant Nissen Huts used for migrant housing during the post-World War II period have been identified in Western Australia.

Nissen Huts were also used at Albany and Collie Commonwealth Hostels, Graylands and Swanbourne Reception Centres, Wexcombe Government Railway Camp and Kelmscott Water Department Camp.³⁸ No extant Nissen Huts remain at these locations.

The fact that there were three post-war migrant camps in Narrogin (Main Roads, Railway and Local Council) may be because of the central and strategic location of the town in the state, and that numerous migrant workers were used from this location to achieve a number of public projects. Or, it may be the case that there were other centres with multiple migrant camps at this time, however, these have not been recognised or remembered.

The Town of Narrogin has recognised three migrant camps within its Municipal Heritage Inventory (MHI). No other Local Government has recognised numerous migrant camps (although most don't recognise any) in their MHIs. This doesn't mean that this didn't occur elsewhere in the State. But it does indicate the historical importance attributed to these migrant camps by the local community, and particularly the impact that the camps and the migrants had on the history and development of the local area and its people. It also suggests that the impact of these migrants and these camps were more significant to the local population than elsewhere in the State.

Conclusion

As no other extant Nissen Huts used to house migrants during the post-World War II period have been identified in Western Australia, this suggests that *Main Roads Migrant Camp (fmr), Narrogin* is rare for containing the only known extant Nissen Huts in Western Australia.

13. 4 KEY REFERENCES

13. 5 FURTHER RESEARCH

³⁸ 'Accommodation for British Migrants' Graylands Housing Plan for British Migrants', *The West Australian*, 18 July 1951, p. 3., 'Housing for Migrants', *The West Australian*, 24 February 1951, p. 9., 'Pipe-line Workers: Nissen Huts for Migrants', *The West Australian*, 14 July 1951, p. 9., Elston, K., *History of Nissen and Quonset Huts* (unpublished report held by State Heritage Office, Perth: 2011), p. 8.