



HERITAGE  
COUNCIL  
OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

## REGISTER OF HERITAGE PLACES Supporting Information

PLEASE NOTE: This Assessment Documentation is intended to provide sufficient information to consider the place for inclusion in the State Register. It is not intended to provide a complete record of the history of the place or its physical presentation.

### 10. ASSESSMENT OF CULTURAL HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

Cultural heritage significance means aesthetic, historic, scientific, social or spiritual value for individuals or groups within Western Australia. In determining cultural heritage significance, the Heritage Council has had regard to the factors in the section 38 of the *Heritage Act 2018*. It is considered that the place warrants inclusion in the Heritage Register against the following factors relevant to cultural heritage significance:

#### 10(a) Importance in demonstrating the evolution or pattern of Western Australia's history;

*Customs House and Sub-Collector's Residence, Broome* is closely associated with customs operations and the movement of goods in Broome during a period in which the town was a significant port in Western Australia. Occupied by the Commonwealth Customs Department from c.1906 to 1979, the place reflects the growth of industries in the region, in particular the prominent pearling industry based at Roebuck Bay from the early 1900s (historic value).

#### 10(b) Importance in demonstrating rare, uncommon or endangered aspects of Western Australia's heritage;

Customs House is a rare example of an off-form concrete building, constructed pre-1900 and built to withstand cyclones, of which only a few remain in the North-West region (rarity value).

*Customs House and Sub-Collector's Residence, Broome* comprises the only remaining elements of a substantial rail, store and customs group which developed in Broome from c. 1897 (rarity value).

Though it was a common practice to locate customs facilities in one complex, *Customs House and Sub-Collector's Residence, Broome* includes a relatively intact residence built specifically for the Sub-Collector of Customs. The former Sub-Collector's Residence is one of a few extant examples of its type that remains associated with other customs facilities, and is the only known example constructed in the North-West Bungalow style and in this region (rarity value).

**10(c) Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of Western Australia's history;**

Customs House, through its function as the Broome Historical Museum since 1981, is a valuable educational and tourism site, providing information about the local area and region, as well as the pearling industry, customs operations, and events of World War II in Broome, through extensive archive collections, research and interpretation of historic material (scientific value).

The form and construction of Customs House can reveal through detailed investigation information on the use of off-form concrete in the design of buildings pre-1900, particularly when used to address the tropical climatic conditions of the North-West region in Western Australia (scientific value).

**10(d) Its importance in demonstrating the characteristics of a broader class of places;**

*Customs House and Sub-Collector's Residence, Broome* reflects the common practice in regional or isolated areas of locating all customs related facilities in one complex, being the public Customs House and private Sub-Collector's Residence (historic value).

*Customs House and Sub-Collector's Residence, Broome* contains design elements and materials used in the construction of both primary buildings to address the tropical climate of Broome. The Sub-Collector's Residence incorporates functional elements for shading, screening, and ventilation, common for buildings in tropical climates, and Customs House is an off-form concrete construction, built to withstand cyclones (aesthetic value).

**10(e) Any strong or special meaning it may have for any group or community because of social, cultural or spiritual associations;**

*Customs House and Sub-Collector's Residence, Broome* is valued by the local and wider community and visitors for its former associations with the Broome pearling industry, with the former Customs House particularly celebrating this history with its function as the Broome Historical Museum since 1981. The place forms part of a recognisable historic precinct, comprising other heritage buildings associated with the early development of the town in close proximity to the Broome foreshore and Chinatown, contributing to the community's sense of place (social value).

**10(f)<sup>1</sup> Its importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics valued by any group or community;**

Customs House is an early example of the use of off-form concrete and is a rare pre-1900 construction method in Western Australia. Its relatively large scale forms a prominent feature in the landscape setting that demonstrates association with customs operations and the pearling industry that operated from Roebuck Bay and

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<sup>1</sup> 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.

the former tramway. Closer inspection of the extant fabric reinforces this industrial use with the utilitarian material expression of the concrete (aesthetic value).

The Sub-Collector's Residence is an important contribution to the cultural environment through its unique local vernacular architectural style of a light framed timber construction raised above ground with its roof generously extending to shelter the verandahs. The extant fabric of the Sub-Collector's Residence has a significant connection to the adjacent Customs House, with both buildings demonstrating modifications to address the tropical climate (aesthetic value).

Although built for industrial use, Customs House displays moderate features of the Federation Bungalow architectural style as a free-standing, single-storey structure with deep verandahs and broad roof planes (aesthetic value).

**10(h) Its importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement;**

Customs House demonstrates innovation and experimentation in its building construction. The early use of off-form concrete is a technical accomplishment for its time (aesthetic value).

11. SITE PLAN

The following plan shows all of the elements included within the place.

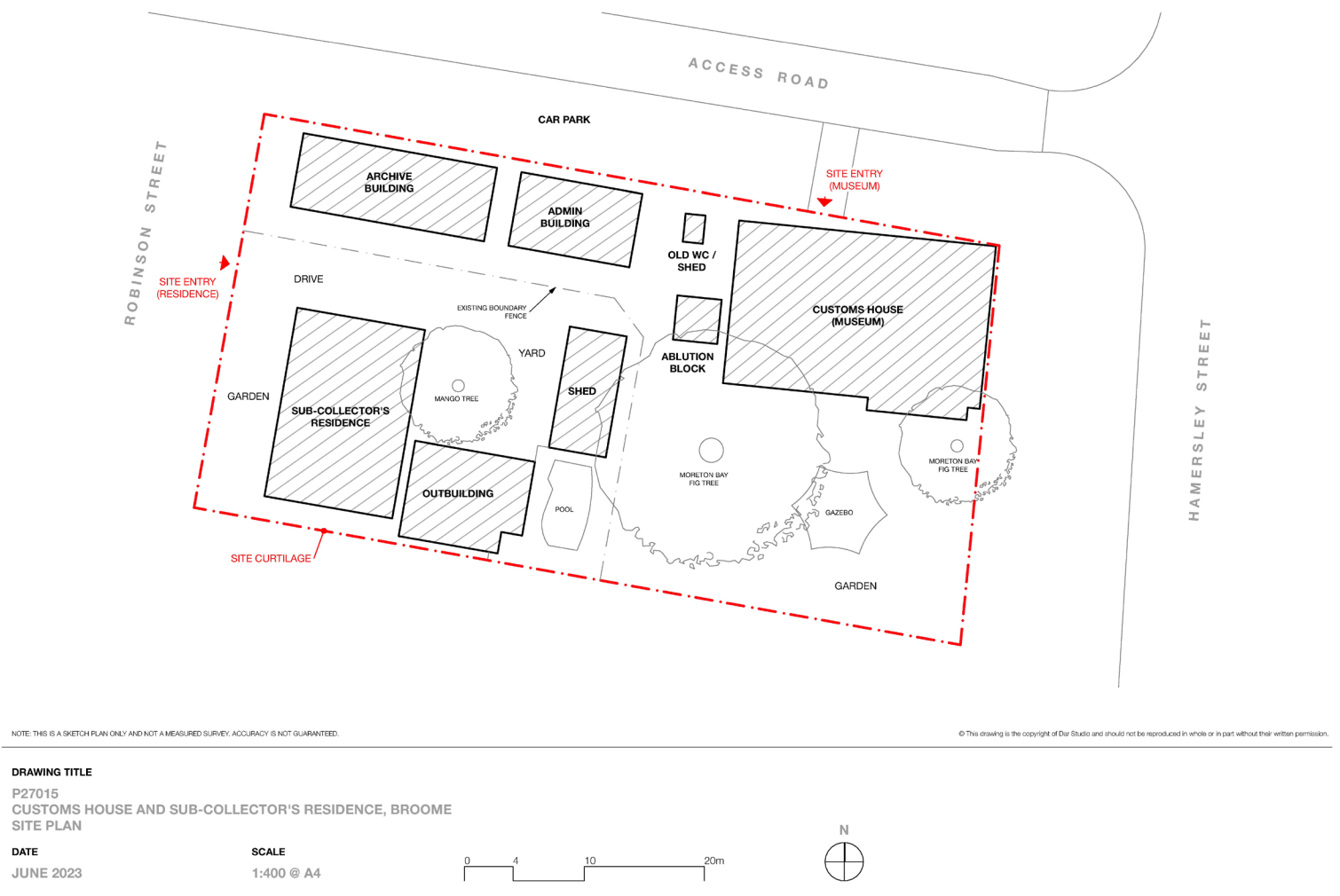


Figure 1: Site Plan of P27015 Customs House and Sub-Collector's Residence, Broome. Dar Studio, June 2023.



## 12. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

The documentation for this place is based on a physical assessment completed by Dar Studio, in May 2023, with amendments and/or additions by the Heritage Council and the Department. Information has been drawn from the Broome Museum Conservation Management Plan (March 2009), prepared for the Broome Historical Society by Laura Gray, Heritage & Conservation Consultation, in association with Irene Sauman, Historian.

The pertinent factors relevant to cultural heritage significance are referenced at the beginning of the documentary, physical and comparative evidence sections.

### 12.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

*Customs House and Sub-Collector's Residence, Broome* comprises the Customs House (c. 1897), a single-storey concrete and timber clad building, and the Sub-Collector's Residence (c. 1911/1912), a timber and fibre sheet raised dwelling constructed in the North-West bungalow style. Although both buildings are no longer used for customs purposes, the original names are utilised in the following discussion.

#### Heritage Council of Western Australia Theme (s)

This analysis is based the Thematic History of Western Australia<sup>[1]</sup> (WA Thematic). The following thematic histories are relevant to the history of the place:

##### Economy – Natural resources (living)

- 1883 Broome gazetted, becoming centre of the pearling industry by end of the decade.
- 1910 Peak of the pearling industry.
- 1920 Pearling revives after wartime restrictions
- 1935 Pearling industry at Broome, already struggling due to Depression, damaged by severe cyclone losses; continues to decline through 1930s.
- 1941 WWII internment policies see Broome cleared of Japanese pearlers & families; pearling ceases.
- 1946 Small-scale pearling restarts at Broome.
- 1952 Japanese labour permitted to return to the pearling industry; introduction of plastics through 1950s severely damages market for pearl products, especially shell.

##### Economy – Commerce

In relation to the movement and processing of goods and income in and out of Broome.

##### Governing - Law, order & defence

In relation to the upholding of customs laws.

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[1] 'A Thematic History of Western Australia' (incl. Framework Spreadsheet & Narratives). Prepared for the Heritage Council of WA by Clare Menck, Historian, June 2018.

## Governing – Government & Politics

- 1870-1880s Tariff protection and education policies major political issues; tariffs steadily rise as one of few reliable sources of government income.
- 1907-1920s Politics (except briefly during WWI) mainly concerned with developing local income/industries as mining revenue declines (especially wheat and dairy); also attention to tariffs especially impact of national tariff policies

The Yawuru people are the traditional owners of the lands and waters in and around Broome (Rubibi) since the Bugarringarra (the time before time).<sup>2</sup> The Yawuru, Djugun, Ngumbarl, Jabirrjabirr, Nyulnyul, Numanburr, Warrwa, Bardi and Jawi people, often collectively referred to as Goolarabooloo, the Salt-Water People, lived virtually undisturbed along the Dampier Peninsula until the 1850s.<sup>3</sup> The establishment of the pearling industry in the region led to many Aboriginal men and women being forced into working on pearl luggers as divers ('blackbirding'). Following the disruption of their way of life, those who were not working in the pearling industry settled permanently on stations, missions or in new town sites.<sup>4</sup>

### Pearling and Customs in Broome

Western Australia's first pearling fleet originally operated from the harbour town of Cossack, established in 1868. Pearling beds were first discovered near Roebuck Bay north of Cossack in the 1870s. Roebuck Bay became the site of several pearling camps, occupied by Malaysian crew members of the pearling luggers and the European owners of small pearling boats.<sup>5</sup> The townsite of Broome was gazetted in 1883 and the following year Broome was declared an 'outport' for customs collection, later becoming the principal cargo port in the North West.<sup>6</sup>

The export of pearls and shells and the import of other goods in and out of Broome was regulated by the Customs Service.<sup>7</sup> Before Federation, each Colony had their own separate Customs organisations. Western Australia regulated its own customs from the beginning of the Swan River Colony. Varying officials, including Government Residents, Resident Magistrates, and Sub-Collectors of Revenue and Customs were responsible for enacting customs legislation. From 1901, the Western Australian Customs Department came under the control of the Commonwealth Department of Trade and Customs. The Commonwealth later established a Works Department in Western Australia in 1926.<sup>8</sup>

The golden age for pearling in Broome was between 1900 to 1913. Along with pearls, pearl shells were in demand as a valuable material used for buttons, jewellery, and other ornamentation. More than 2000 men were employed in the

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<sup>2</sup> Grey, L & Sauman, I, March 2009, Broome Museum & Sailshed – Conservation Management Plan, Prepared for Broome Historical Society, p. 5; NYAMBA BURU YAWURU, 2020, Yawuru, Source: [http://www.yawuru.org.au/?doing\\_wp\\_cron=1625723405.5856359004974365234375](http://www.yawuru.org.au/?doing_wp_cron=1625723405.5856359004974365234375), Accessed July 2021;

<sup>3</sup> Grey & Sauman, op. cit., p. 5.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 6.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., pp. 6-9.

<sup>7</sup> Cossack Townsite Precinct – Assessment Documentation, pp. 4-5; Grey & Sauman, op. cit., pp. 6-8.

<sup>8</sup> Grey & Sauman, pp. 8-9

industry at this stage, of which approximately 1700 were Japanese or Malaysian immigrants. Aboriginal men and immigrants from the Philippines, Timor, and the Macassar Islands were also recruited as pearl divers and boat crew. The Asian population lived in the area known as Chinatown, the main business and commercial district of Broome.<sup>9</sup> Skippers, also known as pearling masters, were white.<sup>10</sup>

### Customs House and Sub-Collector's Residence

The first Customs Shed in Broome was constructed in 1889 on the corner of Dampier and Napier Terrace, near Streeter's Jetty in Chinatown. The timber framed and corrugated iron building included an office for the Sub-Collector and the Tidewater.<sup>11</sup> It was used as the Customs Office, Bond Store and Queen's Warehouse until 1903, when it was vacated by the Customs Department and returned to State ownership as the site could no longer accommodate the increased volume of goods.<sup>12</sup>

The construction of Mangrove Point Jetty in 1897 resulted in further development of the northern end of Broome.<sup>13</sup> A tramway was built from the Mangrove Point Jetty through the town to Streeter's Jetty, and ran along the foreshore, where several goods sheds were established along the Robinson Street frontage.<sup>14</sup> The Customs Department leased an existing timber and iron building owned by pearling company Newman Goldstein & Co for use as a Customs Office on the southern half of Lot 271 Robinson Street, before purchasing it outright in 1906.<sup>15</sup> It was initially planned to build a new Customs House and Bond Store, however, the estimated construction cost was almost double the amount of purchasing the existing Customs Office.<sup>16</sup> In 1907, a sailmaker's shed was constructed on the adjacent Lot 272, south of the extant Customs House.<sup>17</sup>

In 1910, the Customs Department required additional storage space and later purchased the northern portion of Lot 271 for £800 from Newman Goldstein & Co, including a concrete General Store and outbuildings, consolidating all Customs operations onto the one site.<sup>18</sup> The new customs store, which was constructed c. 1897, had concrete walls and floors and sash windows protected with iron bars, and concrete verandah floors. Though it has not been specified, it is likely the

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 6.

<sup>10</sup> Grey & Sauman, op. cit., pp. 6-7

<sup>11</sup> PWD Plan 858, Broome Roebuck Bay, Customs Shed, 31-10-1189; 'A History of the Customs Service in WA', compiled for use at the Collector of Customs Conference 1959, (MS 559 National Library) by the Department of Customs & Excise WA, referenced in the Australian Heritage Database entry 'Customs House (former) Robinson Street Broome'; as cited in Grey & Sauman, op cit., p. 10.

<sup>12</sup> Correspondence, 9 & 11 July, 20 September 1903, Australian Customs Service file, Item 1906/1; as cited in Grey & Sauman, op cit., p. 13.

<sup>13</sup> PWD, *Annual Report*, 1898, p. 36; *West Australian Government Gazette*, 1896, p. 329; Clements, Cathie, 'Notes on some of Broome's heritage structures and their links with the Mangrove Point stock jetty and tramway', *National Heritage*, June 1999, pp. 1-4; as cited in Grey & Sauman, op. cit., p. 11.

<sup>14</sup> P5250 *Sailmaker's Shed (fmr)*, Broome (RHP) – Assessment Documentation, p. 4.

<sup>15</sup> Grey & Sauman, op. cit., p. 11.

<sup>16</sup> Correspondence and sketch plan of proposed new Customs House, 4 & 31 May, 9 July 1906, Australian Customs Service file, Item 1906/1, op cit; Certificate of Titles, Vol. 99 Fol. 32 & Vol 384 Fol. 100, 11 December 1906; as cited in Grey & Sauman, op. cit., p. 13.

<sup>17</sup> P5250 *Sailmaker's Shed (fmr)*, Broome was entered in the State Register of Heritage Places in 2010. This place is not within the curtilage of *Customs House and Sub-Collector's Residence, Broome*.

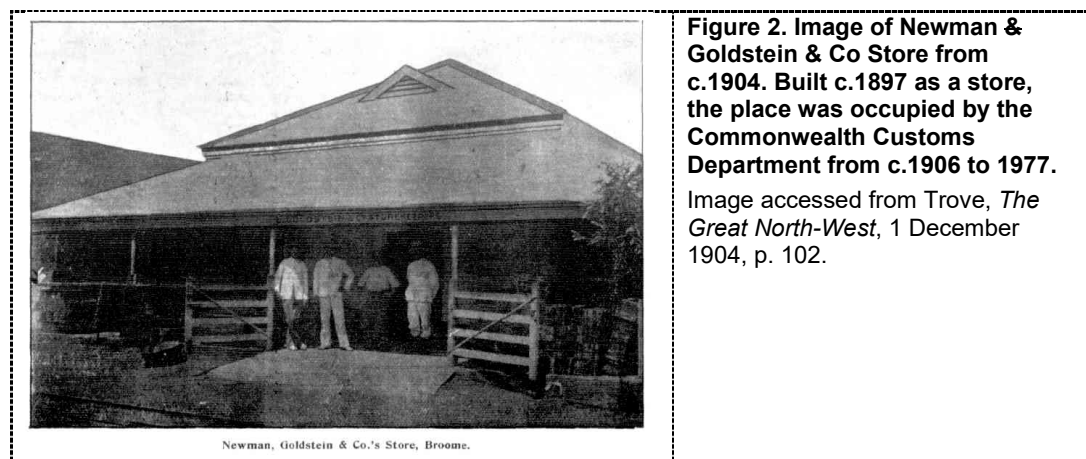
<sup>18</sup> Certificates of Title, Vol. 99 Fol. 32 & Vol. 468 Fol. 104, 5 August 1910.

building was constructed of concrete to withstand the tropical climatic conditions, such as cyclones. This building, now the Customs House (now known as Broome Historical Museum), operated as the Broome Bond Store, later named the Customs House and Bond Store, by the Australian Customs Service from 1910 to 1979. The former timber and iron store became the King's Warehouse.

In August 1911, a contract was awarded to M.A. Smith for a total of £596-9-0 to construct a residence for the Sub-Collector of Customs.<sup>19</sup> The Sub-Collector's Residence was built on the Robinson Street side of Lot 271 and comprised two main rooms with wide surrounding verandahs partly partitioned to form a kitchen and two sleepouts.<sup>20</sup>

The following Sub-Collectors lived at this residence in Broome; H.W. Huggins (1910-1914); W.H. Lovegrove (1914-1917); L.S. Ogilvie (1918-1920); E. Pickett (1920-1926); C.P.S. Rich (1928-1930); F. Lee (1934-1935); W.L. Hosket (1936-1938); W.R. Lawson (1940); Acting customs officer R. Hayes (1947); and A.D. Pilmer (1949).<sup>21</sup>

By 1912, the Commonwealth Trade and Customs Department facility in Broome comprised the Bond Store (the concrete Customs House) and the King's Warehouse (the timber and iron building), both purchased from Newman Goldstein & Co, and the Sub-Collector's Residence, all located on Lot 271.<sup>22</sup> An additional Goods and Customs Shed located on the adjacent tramway goods yard was also a part of the customs facility.<sup>23</sup>



<sup>19</sup> "News and Notes", *Western Mail*, 19 August 1911, p. 33, <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/38832964>

<sup>20</sup> Grey & Sauman, op. cit., p. 14

<sup>21</sup> Grey & Sauman, op. cit., p. 24

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p. 15.

<sup>23</sup> This is not within the curtilage of P27015 *Customs House and Sub-Collector's Residence, Broome*.



**Figure 3. The residence of the Customs Officer (Sub-Collector's Residence), c. 1925 after verandah renovations.**

Image courtesy of the Broome Historical Society, Customs Collection, collection number 2021-115

There is little documentary evidence on the operations of the Broome customs facility between 1910 and 1940. There was a decline in customs operations during the First World War, though there were improvements in the 1920s.<sup>24</sup> Better quality synthetic pearl buttons and a decrease in prices for pearl shell saw a decline in the pearling industry during this time, though cattle had become an important industry. A meatworks was established and became a major employer of Broome residents.<sup>25</sup> During the Second World War, the pearling industry ceased operations following the Japanese air raid in March 1942 and the subsequent evacuation of Broome. During this time, the Sub-Collector's Residence was used for army accommodation before being leased to private tenants between 1945 and 1947.<sup>26</sup>

By the late 1940s the Sub-Collector's Residence and King's Warehouse required considerable repair and maintenance works to the timber work in the interior, verandahs, and roof. In 1949, when the building was being repaired, the Customs offices were relocated to the concrete Bond Store, then known as the Customs House and Bond Store.<sup>27</sup> The Sub-Collector's Residence was the primary residence for the Sub-Collector until 1956 when the Customs Department built a new staff residence on Anne Street. The original Sub-Collector's Residence on Robinson Street was later occupied by a clerk.

By 1959, the timber and iron Queen's Warehouse (previously known as the King's Warehouse<sup>28</sup>) had been damaged by termites. After failing to sell the building, the warehouse was demolished, which left the concrete Customs House and Bond Store and Sub-Collector's residence as the two remaining Customs buildings on Lot 271 at this time, what is now *Customs House and Sub-Collector's Residence, Broome*.<sup>29</sup>

The demand for pearl shell declined in the post-War years and by 1960, customs staff were employed in the repatriation of pearling employees. In the mid-1960s,

<sup>24</sup> "Broome Customs", *Nor-West Echo*, 10 July 1920, p. 7, <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/260841206>

<sup>25</sup> Grey & Sauman, op. cit., p. 8.

<sup>26</sup> Grey & Sauman, op. cit., p. 19

<sup>27</sup> Correspondence, 8 April 1949, Australian Customs Service file, National Archives, Clerks residence Robinson Street, National Archives, Series K272 Item W1967/03311; as cited in Grey & Sauman, op. cit., p. 19.

<sup>28</sup> The Warehouse name was dependent on who held the throne at the time, so the name interchanges between King's and Queen's Warehouse.

<sup>29</sup> Australian Customs Service file, Broome Customs disposal of Queen's Warehouse, National Archives, Series K273 Item 1959/139, as cited in Grey & Sauman, op. cit., p. 20.

construction began Deepwater Point, with the intention to accommodate more ships than Mangrove Point Jetty. A Petroleum Products warehouse was established at this new site as the beginning of a new Customs facility. The main exports from the port during this time were meat in cartons, tallow and pearl shell. The new Customs Office officially opened at Deepwater Point, now known as Kennedy Hill, in 1979.<sup>30</sup>

#### Broome Historical Museum

In 1977, the Broome Historical Society enquired about using the former Customs House as a museum to display their collection.<sup>31</sup> Customs House was later purchased by the Shire of Broome in 1979.

Premier Sir Charles Court officially opened the Broome Historical Museum at Customs House on 16 August 1981 during the annual Shinju Matsuri Festival (Festival of the Pearl). In 1984, restoration works were undertaken to Customs House including replacing roof battens, re-sheeting the roof and rebuilding an internal wall.<sup>32</sup> The Historical Society received grant funding in 1985 to upgrade the grounds, including installing a pergola and seating, security fencing, and painting.<sup>33</sup> In 1986, Lot 271 was subdivided to create separate lots for the Sub-Collector's Residence and Customs House, becoming Lots 3 and 4 respectively.<sup>34</sup>



**Figure 4. Official opening of Broome Historical Museum, 16 August 1981.**

Image courtesy of Broome Historical Society, collection number 2015-523-f.

<sup>30</sup> Grey & Sauman, op. cit., p. 22.

<sup>31</sup> Community Resource Access Broome (CRAB), "Broome News 1977 1/03 July", *Broome News*, Accessed May 2023, <https://broomemuseum.omeka.net/items/show/6>.

<sup>32</sup> National Estates Grants Program, Old Customs House, Broome, SROWA, WA 2162 CONS 5671, Item NEP/84/07; as cited in Grey & Sauman, op cit., p. 22.

<sup>33</sup> Broome Basic Communications, "Broome News 1985 10 Oct", *Broome News*, Accessed May 2023, <https://broomemuseum.omeka.net/items/show/52>

<sup>34</sup> Diagram 69750, accessed via Landgate.





**Figure 5. Customs residence (Sub-Collector's Residence) while in private ownership, c. 1985.**

Image courtesy of Broome Historical Society, collection number 2007-389c.

The Broome Historical Society continues to operate its museum at Customs House and has expanded into the adjacent Lot 240 (71 Robinson Street), forming a historical precinct.<sup>35</sup> Some exhibits within the Museum include Aboriginal People, the Pearling Display, World War Two in Broome, and Domestic Life, with a Research Area that includes the Historical Society's photograph collection. On Lot 240, the Museum occupies the adjacent Sailmaker's Shed, displaying an exhibition on sail making in the early 1900s, and the Rae Val Annexe, formerly a mess hall for Public Works Department employees when the Port of Broome was constructed, that was relocated here by the Historical Society, now displaying Tramway information and the McDaniel Shell Collection.<sup>36</sup>

The Sub-Collector's Residence was sold into private ownership in 1981 and was purchased by the Shire of Broome in 1986.<sup>37</sup> The Shire then sold the property to one of its employees in 1992, who then installed a steel outbuilding and a fibreglass swimming pool.<sup>38</sup> Ownership changed throughout the 1990s and 2000s. A new fibrous-cement dwelling was constructed on Lot 3 c.2012, adjacent to the Sub-Collector's Residence.<sup>39</sup> In 2017, the Shire of Broome again purchased the Sub-Collector's Residence where it is currently used for staff accommodation.<sup>40</sup>

In 2022, the Shire of Broome began preparing a Draft Local Planning Strategy for the Chinatown/Old Broome Precinct, which *Customs House and Sub-Collector's Residence, Broome* sits within a designated area proposed for community/civic use. The proposed strategy will be similar to the currently used Old Broome Development Strategy (2014) and Chinatown Development Strategy (2013) but

<sup>35</sup> P5250 *Sailmaker's Shed (fmr)*, Broome was entered in the State Register of Heritage Places on 8 January 2010. The [Register Entry](#) and [Assessment Documentation](#) can be accessed via inHerit. *Sailmaker's Shed (fmr)*, Broome is not within the curtilage of *Customs House and Sub-Collector's Residence, Broome*; "About the Broome Historical Society", *Broome Historical Society & Museum*, Accessed April 2023, <https://broomemuseum.org.au/about-the-broome-historical-society/>

<sup>36</sup> "Broome Museum", *Broome Historical Society & Museum*, Accessed September 2023, <https://broomemuseum.org.au/broome-museum/>.

<sup>37</sup> Certificate of Title Volume 1727 Folio 479 dated 29 April 1986.

<sup>38</sup> Shire of Broome Settlement Statement, Lot 3 Robinson Street, Broome, 30 January 1992; Building Approval for Outbuilding at Lot 3 Robinson Street, Broome, Shire of Broome, Application Number 2001, 2 December 1992; Building Approval for Fibreglass Swimming Pool at Lot 3 Robinson Street, Broome, Shire of Broome, Application Number 2195, 29 June 1993.

<sup>39</sup> Shire of Broome Planning Approval, Residential, Lot 3, No. 69 Robinson Street Broome, Dated 2 August 2012; Historical Aerial imagery shows construction of the new dwelling began in 2012 and was complete by 2013.

<sup>40</sup> Certificate of Title Volume 1727 Folio 479.

aims to better integrate the Chinatown and Old Broome precincts and will provide more focus on design through building design controls.<sup>41</sup>

## 12.2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

*Customs House and Sub-Collector's Residence, Broome* is a small building complex associated with historical customs operations in Broome comprising the Customs House (c. 1897) and the Sub-Collector's Residence (1911/12) in the North-West Bungalow style.

### Siting

*Customs House and Sub-Collector's Residence* is located on a rectangular flat site to the eastern side of Broome in the Kimberley region of Western Australia. Overlooking Roebuck Bay, it is nestled between Robinson Street to the west and Hamersley Street to the east.

The former Customs House is the most dominant structure on the site, positioned to the north-east corner with its entry point on the northern boundary. An associated ablution block, administration, and archive building are located to the west, and there is a landscaped area to the south. To the east of the building, on the ground surface, are what appears to be remnants of concrete footings of a former goods shed that existed on the site. Separated by a boundary fence to the west and to the south of the administration and archive buildings is the former Sub-Collector's Residence.

The former Sub-Collector's Residence is a smaller structure and is accessed from Robinson Street to the west. On entering the site there is a small driveway and back yard. Other structures within this property boundary include a modern bedroom and laundry building to the east, built c.2012, and an open shed and fibreglass swimming pool towards the eastern boundary, built c.1993.



**Figure 6. East elevation view of Customs House from Hamersley Street.**

Much of the site, when viewed from the surrounding streets, is obscured by mature trees and tropical plantings.

Left of the former Customs House is the State Registered Place P5250 *Sailmaker's Shed (fmr)*, Broome, which is not within the curtilage of *Customs House and Sub-Collector's Residence, Broome*.

<sup>41</sup> Chinatown/Old Broome Precinct Structure Plan – Preliminary Concept Plan, Accessed August 2023, via Shire of Broome, <https://www.broome.wa.gov.au/Home/Tabs/Have-your-say/New-Planning-Framework-for-Cable-Beach-and-ChinatownOld-Broome>.





**Figure 7. Part north elevation view of Customs House.**

A small shopping centre carpark and access road is north of the former Customs House.

Roebuck Bay can be seen in the distance, across the road from Hamersley Street, which is the site of the former tramway and a recent foreshore development. The Pioneer Cemetery and Town Beach jetty are located beyond to the south.



**Figure 8. Landscaped area to the south of Customs House.**

Landscaped area consists of grassed areas and paving with a small gazebo structure and two mature Moreton Bay fig trees.



**Figure 9. West elevation view of Sub-Collector's Residence from Robinson Street.**

The former Sub-Collector's Residence is setback from the street behind a timber fence and is partly obscured by plantings.



**Figure 10. Driveway and rear yard to Sub-Collector's Residence.**

To the rear is a mature mango tree and an addition to accommodate a bedroom and laundry (c.2012), to the left of this image.

### Customs House - External Form and Style

The former Customs House is a rectangular single storey building characterised by its perimeter verandah and concrete walls bearing the imprints of its formwork. Although built for an industrial use, the building has a somewhat domestic presentation showing influence of the Federation Bungalow architectural style as a free-standing, single storey structure with deep verandahs, and broad roof planes.



**Figure 11. Customs House - view of front (north) elevation.**

The main roof is of hipped profile configuration with a separate hipped verandah of the same pitch, all covered with corrugated metal in long sheet sections with a factory pre-painted finish.

There are no gutters or downpipes to either the main roof or verandah, which is typical for this region with all stormwater discharging to ground.





**Figure 12. Customs House - view of front verandah looking west.**

The external walls are built from off-form concrete, otherwise referred to as 'in-situ' or 'site-cast', with horizontal timber boarding used as formwork, which now has a white painted finish.

Where exposed, the verandah comprises of painted cast iron columns and timber roof framing.

A steel mesh security screen and gates have been installed between the original cast iron verandah posts. These are intrusive but support the current use of the place.

The double doors to the main entry (not pictured) have vertical tongue and grooved timber boarding outside and flat panel inside.



**Figure 13. Customs House - typical window to north façade.**

Windows are symmetrically placed around the building and are painted timber frame double hung sashes. They are a combination of two subtly different styles and sizes with one type being two vertical panes per sash and the other slightly smaller and having two horizontal panes per sash.

All original windows have external painted vertical steel bars embedded in the concrete reveals.



**Figure 14. Customs House - detail of enclosed verandah to north façade.**

The verandahs are enclosed on the east, south, and west facades with vertical, white pre-painted corrugated steel sheeting. There are enclosing partitions to the north in the same alignment as the front concrete wall, as shown here.

A later painted timber double casement window has been added to the north façade for the kitchenette.



**Figure 15. Customs House - view of south façade.**

The south doors to the rear have been removed and replaced with a roller shutter door. A later set of flat panel steel doors have been added to the enclosed verandah to the south, resulting in the removal of the original cast iron column. This column remains stored on site so could readily be re-instated.

A small, overhang aluminium-framed extension has been added to the south-east roof to accommodate a museum exhibit.

### **Customs House - Internal Layout and Details**

The layout of Customs House is of simple configuration with one main room, accessed from the front (north) verandah. The surrounding enclosed verandahs are accessed via two central door openings to the south and west walls. There is an additional door opening to the east wall, but it is currently not in use as it is blocked by museum displays. A kitchenette and storeroom has been formed to the north-west corner of the enclosed verandah.





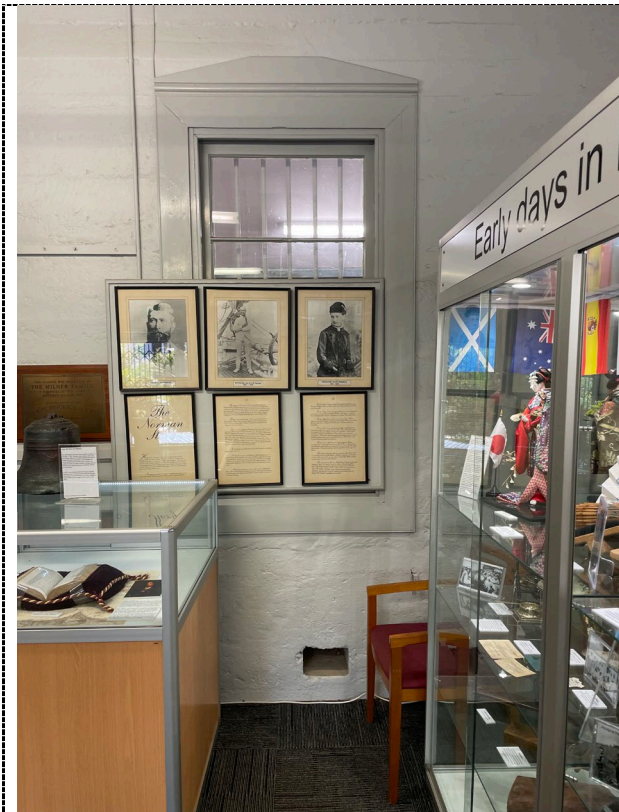
**Figure 16. Customs House - view of main internal museum space.**

The main room is of generous size and characterised by its high ceiling and perimeter window openings. The space is generally fit out with display items and free-standing units associated with the current use as a museum.



**Figure 17. Customs House - view looking through west wall of main room into enclosed verandah.**

The internal detailing consists of painted concrete walls and modern carpet tiles covering the original concrete floor slab. The ceiling is flat plasterboard sheeting with exposed joints and a small painted cornice trim.



**Figure 18. Customs House - typical interior detailing.**

An example of an original window with wide timber architraves and arch capping.

As shown in this image, the wall vents are at a low level.



**Figure 19. Customs House - typical internal detail of enclosed verandah.**

To accommodate further floor space the verandahs to the east, south, and west have been infilled with steel corrugated sheeting that is evident to the internal face. The original cast iron columns have been boxed out with timber boarding. The concealed verandahs all have a raked painted plasterboard ceiling.

All floors have their painted surface exposed that show signs of general wear and tear with unevenness and cracking.



## Sub-Collector's Residence - External Form and Style

The Sub-Collector's Residence incorporates functional elements to address the tropical climate. This is demonstrated through the building's light framed timber construction, the roof generously extending to shelter the verandahs, its narrow linear planning with windows to both sides enabling cross ventilation, and being raised above the ground to permit cooling air flow.



**Figure 20. Sub-Collector's Residence (from c.1910/11) - view of front (west) façade.**

This is a modest sized, timber-framed dwelling that is raised off the ground and constructed in the North-West Bungalow architectural style.

Timber steps provide access to the front and rear verandah. A number of painted timber casement windows of varying sizes are arranged around the building perimeter, a combination of large, roughly square-shaped (3mx3m sash), and original tall slender windows (1mx4m sash).

In this image there are two fixed timber awnings and adjustable metal cyclonic shutters to verandah.



**Figure 21. Sub-Collector's Residence - north elevation view.**

Majority of the verandah was enclosed in 1947 concealing much of this original space, evident through most of the perimeter wall cladding consisting of a later infill of painted white fibre cement sheeting, and the original remaining walls being painted timber weatherboarding.

The roof is hipped, clad with pre-painted factory finished corrugated steel sheeting with a painted timber fascia board. Like the former Customs House, there are no gutters or downpipes.



**Figure 22. Sub-Collector's Residence - detail view of rear (east) verandah steps, ground stump, and balustrade.**

Verandah posts are squared timber with timber lattice work and handrail to the balustrade.

The raised timber floor is supported by circular painted concrete ground stumps, which creates approximately 0.5m high void space underneath the building. Metal ant caps are installed to the top of each stump.



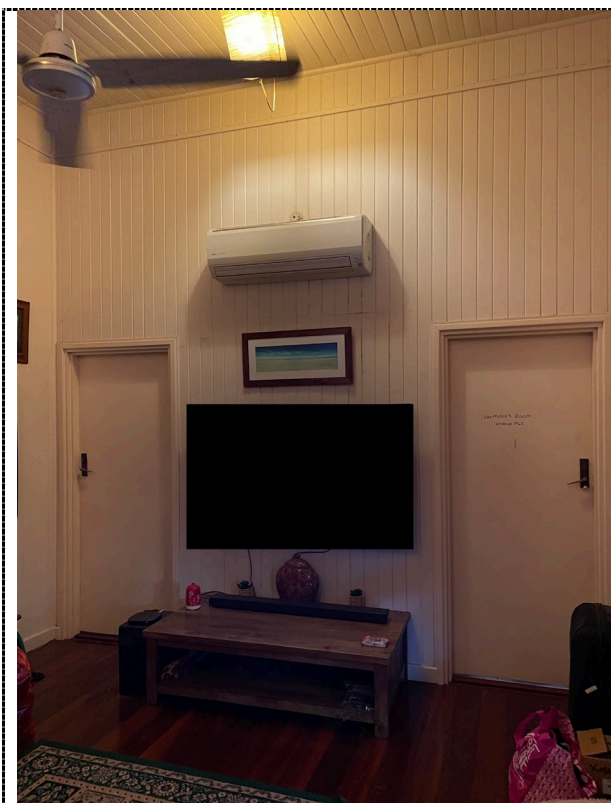
**Figure 23. Sub-Collector's Residence - detail view of rear (east) verandah.**

The timber weatherboard cladding and window appears to be original.



## Sub-Collector's Residence - Internal Layout and Details

Like the former Customs House, the former Sub-Collector's Residence is also of simple layout with a front and rear verandah accessing two central rooms of a living room and kitchen. These are the original rooms of the house, of equal size, and separated by a dividing wall with an opening to the eastern end. A single flat panel timber door provides access from each verandah. To the north and south of these rooms are later alterations that have created additional rooms within the footprint of the original verandah. To the north are two bedrooms of equal size and to the south is a single larger bedroom and shared bathroom accessed from the rear (east) verandah.

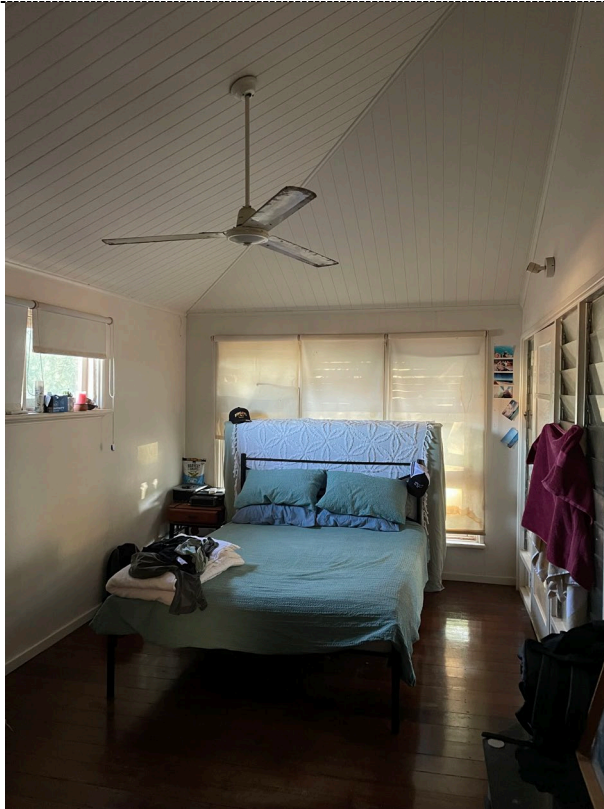


**Figure 24. Sub-Collector's Residence - view within living room.**

The detailing of the two central rooms is characterised by exposed jarrah floorboards with oil finish and painted vertical timber boarded walls. The ceiling to the living room also has painted timber boarding but the adjacent kitchen has a flat painted plasterboard lining.

Internal doors are simple flat panel painted timber and rooms have modern trim painted timber skirting boards.

Both ceilings to these areas are noticeably high with a small timber trim at high level running the perimeter of the rooms.



**Figure 25. Sub-Collector's Residence - view within large bedroom.**

The flanking bedrooms and bathroom have painted plasterboard walls and painted timber boarded raked ceilings. The bathroom has a tiled floor finish with the bedrooms having jarrah floorboards.



**Figure 26. Sub-Collector's Residence - view within kitchen.**

The kitchen has a modern fit out.

## Outbuildings and Other Elements

There are numerous outbuildings of varying significance associated with *Customs House and Sub-Collector's Residence, Broome*.



**Figure 27. Gazebo structure to south of Customs House.**

Aligned with the south access opening into Customs House is a timber framed hexagonal gazebo structure built between 1970 and 2000. It has a shade cloth roof covering, and brick paved flooring. The gazebo does not contribute to the significance of the place.



**Figure 28. West elevation view of Ablution block, to the west of Customs House.**

Built between 1970 and 2000, the Ablution Block accommodates two WCs and an undercover area in front. It is a steel frame structure with a hipped roof clad with corrugated steel sheeting to the walls and roof. The Ablution block does not contribute to the significance of the place.





**Figure 29. Old WC / store to the west of Customs House.**

Further north from the ablutions block towards the lot boundary is a very small single gable roofed timber framed corrugated iron clad WC built c. 1970 (as indicated in historic aerial imagery). It is no longer in use and used a store and does not contribute to the significance of the place.



**Figure 30. Administration and archive buildings, to the west of Customs House, constructed between 1970 and 2000, likely c.1980s.**

West of the ablution block and old WC is a free-standing administration building of prefabricated construction with horizontal corrugated steel cladding and hipped roof. It is elevated off the ground with steel stumps. West of this building, in the same alignment, is an archive building of similar prefabricated construction but with a gable roof and resting on a concrete slab.

These two structures are of secondary significance to the place for their association with the Broome Historical Museum.





**Figure 31. Building addition directly adjacent to the Sub-Collector's Residence.**

Immediately adjacent to the east of the Sub-Collector's Residence is a single-storey laundry and bedroom addition built c2012. It is a steel framed structure, of contemporary design, clad with white fibre cement sheeting, horizontal timber shading slats, and has a distinguishing raised monopitch roof and separate verandah.

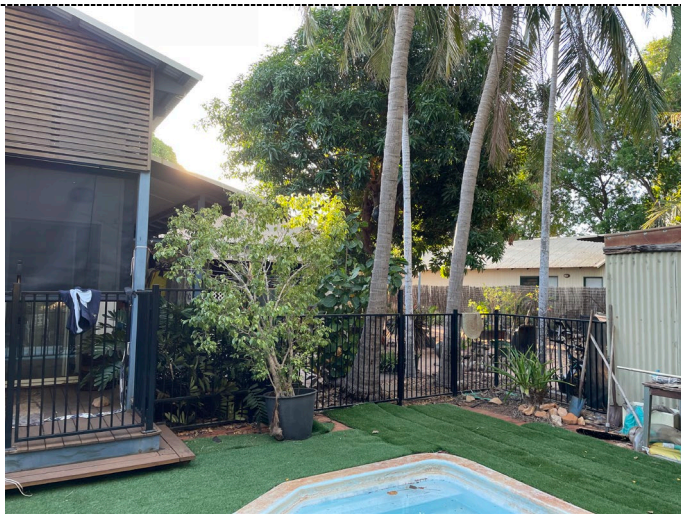
The rear yard formed by the surrounding structures is partly covered with timber decking and has remnants of a concrete slab indicating the location of a former outhouse or rainwater tank.

The addition does not contribute to the significance of the place.



**Figure 32. Half open shed to rear yard of the Sub-Collector's Residence.**

There is a half open shed structure clad with corrugated steel sheeting to the north-east of the house, that was constructed with old railway tracks from the Broome tramway in the 1990s. This is of secondary significance.



**Figure 33. Siting of fibreglass swimming pool with fencing (c. 1993).**

This fibreglass swimming pool is located south of the abovementioned half open shed to the rear yard of Sub-Collector's Residence. This is of secondary significance.

### 12.3 CONDITION

As a complex, *Customs House and Sub-Collector's Residence, Broome* is overall in fair condition. The condition of each element is discussed below.

#### Condition – Customs House

The former Customs House is in a fair to good condition with the main roof and wall structure in a reasonable state of repair. Apart from isolated areas of the verandah, there is no evidence of cracking or structural movement to both internal and external fabric. There are no signs of any water ingress and dampness. Internal finishes, fittings, and corrugated wall cladding enclosing the verandah are showing signs of general wear and tear.



**Figure 34. Customs House - north verandah floor.**

Cracking evident to verandah concrete floor slab.



**Figure 35. Customs House - north façade detail.**

Evidence of peeling acrylic paint to external concrete façade.

#### Condition – Sub-Collector's Residence

The former Sub-Collector's Residence is in a fair to poor condition with timber repair works required throughout. Finishes and fittings are generally showing signs of overall wear and tear.





**Figure 36. Sub-Collector's Residence - internal floorboards.**

Jarrah floorboards appear to have suffered from decay and termite damage resulting in significant gaps and gouges.



**Figure 37. Sub-Collector's Residence - detail of concrete ground stump.**

There is evidence of rust to the ant caps on top of concrete stumps.



**Figure 38. Sub-Collector's Residence, detail of east façade.**

Instances of black mould growth is evident to the external timber weatherboarding, which is a common problem due to the humid climate.



**Figure 39. Sub-Collector's Residence - view of raised ground floor structure.**

The concrete ground stumps have deteriorated and appear to have suffered from subsidence (below ground downward movement), which has affected the rest of the house, in particular the ground floor structure resulting in uneven floors.

### Archaeological Potential

*Customs House and Sub-Collector's Residence, Broome* is located in relative proximity to the foreshore, and has been the subject of several severe weather events associated with the tropical climate. In addition, redevelopment of the site over time, including the installation of a below ground pool and the extension to the former Sub-Collector's Residence, suggests that there is low potential for intact archaeological deposits associated with the operations of Customs House or the Sub-Collector's Residence to be present at *Customs House and Sub-Collector's Residence, Broome*.

## **12. 4 COMPARATIVE INFORMATION**

### **Comparative Analysis**

*Customs House and Sub-Collector's Residence, Broome* comprises a group of buildings associated with customs operations in Broome, including the former Customs House (c. 1897), now the Broome Historical Museum, and the former



Sub-Collector's Residence (c.1911/1912), a timber-framed North-West Bungalow style cottage built as lodgings for the sub-collector of customs.

### Customs Facilities

*Customs House and Sub-Collector's Residence, Broome* is closely associated with customs operations in Broome from the 1890s until the 1970s, when customs facilities were moved to a different location. The below State Registered places are comparable for their association with the administration of Customs and government policy:

- P395 *Bond Store & Resident Magistrate's Office (fmr), Busselton* (1856) – a single-storey brick building constructed as a bond store, this place is the earliest remaining civic building in Busselton. It is an early example of a bonds store in WA, notably built in a settlement that did not have a port at the time. One room of the building was used to accommodate Police Constable Joseph Harris, who was later appointed Resident Magistrate.
- P857 *Commissariat Buildings (fmr), Fremantle* (1852, 1856, 1860-61, c.1894, 1895-96, c.1896, 1897, 1898) – from its construction until the late 1970s, this limestone building has been associated with a number of government agencies, including government bonds and stores, and the Customs office. Since 1979, the place has been associated with the Maritime Museum of Western Australia.
- P977 *Customs House (fmr), Fremantle* (1908, 1927, 1966) – a two-storey stone building that is one of a small number of surviving purpose-built customs houses and functioned as the main branch of the Customs Department of Western Australia since its construction in 1908.
- P3239 *Cossack Townsite Precinct* (1860s-1890s) – a precinct recognised for its importance as a frontier settlement established in 1863, the first port in the North West of Australia before the establishment of Broome, and the location of Western Australia's first pearling industry. The place contains a notable group of public buildings, including a stone Customs House and Bond Store (1895). Former residences associated with customs staff do not appear to be included.
- P3262 *Albany Railway Station & Bond Store (fmr)* – comprising a Railway Station Building (1888; 1961-63; 1994) and Bond Store (c.1880s; 1897; 1949; 1962) that formed a significant transport centre in association with the Town Jetty and was instrumental in keeping the focus of the commercial development in Albany toward the port.
- P3940 *Geraldton Customs Complex* (1935-6, c.1960) – representing ongoing customs operations in Geraldton since 1865, this place is a group of three principal buildings (a customs house, King's Warehouse, and sub-collector's residence) which are associated with the activities of the Commonwealth Customs Department in WA. The place also represents the growth of primary and secondary industries in Geraldton in the 1920s and 1930s.

The above suggests many customs complexes were provided all customs facilities at the one site, also shown with *Customs House and Sub-Collector's Residence, Broome*. All demonstrate the requirement for government management of goods

moving in and out of Western Australia, and in the case of *Customs House and Sub-Collector's Residence, Broome*, predominantly goods associated with the pearling industry at Roebuck Bay. Though most of the abovementioned examples do not contain an intact residence that was constructed specifically for the Sub-Collector of Customs. *Customs House and Sub-Collector's Residence, Broome* is also the northern most example, demonstrating consideration of the tropical climate with its construction.

#### Off-Form Concrete pre-1900

Customs House was constructed c.1897 using off-form concrete, with horizontal timber boarding used as formwork. During the 1890s, the Western Australian government experimented with form of concrete combined with the *pindan* (rich red soil) of the north-west region, mixed with cement, gravel and coarse sand, producing a rich earthy coloured material. This concrete was used for shuttered concrete walls at Broome and for blocks at Roebourne and Cossack,<sup>42</sup> though it is unclear whether this specific technique was also used in the construction of Customs House.

Other concrete structures of a similar era in the North-West, which are most comparable to Customs House, include:

- P294 *Old Police Lockup and Boab Tree, Broome* – comprising single-storey concrete and iron police building, constructed by the Public Works Department in 1896.
- P303 *Streeter & Male Group of Stores, Broome* (within P291 *Chinatown Conservation Area*) – this place includes a concrete commercial building, dating pre-1904. This building is a rare example of its type and has aesthetic value for the use of concrete and corrugated galvanised iron which is representative of one of the twentieth century Broome building styles. The use of thick concrete walls was to address the tropical heat, cyclones, and termites. The building has been extensively altered.

The above suggests Customs House is one of a few extant examples demonstrating the use of concrete in the construction of buildings pre-1900 in the North-West. No comparative examples were found in other regions of this era, suggesting *Customs House and Sub-Collector's Residence, Broome* includes a rare example of this type of construction in Western Australia.

#### Local History Museums

The former Customs House has been operating at the Broome Historical Museum since 1981. There are a number of comparable places that have been repurposed as local history museums, contrasting with their original function. The below places are on the State Register:

- P19 *Patrick Taylor Cottage, Albany* – a single-storey wattle and daub, mud brick, woodfired brick, and framed weatherboard building that was constructed as a residence c. 1832/33. The place has been a local history museum since the mid-1960s.
- P497 *Claremont Museum* – a single-storey stone and corrugated iron building constructed as a school and church for Pensioner Guard children

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<sup>42</sup> Lewis, Miles. *Australian Building: a cultural investigation*. "Volume 7: Cement and Concrete", p. 7.02.6.

in 1861/62, and later used as a boarding house, police station, and police quarters. The place has been a museum since 1975 and is run by the local government.

- P649 *No 3 Pumping Station, Cunderdin* – a brick and corrugated iron building constructed in 1901/2 as a pumping station associated with the Goldfields Water Supply Scheme. The place has functioned as a museum since 1973, focusing on the region's wheatbelt and pipeline history.
- P1170 *Walkaway Railway Station Museum* – a railway complex comprising a Federation Arts and Crafts style railway station building, a goods shed, and other structures, dating from 1888. The place has functioned as a local history museum since 1972.
- P1804 *Courthouse Museum, Narrogin* – a single-storey stone building first constructed as a government school in 1894, and later became the Narrogin Court House. The place has functioned as a museum since 1976.
- P4285 *Pioneer Museum, Greenough* – a two-storey brick and stone cottage, outbuildings, and gardens first constructed as a residence in 1862 that is associated with the early agricultural development of the Greenough Front Flats. The place has functioned as the Pioneer Museum since 1966 and is one of the earliest museums of its kind established in the Midwest region of Western Australia.

The above suggests many historic buildings have been repurposed by local community groups for interpretation and use as a museum with a focus on the history of the region, similar to the former Customs House. The conversion of Customs House to become the Broome Historical Museum suggests the place has social value to locals and visitors to the region as a local landmark, contributing to the community's sense of place.

## 12. 5 KEY REFERENCES

Broome Museum Conservation Management Plan, prepared for the Broome Historical Society, by Laura Gray, Heritage & Conservation Consultation in association with Irene Sauman, Historian, March 2009.

## 12. 6 FURTHER RESEARCH

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