



## 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)

- 7.5.6 Policing Australia
- 8.10 Pursuing excellence in the arts and sciences

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

- 403 Law and Order
- 407 Cultural activities

#### 11.1 AESTHETIC VALUE\*

*Art Gallery Administration Building*, viewed from the exterior, is a fine, simply rendered example of Federation Romanesque style stone construction architecture. With its pillow shaped rock faced Donnybrook sandstone construction walls, symmetrical arrangement of pavilions, arcades and fenestration, the building makes a strong and simple statement, while retaining a domestic scale. The building's main or north façade is its most important and detailed element. The landscaping installed in the James Street road reserve obscures much of the façade, especially when the Plane trees are in full leaf. The stone pier, plinth and cast iron paling fence are an integral part of this design and contribute significantly to its overall visual impact. (Criterion 1.1)

The interior contains only one room that is virtually unchanged, a large number that have had only a small number of changes and a few that have been changed considerably by partitioning off during the adaptation works from 1953 onwards. The unchanged room (113) and those rooms that have had few changes (G01, G02, G13, 105, 110 and 115), have fine spatial qualities and remaining details that demonstrate high design standards and workmanship. Later alterations of the remaining spaces have tended to alter the reading of the spaces and to remove the fine qualities exhibited

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

by the spaces previously noted. The creation of the theatrette G08 and the clearing out of the partitions to room 108 have made these spaces into intrusive adaptations of previously elegant spaces. (Criterion 1.1)

The elements that were added to the building in 1976 to achieve *Art Gallery Administration Building* in its present form are competent renderings of Late Modern architecture in their own right, but do not contribute significantly to the overall aesthetic impact of the place as a whole. The courtyard that was created to the south and east of the original building is a pleasant space and the relationship between this space and the boardroom is a successful interpretation of a much-used modern architectural motif. The majority of the internal spaces in the additions are workmanlike designs and the boardroom is the only space that is of any note in an aesthetic sense. (Criterion 1.1)

The former Police Quarters is a competent execution of the Federation Romanesque style rather than an innovative artistic achievement. It shows a confident use of the vocabulary of the style. The 1976 works could also be seen as competent late twentieth century architecture at a conceptual level and the execution of the interiors of this section of the building are more a la mode than innovative. (Criterion 1.2)

*Art Gallery Administration Building* is an important component of the Art Gallery environment and of the wider context of the Perth Cultural Centre as a whole. The relationship between the historic components of the Cultural Centre is close enough to regard the place as an historic and architecturally significant precinct as a whole. Indeed, it can be read as part of a wider precinct that includes the former Police Courts (AGWA Centenary Gallery), the Old Gaol (WAM), the former Art Gallery, Geology Building and Jubilee Building (WAM), Perth Boys School (PICA) and Swan Barracks in particular. Attempts have been made to unify the precinct with common landscaping and paving themes, but in the process the sense of street and cadastre have been lost. The principle of attempting to identify the place as a precinct was a good one, but the execution failed to achieve a result that was compatible with the dynamics of the urban environment or to reveal the significant architectural elements in the precinct. Notwithstanding elements that are of little significance or are intrusive, the former Police Quarters section of the Administrative Wing of the Art Gallery contributes significantly to a civic cultural environment of considerable significance. (Criterion 1.4)

## **11. 2. HISTORIC VALUE**

In its role as the Police Quarters, *Art Gallery Administration Building* has significance for its capacity to contribute to the illustration of the history and development of policing in the Perth Metropolitan area. It has particular significance for demonstrating the standard of accommodation and living conditions for single constables at the beginning of the twentieth century, at a time when it was compulsory for single constables to live in quarters or barracks. (Criterion 2.1)

The present arrangements in *Art Gallery Administration Building* have little to some significance on their own account for demonstrating how the Art

Gallery is administered and how management of the State's Art Gallery has evolved in the last quarter of the twentieth century. Though some of the spaces have had continuous functions since the establishment of the Administration Building, many of the functions have altered or have been relocated in the history of the place. (Criterion 2.1)

In common with the other historic elements of the present Perth Cultural Centre, the former Police Quarters is a product of the wealth generated by the 1890s Gold Rush and the prosperity which the boom phenomenon brought to Western Australia. Other important projects included a substantial railway system (from 1881), gas reticulated (from 1882), electricity reticulated to a limited extent (from 1891), sanitation systems commenced (1890s), modern police force (1892), the first art gallery, library, museum (1891), piped water for the metropolitan area (1890s), the Coolgardie Water Supply (1903), the new Houses of Parliament (1904) and many more important public projects. (Criterion 2.2)

The new Art Gallery of Western Australia and the adaptation of the former Police Quarters to transform it to *Art Gallery Administration Building* was related to two other historic events. The first was the nickel boom of the 1970s, which brought new people and new wealth to Western Australia and put pressure for improvement and change on cultural institutions. The second event was the State's Sesquicentennial year celebrations, which provided a specific impetus for the design and completion of the project (Criterion 2.2)

The former Police Quarters, later Police and CIB offices and then *Art Gallery Administration Building* is closely associated with a number of significant individuals who have had an impact on the history and development of the State including its architect Hillson Beasley; Police Commissioners T. H. Andersen, J. M. O'Brien, R. T. Napier and A. L. M. Wedd; Art Gallery Directors Frank Norton, Frank Ellis, Betty Churcher, Paula Latos Vallier and Alan Dodge; prominent curators Lou Klepac, Hendrik Kohlenburg, John Stringer, Robert Bell, Janda Gooding, Anna Gray, Barbara Chapman, Gary Dufour; Board Chairs Ella Fry, Robert Homes á Court, Trevor Eastwood and board members, Kerry Stokes, Dr Constable, Professor Constable, Dr Dolph Zink, Dr Harold Schenberg, Sir James Cruthers and many others. (Criterion 2.3)

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

*Art Gallery Administration Building*, the former Police Quarters section, has some significance for its use of Donnybrook stone and for its capacity to teach about aspects of its durability in use for construction, together with the success and failure of past repair strategies. (Criterion 3.1)

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

The former Police Quarters section of the building has social value for the historic role it played in provision of accommodation for the police force's single officers from the date of its completion until it became part of the Police Administration and housed the Police Commissioner and Criminal Investigation Bureau. In the latter role, it continued to have significance for

its association with policing and, in combination with the former Police Courts on the adjacent land, the administration of justice. For many in the community, these associations remain strong and durable and many people still refer to these buildings by their former names. (Criterion 4.1)

Similarly, as the Art Gallery's administrative centre, the place has filled an important place in the education of the West Australian public for many years. The complex as a whole has social value and the component part under discussion in this document clearly plays an important and enduring part in the cultural institution. (Criterion 4.1)

Listings by The National Trust of Australia (WA), the Australian Heritage Commission, and the Registration on an interim basis by Heritage Council of Western Australia, together with the inclusion of the place in the City of Perth Municipal Inventory and in the City of Perth Town Planning Scheme schedule under clause 46, are also a measure of social significance, though they are not conclusive evidence of social significance. (Criterion 4.2)

*Art Gallery Administration Building*, particularly as the former Police Quarters building, is part of a collection of civic and cultural institutions located in the Perth Cultural Centre that contribute significantly to the community's sense of history and place. (Criterion 4.2)

## **12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE**

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

Although not directly related and physically separated by a road reserve, the former Police Quarters section of *Art Gallery Administration Building* is part of a family of structures in the Perth Cultural Centre that are executed in the Federation Romanesque style. Other states chose to use various forms of classically derived architecture for their cultural institutions and civic buildings in the latter half of the nineteenth century and the early part of the twentieth century. The collection of buildings in the Federation Romanesque style has rarity value as a collection of buildings in this particular style. This is rare in terms of the State and Nation. (Criterion 5.1)

The former Police Quarters section of *Art Gallery Administration Building* has some rarity value as one of a small number of police quarters buildings built in the metropolitan and regional centres in Western Australia, where police constables lived in barrack style or dormitory accommodation. (Criterion 5.2)

### **12. 2 REPRESENTATIVENESS**

The former Police Quarters section of *Art Gallery Administration Building* is significant for its capacity to demonstrate, with the assistance of interpretation, the life of police in barracks and is therefore representative of police barracks accommodation. The Quarters represents a variety of facets of late Victorian and early Federation period history and society in the Colony, which provided Western Australia with some of its finest architecture and settings, together with institutions that remain part of our present society. It was conceived in a time of the pursuit of a broad education, the desire to create order, collect and classify all manner of things with a view very often to exploring its potential for exploitation. In its history, it is a marriage of both streams. Some of the police barracked here assisted in gathering collections for the museum across the road. (Criterion 6.2)

The former Police Quarters is a fine representative example of Federation Romanesque architecture stripped back to a simplified austere form and applied to a domestic scale building. (Criterion 6.2)

The 1976 works to the former Police Quarters that were executed in the late twentieth century International Style are fair representative examples of the genre. (Criterion 6.2)

### **12. 3 CONDITION**

The setting of the place bears little relation to the original setting and subsequent changes to ground levels and gardening practices are having a negative impact on the exterior fabric of the place. Most of the stonework is in good order, though there are instances of poor repair strategies to jointing and of mortar loss, together with deterioration in the stonework where ground levels and finishes have been changed. The lead roof

decking on the two balconies and the balcony drainage system is in a poor state of repair and is causing deterioration in the adjacent area walls.

The inclusion of toilets in the original fabric has caused problems with damp around new plumbing fixtures.

Cracking has occurred in a number of locations and some of this cracking is quite extensive. The building would appear to be breaking its back, which is to say that the two end wings would seem to be rotating outward from the central part of the building. Although this cracking looks unsightly, advice has been received that the cracking is not of a serious nature.

A good deal of the work associated with the 1976 works is showing signs of extensive crazing in the plaster. This would appear to be more a problem of materials and workmanship than any inherent problem with the substrates.

Overall the old Police Quarters is in good condition and the 1897 and subsequent works are in fair condition.

#### **12. 4 INTEGRITY**

The Police Quarters have long since ceased to be used for their intended purpose. Subsequent uses have brought about significant change. However, the present use has the capacity to retain and conserve the remaining physical evidence of the Police Quarters fabric. There are opportunities to conserve the existing fabric and to reconstruct missing elements, so that the ongoing conservation of the remaining significant fabric is capable of being undertaken. The integrity of the place is moderate.

#### **12. 5 AUTHENTICITY**

By and large, the changes to the original Police Quarters has been a subtractive process. Much internal detail has been lost and the elements of the original setting have been removed. The external elevations have had only minor changes. The interior has been subject to varying degrees of change and there are no spaces in original condition. Several spaces are in near original condition and a further group of spaces with few alterations. The degree of authenticity of the exterior is high and that of the interior is moderate to low.

### **13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE**

Attached are key sections of the supporting evidence prepared by Considine and Griffiths Architects Pty Ltd with Erickson & Taylor, 'Art Gallery of Western Australia Administration Building Conservation Plan' prepared for Contract and Management Services in September 1999.

#### **13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE**

For a discussion of the Documentary Evidence refer to Considine and Griffiths Architects Pty Ltd with Erickson & Taylor, 'Art Gallery of Western Australia Administration Building Conservation Plan' prepared for Contract and Management Services in September 1999.

#### **13.2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE**

For a discussion of the Physical Evidence refer to Considine and Griffiths Architects Pty Ltd with Erickson & Taylor, 'Art Gallery of Western Australia Administration Building Conservation Plan' prepared for Contract and Management Services in September 1999.

#### **13.3 COMPARATIVE INFORMATION**

For a Comparative Analysis refer to Considine and Griffiths Architects Pty Ltd with Erickson & Taylor, 'Art Gallery of Western Australia Administration Building Conservation Plan' prepared for Contract and Management Services in September 1999.

#### **13.4 REFERENCES**

Considine and Griffiths Architects Pty Ltd with Erickson & Taylor, 'Art Gallery of Western Australia Administration Building Conservation Plan' prepared for Contract and Management Services in September 1999.

#### **13.5 FURTHER RESEARCH**

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