



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.

11.1 AESTHETIC VALUE*

North Perth Post Office (fmr) is a good example of the type of small scale public building built during the First World War. The *North Perth Post Office (fmr)* was associated with Hillson Beasley, the Chief Architect 1905-1916, whose work is generally defined as Federation Free style. (Criterion 1.1)

Situated at an elevated junction, *North Perth Post Office (fmr)* is an integral part of the Leake and View Streets vista. (Criterion 1.3)

The *North Perth Post Office (fmr)*, when taken with the adjacent residential area, local government church, town hall and fire station, forms a significant part of the North Perth townscape. (Criterion 1.4)

11.2. HISTORIC VALUE

North Perth Post Office (fmr) is a feature of the historic development of the northern suburbs. It was built as a result of the development and need for postal services in this area and in the State in general. (Criterion 2.1)

North Perth Post Office (fmr) is associated with the architectural work done by Chief Architect Hillson Beasley. (Criterion 2.3)

11.3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE

11.4. SOCIAL VALUE

North Perth Post Office (fmr) is valued by the community for its service to the public and as a point of social contact during its function as a post office 1916-1996. (Criterion 4.1)

* 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* North Ryde NSW, Angus & Robertson 1989.

12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE

12. 1. RARITY

12. 2 REPRESENTATIVENESS

North Perth Post Office (fmr) is representative of a public building designed by the Public Works Department in the early 1900s, a design influenced by the Federation style and built in red-brick. (Criterion 6.1)

North Perth Post Office (fmr) was specifically built and designed for the purpose of functioning as a post office. (Criterion 6.2)

It is a fine example of a post office and attached residence, and is a demonstration of the particular way of life of the postmaster/postmistress at the time. (Criterion 6.2)

12. 3 CONDITION

The condition of the place is very good, no doubt a reflection of regular maintenance and repairs, in response to the continued use of the place.

12. 4 INTEGRITY

The integrity of the place is high. The changes in use are closely associated with the original and continuing function of postal services.

12. 5 AUTHENTICITY

The place demonstrates a high degree of authenticity with minimal intrusion to the fabric.

13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

The documentary evidence has been compiled by Laura Gray, Conservation Professional, with assistance in primary research by Gillian O'Mara, Archival Researcher. The physical evidence has been compiled by Laura Gray. Additional research has been compiled by Heritage Council staff.

13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

In the 1890s and 1900s, the enormous increase in population in Western Australia, associated with the discovery of gold first in the Kimberley and then around Kalgoorlie, led to the suburbanisation of Perth and the construction of thousands of residential dwellings. In the 1890s four post offices were built to serve Perth's rapidly expanding residential areas north of the railway line.

The need for postal services in North Perth was raised in parliament on 24 September 1895, when Mr Wood requested, 'the Government to give postal accommodation to the residents of North Perth, either by the establishment of a post office, or by placing a pillar-box at the corner of Palmerston and Brisbane Streets, and also one at the corner of Lincoln and Burt Streets.'¹ As a result, the former *Brisbane Street Post Office* (1896) was built, followed by the construction of the *Aberdeen Street Post Office* (1897), the *Leederville Post Office* (1897) and a post office in Newcastle Street (now demolished). With the exception of the *Leederville Post Office* (1897) which was built under the direction of Chief Architect J. H. Grainger (although still in the style of Poole), all of these buildings were designed by the Government Architect George Temple Poole.

The rapid expansion of the residential area north of the railway continued throughout the early 1900s through to the 1920s. Gazetted as a municipality in 1901, in 1904 only 12% of North Perth had been built on, but by 1911 this area had trebled.² North Perth Municipality united with the Perth City Council within the provisions of the Municipal Corporation Act of 1906. This was validated by the *City of Perth Act* 1914.³

The Post Master General's Department found a suitable location for the post office, on the corner of View and Leake (also referred to as John Street in early documents) streets, North Perth. The lot was in an elevated position and was adjacent to the North Perth Town Hall.

The site was then owned by Perth Architect Michael Cavanagh. After the Public Service Inspector had valued the land, the Post Master General's Department formerly agreed to purchase the lot for £200 on 11 November 1904.⁴ In May 1905, Cavanagh, through his agent J. Fiddes, sold the property to the Commonwealth of Australia for the purpose of a constructing a post

¹ *Western Australian Parliamentary Debates*, 1895.

² Stannage, C.T., *The People of Perth*, Perth City Council. Perth Western Australia, 1979, p. 243

³ *ibid*, p.296

⁴ Australian Archives, Acc No. K 273/44 Item No. 1904/4.

office on the site.⁵ The transfer of ownership was a lengthy process with some delays due to differences in valuations and subsequent delays in authorisation.⁶

During the long time period between the land purchase and the new post office being built, several other postal facilities were opened in the area to service the needs of the growing community.⁷ In 1910, an Allowance Post and Telephone Office was established in Mrs Rome's shop at 491 Beaufort Street to service the needs of those living in the west ward.⁸ In 1912, another Allowance Post Office was established in Isaac's shop at 90 Grosvenor Road to service the east ward.⁹ By September 1911, the growth in population, and subsequently in correspondence, made it necessary to increase the delivery service, replacing the horse mail service with bicycle deliveries.¹⁰

In September 1912, a letter from the Postmaster General's Department discusses the construction of a new building on the corner of Alma and Fitzgerald streets in which an Official Post Office would be conducted. This 'North Perth Official Post Office' appears to have been the temporary post office (branch office) for the North Perth area, while waiting for the new post office on Leake and View streets to be built.¹¹

The *North Perth Post Office* was erected in 1916 for the cost of £1,720.¹² The Chief Architect of the Public Works Department at the time was Hillson Beasley. Noted for his Federation Free style, Beasley's 'post office work' is considered to be a continuance of the designs of his predecessors Temple-Poole and Grainger.¹³ Like the other four main post offices in North Perth at this time - and around the state, this new building had a residential area to accommodate the Postmaster/mistress. In this case, the Postmaster/mistress' residence was attached to the main building.

⁵ Australian Archives, Acc No. K 273/44 Item No. 1904/4; C.T. Vol 288 Fol. 182; *Government Gazette* 27 May 1905 p.479.

⁶ Australian Archives, Acc No. K 273/44 Item No. 1904/4. From telegrams dated May 1905.

⁷ It is not clear why there was such a delay between the purchase of the land and the post office being built. Although the transfer of ownership would have caused some minor delays, it is more likely that the construction of other public buildings (especially those in developing rural towns/areas) were given priority by the Department of Public Works.

⁸ Australian Archives, Acc No. K 1/1 Item No. 195/10.

⁹ Australian Archives, Acc No. K 1/1 Item No. 36/1674/12.

¹⁰ Australian Archives, Acc No. K 1/1 Item No. 3649/11. Correspondence; Superintendent Mail Branch GPO to Acting Deputy Post Master General.

¹¹ Australian Archives, Acc No. K 1/1 Item No. 3030/12. (The letter also mentions an existing Allowance Office at Angove Street, from which the cabinet, instruments and cables would be removed and reconnected to the Alma Street post office.

¹² *WA Votes and Proceedings of Parliament*, 'Annual Report of the Department of Public Works & Trading Concerns, 1956-16', 1916-17, Vol. 2, p. 286

¹³ Pope, Bush, Broomfield and Kelsall, 'Historical and Architectural Assessment of Post Offices in Western Australia owned by Australia Post as at 21st July 1991', NEGP and the National Trust, November 1993, p. 17&18

At the same time that the *North Perth Post Office* was being built, work was being done on the new Perth GPO building located between Murray and Wellington streets.¹⁴

Some renovations, painting and repairs were done to the building, including the erection of a flag pole, in 1959/60 for a cost of £1,379.¹⁵ It was probably at this time that the Postmaster's residence was altered to provide access between the post office and the residence, providing convenience and more office space.

In the late 1970s, a new shopping centre development in nearby Fitzgerald Street signalled a change in consumer patterns and, as a result, patronage of the post office began to steadily decline. Business was further hindered by the relocation of postal delivery services from *North Perth Post Office* to a delivery centre (in c.1995). A new Post Office on the corner of View and Fitzgerald Streets was planned.

In January 1996, after an extensive office fitout, the administration department for the area managers of the Central Business District and the Northern Suburbs postal services moved into the post office building.

North Perth Post Office officially closed in July 1996. In 1996, a new post office opened on the corner of View and Fitzgerald streets in North Perth. In 1998, the place is used by Australia Post as an administrative centre and offices.

13. 2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

The brick and tile single-storey building is located on the south-west corner of the intersection of View and Leake streets in North Perth. The intersection is in an elevated position with direct city aspect to the south, and surrounding environs to the north. Immediately adjacent in View street is the North Perth Town Hall (1898) and lesser hall (1902). On the south side of the Post Office is the former North Perth Fire Station (1926). St Hilda's Anglican Church (c.1915) and North Perth Primary School, on the northern side of the View and Leake street intersection, completes the precinct.

North Perth Post Office (fmr) comprises the former Post Office, on the corner, and the adjoining former Postmaster's residence, with the entry in Leake Street. The height of the walls and eaves mark the difference between the post office and the residence, with the post office having a considerably higher eaves line.

The entire building is a red brick construction in a standard stretcher bond, with rendered sill, window reveals and lintels. The hip tiled roof has a decorative ridge detail. The corners of the post office section of the building are banded pilasters to complement the banded brick column on the street corner of the porch. The residential entry with the low skillion roof also has banded brick columns.

¹⁴ WA Votes and Proceedings of Parliament, 'Annual Report of the Department of Public Works & Trading Concerns, 1956-16', 1916-17, Vol. 2, p. 286

¹⁵ Australian Archives, Acc No. PP 280/1/0 Item No. P1958/59/8117.

The windows are double hung sash windows with 12 panes. The two outer walls of the post office have a set of two windows on each wall, and double glass and chrome doors (c.1950s) give access to the interior of the former post office. The main residential room facing Leake Street has a series of three vertical format sash windows. The residential entry door has retained the sidelight panel detail although the frosted glass is a recent intervention. The walls where the post office boxes were located have been rendered.

The interior of the building has retained a high degree of authenticity and integrity despite the 1996 refurbishment. These works introduced a series of partitions into the large former post office facility, and generally painted, carpeted and window dressed the space with minimal intervention to the original fabric. The original tongue and groove ceiling lining is in place, as are the windows and doors. The former fireplace was converted to a safe many years ago.

A door has been inserted in the rear post office wall (c.1970), to access the former residential section. All the main rooms in the residential area have retained their fireplaces and mantelpieces, although two of the five are timber stained, two are painted, and one is rendered over. The doors and door hardware are the original fabric as are the coat-hooks in the entry. The kitchen and bathroom are accessed from the back verandah which also contains the pantry. The kitchen has retained the original fireplace and mantle piece, although a toilet has been added to the south wall of the bathroom with a doorway for access.

A red brick skillion roofed building c.1970 is located metres from the bathroom on the east boundary. The property is enclosed by a 1.2 metre high chain link and pipe fence along the Leake Street boundary except where the former residential entry has been paved to allow for vehicle parking. Mature shrub trees obscure much of the view of the former post office building and residence along the Leake Street facade. The rear of the yard has access from Leake Street.

13.3 REFERENCES

Pope, Bush, Broomfield and Kelsall, 'Historical and Architectural Assessment of Post Offices in Western Australian owned by Australia Post as at 21st July 1991', NEGP and the National Trust, November 1993

13.4 FURTHER RESEARCH
