



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)

- 7.7.1 Providing for the common defence
- 7.7.2 Preparing to face invasion
- 7.7.3 Going to war

HERITAGE COUNCIL OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA THEME(S)

- 501 World Wars and Other Wars
- 404 Community services and utilities
- 209 Technology and technological change
- 401 Government and politics

11.1 AESTHETIC VALUE*

11.2. HISTORIC VALUE

RAAF Headquarters Bunker (fmr), Belmont was a military post that played a significant role in the transfer of information of aircraft movements towards the end of World War Two (fully operational on 14th March 1945) through a series of radar stations. This information was used to determine if planes were required to intercept unidentified or suspicious aircraft. (Criteria 2.1 & 2.2)

RAAF Headquarters Bunker (fmr), Belmont was built in response to the bombing of Broome (3rd March 1942) to provide a better-secured facility for Fighter Sector Headquarters against a possible air raid. (Criterion 2.2)

RAAF Headquarters Bunker (fmr), Belmont was designed and built by the Allied Works Council, which was responsible for planning and designing all works required by the Allied Forces in Australia between 1943 and 1945. (Criterion 2.3)

RAAF Headquarters Bunker (fmr), Belmont played an important role for the Civil Defence and Emergency Department (also known as the State Emergency Service (SES)) as a potential operational headquarters in case of national

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Canberra, 1991, with additional reference to Richards, O. *Theoretical Framework for Designed Landscapes in WA*, unpublished report, 1997.

emergency from 1967 to 2003, and particularly during the Cold War period (1948 – 1989). (Criterion 2.1)

RAAF Headquarters Bunker (fmr), Belmont played a role in the development of the Woman's Auxiliary Australian Air Force (WAAAF) and the Volunteer Air Observer Corps (VAOC), as there were women from the WAAAF as well as volunteers from VAOC working at the Fighter Sector Headquarters. (Criterion 2.1)

11. 3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE

RAAF Headquarters Bunker (fmr), Belmont is an important example of technical achievement required to construct a partially subterranean bunker for the purposes of military defence. (Criterion 3.3)

11. 4. SOCIAL VALUE

RAAF Headquarters Bunker (fmr), Belmont is valued by the past and present military community and the wider community for its historic and military associations with World War Two as evidenced by its inclusion in the Shire of Belmont's Municipal Inventory. (Criterion 4.1)

12 DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE

12. 1. RARITY

RAAF Headquarters Bunker (fmr), Belmont is unique in that it was the only bunker built to be a Headquarters for the RAAF in Western Australia. The other seven bunkers known to be built in Western Australia were built as components of greater military facilities. (Criterion 5.1)

RAAF Headquarters Bunker (fmr), Belmont is rare for the fact that it was the only intelligence Headquarters for the RAAF in Western Australia during World War Two and was used as an information centre (from March 1945 to August 1945) to make decisions about Western Australia's Air Defence. (Criterion 5.2)

12. 3. CONDITION

RAAF Headquarters Bunker (fmr), Belmont is in good condition. All the finishes are well maintained, owing to its conversion as the SES Headquarters. The current internal finishes are representative of late twentieth century office fit outs with carpeted floors, flush plasterboard lined walls, surface mounted fluorescent light fittings and semi glazed partitioning. There is little obvious evidence of fabric from the original period of construction.

12. 4. INTEGRITY

RAAF Headquarters Bunker (fmr), Belmont has moderate to high integrity. The Bunker's grass covered roof has been replaced with metal decking which could easily be replaced if the need arose. The filter room has undergone two major changes: removal of gallery seating and removal of one stairway entrance. This fabric was not conserved and therefore reduces the integrity of the *RAAF Headquarters Bunker (fmr), Belmont*.

12. 5 AUTHENTICITY

The overall authenticity of the *RAAF Headquarters Bunker (fmr), Belmont* is moderate. A few alterations have been undertaken to convert the RAAF Headquarters design to accommodate that of the SES requirements.

Alterations have been made to the *RAAF Headquarters Bunker (fmr), Belmont*, including the removal of the earth covering on the concrete roof and replacement with metal decking. Internally, the Filter room has undergone a number of changes, including removal of the gallery seating and one stairway entrance. Some of these changes would have been made in the 1960s, when the building was first taken over, but most of the internal alterations are likely to have been made during the upgrading in the early 1980s.

13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

The wording of this document has been adapted from 'Standard Heritage Record for SES Bunker', prepared by Smith and Hooke Architects for Vic Smith and Associates Pty Ltd Property Consultants on behalf of Fire and Emergency Services Authority, 2003 with amendments and/or additions by HCWA staff and the Register Committee.

13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

For a discussion of the Documentary evidence refer to the 'Standard Heritage Record for SES Bunker' (pp.13-14), prepared by Smith and Hooke Architects for Vic Smith and Associates Pty Ltd Property Consultants on behalf of Fire and Emergency Services Authority, 2003.

Additional Information –

Established in February 1942, the Allied Works Council was responsible for carrying out any works required by the Allied Forces in Australia during the Second World War.¹

The term 'Cold War' is used to describe the post-World War II struggle between the United States and its allies and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) and its allies. During the Cold War period, which is generally accepted as starting with the Berlin Blockade (1948) and continuing until the Berlin Wall fell in 1989², international politics were heavily shaped by the intense rivalry between these two nations of power and the political ideologies they represented: democracy and capitalism in the case of the United States and its allies, and Communism in the case of the Soviet Union.³

As one of America's allies, Australia created civil defence strategies in order to protect itself in the event of attack or nuclear exchange. It was in response to this climate of fear that the Australia Government re-instated some World War II bunkers and military posts to again act as strategic defence centres. It is probable that the *RAAF Headquarters Bunker (fmr)* was re-opened in 1967 as a Civil Defence bunker in response to the global political climate of the Cold War.⁴

13.2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

For a discussion of the Physical evidence refer to the 'Standard Heritage Record for SES Bunker' (pp.6-12), prepared by Smith and Hooke Architects for Vic Smith and Associates Pty Ltd Property Consultants on behalf of Fire and Emergency Services Authority, 2003.

13.3 COMPARATIVE INFORMATION

There are seven other bunkers in Western Australia according to the Heritage Council Western Australia (HCWA) database and the Royal Australian Artillery

¹ Australian Science and Technology Heritage Centre., *Allied Works Council*, 2003 <http://www.austehc.unimelb.edu.au/asaw/biogs/A000305b.htm>

² Australian War Memorial., *Significant Cold War Events*, 2004. <http://www.awm.gov.au/korea/origins/cold/events.htm>

³ Msn Encarta, *Cold War*, 2004 http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761569374/Cold_War.html

⁴ Msn Encarta, *Cold War*, 2004 http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761569374/Cold_War.html

Association of Western Australia: *Army Bunkers*, Yanchep National Park, Wanneroo, Metropolitan (P02682); *Concrete Bunkers*, Merredin, Wheatbelt (P13512); *Generator Bunkers – Radar Installation*, Yanchep National Park, Wanneroo, Metropolitan (P14278); *World War Two Airfield and Bunkers*, Springfield Capel, Southwest (P15133); *Signal Hill Rottnest Island* (P09146); *Leighton barracks*, Leighton, Metropolitan (P03247) and *Artillery Barracks and Fremantle Harbour Signal Station (fmr)* (P991). All were built during World War Two and all had different functions.

The Army Bunkers built in 1940 at Yanchep National Park is the only Registered Bunker and was used for radar communication.

The Concrete Bunker in Merredin was built in 1941. It is unascertainable how these bunkers were used - it is presumed for storage or communication. The Generator Bunker at Yanchep (1946) was used for the storage and protection of generators to supply the Army Bunker facilities and radar installations. The World War II Airfield and Bunker at Capel, built in 1942 was presumably used as a munitions bunker. The defences at Leighton (1942) and at Signal Hill Rottnest (construction started in 1936) had bunkers that were used as a storage facility for munitions and the storage of guns. The Artillery Barracks in Fremantle includes an underground control room, built in the 1930s, which was used for communications.

It is important to note that the other bunkers in the state were not specifically designed as operational headquarters. The other bunkers were used as storage facilities for generators, munitions, and machinery. The *RAAF Headquarters Bunker (fmr)* was designed to operate as a headquarters and not to store munitions.

The *RAAF Headquarters Bunker (fmr)*, Belmont was built in response to World War II as a means of defending Western Australia against surprise enemy attack. The *RAAF Headquarters Bunker (fmr)*, Belmont was designed to be the Headquarters for the Fighter Sector of the RAAF.

13. 4 KEY REFERENCES

HCWA Database

Smith and Hooke Architects, 2003. *Standard Heritage Record for SES Bunker*. 2003.

13. 5 FURTHER RESEARCH

The HCWA database has been used to ascertain the current condition and past use of the four other bunkers in Western Australia. The past use of all the bunkers was unable to be determined and this requires further research.