



HERITAGE
COUNCIL
OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

REGISTER OF HERITAGE PLACES

Assessment Documentation

11. 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 *Heritage Act 2018* and the indicators adopted on 14 June 2019.

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

Bundi Club, Meekatharra is one of a few remaining and intact public buildings dating from the early twentieth century in Meekatharra and demonstrates the early development of the mining settlement.

Bundi Club, Meekatharra provided a venue for social, welfare, educational opportunities and support until the mid-1990s for local Aboriginal families, these support networks spanning generations of Aboriginal families that came together at this place.

Bundi Club, Meekatharra is closely associated with the Law Court and Mining practices of the twentieth century, being used as a centre for the application for mining leases and settlement of disputes from 1911 to 1963.

Bundi Club, Meekatharra functioned as a courthouse during the administration of the *Native (Citizenship Rights) Act 1944*, as a place where Aboriginal people could gain full citizenship rights at the cost of forgoing their traditional cultural ties.

Bundi Club, Meekatharra was constructed in 1911 to the original designs prepared under the direction of Hillson Beasley, Chief Architect of the Public Works Department of the Western Australian State Government.

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

Bundi Club, Meekatharra is one of a few extant court houses and mining registrar's offices dating from the early twentieth century.

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

As a relatively unmodified building, *Bundi Club, Meekatharra* has the potential, through archaeological investigation, to uncover the cultural material that may shed on the day to day operation of the Mining Registrar's Office or the Bundi Club.

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

Bundi Club, Meekatharra is representative of the Public Works Department's attempts to design standard government buildings for climate control.

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

Bundi Club, Meekatharra has a high social and cultural significance to the local Aboriginal community who have strong memories of the place, and still retain considerable amount of records and memorabilia of the place, as the only building in the region (excluding places of worship) where both Aboriginal and mixed social and community gatherings took indoors between 1963 and 1996.

Bundi Club, Meekatharra provided a venue for all social events from church services and celebration of births, weddings and wakes to catering for local schools, sewing groups, educational programs, social dance nights and other political and business meetings connected with Aboriginal community development and as such, contributes to the community's sense of place.

11(g) Any special association it may have with the life or work of a person, group or organisation of importance in Western Australia's history;

Bundi Club, Meekatharra is closely associated with mid twentieth century resurgence of Aboriginal social, political and cultural identity and the work of Mrs Avy Curley OAM, a prominent Aboriginal activist who was responsible for considerable advances in Aboriginal welfare in Western Australia.

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

Bundi Club, Meekatharra has a complex roof ducted ventilation system incorporated throughout the building, which together with eaves ventilation panels and well positioned openings and verandahs, contribute to make this a special feature of the design. Attempts to design for climate control were introduced into the Public Works Department's Architect's Office in the early 1900s and great effort was made to explore innovative cooling systems in these buildings.

12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE

12.1 CONDITION

Bundi Club, Meekatharra is in very poor condition, with the building both dilapidated from lack of maintenance and severely vandalised since the closure of the place c.1997.

12.2 INTEGRITY

This section explains the extent to which the fabric is in its original state.

The integrity of the place is considered high, as the design and all major spaces within the building are original. The whole building is an example of a typical late nineteenth or early twentieth century courthouse and mining registrar's office constructed on the Western Australian goldfields.

12.3 AUTHENTICITY

This section explains the extent to which the original intention is evident, and the compatibility of current use.

Being unused, *Bundi Club, Meekatharra* has a low degree of authenticity. However, with substantial repairs, the place could potentially be restored to its former use as an Aboriginal community centre and continue to provide social support for the local community.

13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

The documentation for this place incorporates information from the Conservation Plan prepared by Amanda Jean and Glenys Hayes in 2000, a heritage assessment completed by State Heritage Office staff in April 2017, with amendments and/or additions by the Heritage Council and the Department.¹

13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

Bundi Club, Meekatharra consists of a former Courthouse and Mining Registrar's Office established in 1912 that was adapted in 1963 to become an Aboriginal social support centre, a function which continued until the closure of the place c.1992. The place demonstrates both the development of the remote mining town of Meekatharra as well as the development of Aboriginal activism and self-determination.

It is unknown exactly when Aboriginal groups arrived in the Midwest region of Western Australia, however excavations of Yalibirri Minda Rock shelter at the Weld Ranges indicates on ongoing physical and cultural presence stretching back at least 30,000 years.² The traditional lifestyle of the Aboriginal people of this region, currently collectively known as the Yamatji, can be broadly characterised by small scattered family groups, culturally bound by the shared knowledge of the ancestral beings who transformed the landscape, created life and imparted the traditional lore governing social behaviour, kinship relations and respect for the land itself.³ Natural resources utilised by these people included macropods, smaller marsupials, birds and reptiles. They also gathered and processed seeds, yams, fruits and nuts.⁴ The artefacts used by the Aboriginal groups of the region can be broadly summarised as wooden tools, as well as flaked tools utilising banded iron formation, quartz and chalcedony, grinding tools of dolerite, mostly sourced from local stone outcrops or creek beds.⁵

A number of Aboriginal family and language groups developed in the Murchison area, with groups near the current Meekatharra townsite including the *Ngaiawongga*, *Barima*, *Madoitja* and *Wajarri*.⁶ A particular cultural feature of the Wajarri people of this region has been the trade of ochre mined in the Weld Ranges, particularly from P6580 Wilgie Mia and P25362 Little Wilgie Ochre Mine,

¹ Jean, A, Hayes, G, *The Bundi Club: A Conservation Plan*, Australian Heritage Commission, 2000

² Winton, V, Brown, V, Leopold, M, D'Ovidio, B, Yushihermi, E, Carson, A & Hamlett, C, 'The first radiometric Pleistocene dates for Aboriginal occupation at Weld Range, inland Mid West, Western Australia', *Australian Archaeology*, vol 82, 2016

³ Tonkinson, R, 'The Desert Experience', *Aboriginies of the West: Their Past and their Present*, R M & C H Berndt (eds.), pp. 140-141, Alternate spellings include Wadjarri and Wadjari. More information can be found in *Wajarri Yamatji Research Report Bibliography*, National Native Title Tribunal, accessed 8 May 2017, <http://www.nntt.gov.au/Information%20Publications/Wajarri%20Yamatji.pdf>

⁴ Bordes, F, Dortch, C, Thibault, C, Raynal, J P, Bindon, P, 'Walga Rock and Billibong Spring: Two archaeological sequences from the Murchison Basin, Western Australia', *Australian Archaeology*, 1983, pp. 1-3

⁵ Summarised for brevity. A comprehensive discussion of the tools and material culture of the Wajarri people can be found in Brown, V, *Tool-Stone Resource Management in the Weld Range, Midwest Region, Western Australia*, Masters Thesis, UWA School of Social Sciences, 2015.

⁶ Derived from an adapted version of Tindale's tribal boundaries map, 1940. Current map published by the Department of Aboriginal Affairs website, accessed 24 May 2017, and should be considered a guide only. https://www.daa.wa.gov.au/globalassets/pdf-files/maps/state/tindale_daa.pdf

Cue.⁷ This way of life began to be disturbed after 1829 with the arrival of British colonists, who established the settlements of Perth and Fremantle along the Swan River.

Following explorations of the region by British surveyor Robert Austin in 1854, Colonial settlers began to travel into the Murchison in the 1870s, prospecting for minerals or taking up pastoral leases. This expansion intensified after the discovery of gold in the area in 1888 by Bourke, which led to the formal gold claims in 1890 by Connelly.⁸ Other gold finds soon followed, and the Murchison goldfield was proclaimed in September 1891.⁹

The next ten years saw a flood of prospectors enter the region, supplied by the existing pastoral stations, which resulted in the rapid development of mining settlements at Day Dawn, Cue, Nannine and Peak Hill. The makeshift settlements were connected to coast and southern goldfields by the arrival of telegraph lines in 1894 the railway in 1897.¹⁰

In 1895, prospectors Meehan, Porter and Soyich pegged a gold find at a spring named 'Meekatharra,' derived from a local Aboriginal name. The lease changed hands a number of times but was eventually owned by a company who opened a mine at the site.¹¹ Other mines soon followed, and Meekatharra attracted professional, industrialised mining companies as the gold in the area was in submerged reefs and required a more substantial mining operation to access.¹²

Despite the challenges, miners still migrated to the area and by 1900 the jumble of buildings around the mine shafts warranted the attention of a progress committee who pressed the local mining warden to have a proper town site surveyed. Streets and lots were laid out in 1901 and thrown open for sale, however the town site itself was not formally declared until 1903.¹³ A significant event in the early history of the town was the establishment of a State battery in 1901. The battery encouraged the growth of small mining operations by providing ore crushing services and was a sign of the government's confidence in the area.¹⁴

Other visible signs of official confidence in the fledgling town was the establishment of a rail line from Nannine in 1910 and a new courthouse in 1912.¹⁵ Initially, court cases were heard in a calico tent considered 'little better than a furnace during the

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- ⁷ Flood, J, *Archaeology of the Dreamtime*, Angus and Robertson, 1999, pp. 271-273; Tonkinson *et al.*, *op cit.*, p. 3; Smith, M, *The Archaeology of Australia's Deserts*, Cambridge University Press, 2013, pp. 278-280
- ⁸ Edwards, H, *Meekatharra: The gold beyond the rivers*, Swanbourne, H Edwards, 1994, pp. 7-11, 39-41, 49-51; Michael Bourke was a prospector who discovered gold at Berin, while John Connelly was regarded as the first to make a formal claim, Sharp, M, *he Story of the Murchison, - Part 1*, Outback Family History website, accessed 23 November 2020, <https://www.outbackfamilyhistoryblog.com/the-story-of-the-murchison-part-1/>
- ⁹ *Government Gazette*, 24 September 1891, p. 1
- ¹⁰ Edwards *op cit.*, pp. 52-54, 58
- ¹¹ Murray, I, Bianchi, P, Bloomfield, M, Bridge, C, *West Australian Gold Towns and Settlements Volume 1*, Hesperian Press, 2011, p. 75; Edwards *op cit.*, pp. 60
- ¹² *ibid.*, p. 60; Moore, G, *Mining Towns of Western Australia*, Chamber of Minerals and Energy of Western Australia, 1999, pp. 79-80
- ¹³ Murray, *et al.*, *op cit.*, pp. 75-76
- ¹⁴ *The Inquirer and Commercial News*, 26 April 1901, p. 13; *The Murchison Times and Day Dawn Gazette*, 16 April 1901, p. 2
- ¹⁵ Edwards *op cit.*, pp. 67-68; *Murchison Advocate*, 25 August 1910, p. 2; *The West Australian*, 16 August 1910, p. 4; *Meekatharra Miner*, 30 March 1912, p. 4

hot summer months' and unable to protect the privacy of confidential witness statements.¹⁶ By 1911 the local Justices of the Peace refused to sit in the makeshift structure, the local medical officer declared the building to be unfit and the court was temporarily moved to the local community hall.¹⁷ At this time, complaints were also raised regarding the fact that the local Mining Registrar's Office was only open for one hour per day, and the nearest permanent Warden's Court was based in Nannine.¹⁸ The contract for a new Courthouse and Mining Registrar's Office was awarded to G McInnes of Cue in 1911, for the price of £1,233.¹⁹ The structure was designed by Chief Architect of Public Works Hillson Beasley, the timber-framed structure designed in a simplified Federation Queen Anne style.²⁰

The new building was completed in 1912, noted as

*Specially built to enable those who, perforce, have to resort to it to spend their time in a place that will not remind them of an inferno... there is a special provision made for ventilation in the shape of large vent panels in the walls to carry off the vitiated air... The acoustic properties of the room have also been the subject of special attention from the designers.*²¹

The Courthouse and Mining Registrar's Office continued in its assigned functions for the next 50 years, administering State law to local miners, pastoralists and Aboriginal people.

Local Aboriginal people had found employment as shepherds in 1870s, even though sporadic violence between the British settlers and pre-existing Aboriginal families continued into the 1880s.²² However the population surge of British settlers as a result of the gold discoveries meant that by the 1890s there was less employment available for local Aboriginal people. This was exacerbated by a colonial attitude that Aboriginal people should not congregate in towns, and that 'white' labour was preferable to Aboriginal.²³ Aboriginal employment during this period therefore was primarily on stations, and as trackers for lost stock, guiding prospectors and finding water.²⁴

Overall, the impact of colonial settlement on Aboriginal resources and movement in the region resulted in the formation of fringe camps around towns and stations. This move further impacted traditional social structures as scattered groups became centralised into overpopulated camps, which also resulted in the spread of disease.²⁵ Fringe camps in general also created social problems arising from

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- 16 *The Murchison Times and Day Dawn Gazette*, 22 June 1907, p. 2; *The Black Range Courier and Sandstone Observer*, 13 March 1908, p. 2
 - 17 *Meekatharra Miner*, 18 March 1911, p. 2
 - 18 *The West Australian*, 27 February 1911, p. 4; *Murchison Advocate*; Nannine is a ghost town on the shore of Lake Annean, approximately 35 km south of Meekatharra
 - 19 *The Murchison Times and Day Dawn Gazette*, 3 October 1911
 - 20 Jean & Hayes *op cit.*, p. 46
 - 21 *Meekatharra Miner*, 30 March 1912, p. 4
 - 22 Edwards *op cit.*, pp. 84-94
 - 23 Marchant, L R, *Aboriginal Administration in Western Australia, 1886-1905*, Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, 1981, p. 51; *The Murchison Times and Day Dawn Gazette*, 7 November 1907, p. 3
 - 24 *Daily Telegraph and North Murchison and Pilbara Gazette*, 1 July 1920, p. 2; *Geraldton Guardian*, 29 March 1924, p. 4
 - 25 Tonkinson, *op cit.*, pp. 141-143; Briscoe, G, *Counting, Health and Identity: An Aboriginal health and demography in Western Australia and Queensland 1900-1940*, Aboriginal Studies Press, 2003, pp. 89-92

the unequal treatment of Aboriginal people in settler society, particularly alcoholism, crime and prostitution.²⁶ A wide-spread concern of these exploitative sexual relationships was the control of 'half-caste' children, who were seen as 'endangered' by their association with Aboriginal culture and calls were made to assimilate them into 'white' society.²⁷

The result of this situation was increasing government control over the freedoms and daily lives of Aboriginal people during this period. In 1886 the *Aborigines Protection Act* was established, which regulated Aboriginal employment, however in practice the laws favoured the rights of pastoralists over Aboriginal workers. Another aspect of the Act was the appointment of Protectors of Aborigines, who were given the authority to involve themselves in the lives of Aboriginal families, in particular the custody of children.²⁸ In response to the public fears over disease, employment conditions of Aboriginal workers, and mixed race relationships, Government control increased with the *Aborigines Protection Act (1897)*, culminating in the Roth Enquiry of 1905.²⁹

The Roth enquiry was primarily concerned with allegations of slavery in the pastoral industry, but also broadly examined the treatment of Aboriginal people. Roth's report was scathing of the treatment of Aboriginal people in the State's far north, however the political response shifted the focus of the resulting *Aborigines Act 1905* towards control of Aboriginal children, movement, employment and health concerns.³⁰

For Aboriginal people living around Meekatharra in the early 20th century employment was found on stations or performing domestic work in town, however Aboriginal people were considered 'dirty' and moved on after dark from the town's 'protected area'.³¹ Eventually a camping area was gazetted for Aboriginal use, however local Aboriginal people still faced government control over their lives in matters such as employment, alcohol and dogs.³² Medical care was provided by the local hospital and charged back to an employer or the Aborigines Department, however there was a widely held perception that the Aboriginal people were 'passing away', and would essentially 'die out'.³³

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- 26 Tonkinson, *op cit.*, p. 143; *Kalgoorlie Miner*, 17 September 1901, p. 2; *Kalgoorlie Miner*, 19 April 1900, p. 7; *The WA Record*, 12 March 1898, p. 16
- 27 Haebich, A, *Broken Circles: Fragmenting Indigenous Families 1800-2000*, Fremantle Arts Press, 2000, pp. 141-143; 160-161; Edwards *op cit.*, pp. 93-95
- 28 Haebich, *op cit.*, p. 210; 'Western Australia – Legislation', *Find & Connect*, accessed 30 May 2017, <https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/guide/wa/WE00403>
- 29 Briscoe, *op cit.*, pp. 86-95; Haebich, *op cit.*, pp. 210-213; Allbrook, M, *Henry Princep's Empire*, ANU Press, 2014, pp. 237-243
- 30 Briscoe, *op cit.*, pp. 99-101; Haebich, *op cit.*, pp. 215-216; Bolton, G C, 'Black and White after 1897', *A New History of Western Australia*, C T Stannage (eds.), UWA Press, 1981, pp. 128-132
- 31 *Sunday Times*, 15 December 1907, p. 8; *The Manganese Record, Peak hill, Mullagine and Marble Bar Gazette*, 25 April 1941, p. 4
- 32 *The Manganese Record, Peak Hill, Mullagine and Marble Bar Gazette*, 21 February 1941, p. 4; *Daily Telegraph and North Murchison and Pilbara Gazette*, 25 March 1927, p. 3; *Daily Telegraph and North Murchison and Pilbara Gazette*, 22 August 1924, p. 3; *Daily Telegraph and North Murchison and Pilbara Gazette*, 24 December 1924, p. 2; *The Daily Telegraph*, 27 December 1918, p. 3
- 33 *Daily Telegraph and North Murchison and Pilbara Gazette*, 8 July 1931, p. 2; *The Yalgoo Observer and Murchison Chronicle*, 31 March 1939, p. 3; Edwards, *op cit.*, pp. 88, 95

Mrs Avy Curley (née Cameron) was born into this social fabric in 1912, growing up at the 'Camel Soak' camp near Meekatharra. In an interview in 1997, she remembered her father building a hut for the family from sheets of corrugated iron collected from the rubbish tip. Mrs Curley performed domestic work for a local woman Stella Motts, and was paid 'a few bob, just enough to buy bread or flour to make a damper'.³⁴

In 1937 a nationwide assimilation policy was announced for Aboriginal people, with the intention that 'part Aboriginal' people would be absorbed into 'white' culture while traditional Aboriginal groups would continue to die out.³⁵ This policy was championed in Western Australia by Chief Protector of Aborigines A O Neville.³⁶ However the ongoing inequality faced by Aboriginal people saw the development of resistance to assimilationist attitudes and governments controls in the 1930s.

At the 150th anniversary celebrations for British colonisation of the continent in 1938, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal groups staged protests against the conditions facing Aboriginal people, which sparked a new national debate on the subject.³⁷ At a local level this new attitude of political resistance was taken up by Avy Curley, who led a protest march in Mount Magnet in 1940 against the 6pm curfew on Aboriginal people in town and spent the night in a lockup as a result.³⁸ Other forms of resistance in Western Australia during this time included protests at Port Hedland in 1945 against the town's 'prohibited area,' as well as the political watershed of the Pilbara worker's strike in 1946-1949. Instrumental in the protests of these Aboriginal workers was the involvement of Meekatharra activist Don McLeod.³⁹

A significant event in the struggle by Aboriginal people that occurred during this period was the 1944 *Native (Citizenship Rights) Act*, which made it possible for an Aboriginal person to gain full citizenship rights, but only if the person could prove to a local magistrate that they had 'dissolved tribal and native association' for two years and had 'adopted the manner and habits of civilised life, including fluency in English and being free from disease'.⁴⁰ In Meekatharra, Aboriginal members of the

³⁴ Jean & Hayes *op cit.*, pp. 43-44

³⁵ Haebich, *op cit.*, pp. 454-457; 'Era 3: Assimilation', *Australians Together*, accessed 2 June 2017, <http://www.australiansitogether.org.au/stories/detail/assimilation>

³⁶ Haebich, *op cit.*, pp. 270-277; Bolton *op cit.*, pp. 148-149

³⁷ Haebich, *op cit.*, p. 313; '26 January 1938', *Australian institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander Studies*, accessed 2 June 2017, <https://aiatsis.gov.au/collections/collections-online/digitised-collections/day-mourning-and-protest-aborigines-conference-75th-anniversary/26th-january-1938>; *The Age*, 27 January 1938, p. 7; *The Daily News*, 10 March 1939, p. 2, *Sunday Times*, 7 August 1938, p. 8

³⁸ Jean & Hayes *op cit.*, pp. 43-45; Skyring, F, *Justice: A history of Aboriginal Legal Service of Western Australia*, UWA Publishing, 2011, p. 1-3

³⁹ Hess, M, 'Black and Red: The Pilbara Pastoral Worker's Strike, 1946', *Aboriginal History*, 1994, vol. 18:1, pp. 70-81; Wilson, J, 'The Pilbara Aboriginal Social Movement: An Outline of its Background and Significance', *Aboriginies of the West: Their Past and their Present*, R M & C H Berndt (eds.), pp. 151-166,

⁴⁰ Jean & Hayes *op cit.*, np; 'Western Australia – Legislation Native (Citizenship Rights) Act 1944 (1944-1971). *Find and Connect website*, accessed 11 December 2020, [https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/guide/wa/WE00416#:~:text=Native%20\(Citizenship%20Rights\)%20Act%201944%20\(1944%20%2D%201971\)&text=23\)%20had%20the%20full,met%20a%20range%20of%20conditions](https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/guide/wa/WE00416#:~:text=Native%20(Citizenship%20Rights)%20Act%201944%20(1944%20%2D%201971)&text=23)%20had%20the%20full,met%20a%20range%20of%20conditions.); 'Impacts of Law Post 1905', *Kaartdijin Noongar – Noongar Knowledge*, South West Aboriginal Land & Sea Council website, accessed 11 December 2020, <https://www.noongarculture.org.au/impacts-of-law-post-1905/>

Seventh Day Adventist Church were reported to have voiced their determination to acquire citizenship rights in response.⁴¹

By the 1950s, the State government had grown concerned over the fringe camps on the outskirts of the Meekatharra town site and the lack of accommodation provided for Aboriginal people, and in 1959 four “hutment” dwellings were built in the town. In 1957, the Courthouse and Mining Registrar’s Office underwent minor internal alterations, blocking up what had originally been a private entry to the building for the local magistrate, and one of the magistrate’s rooms converted into a kitchen.⁴²

In the early 1960s the Courthouse and Mining Registrar’s Office was abandoned in favour of new premises, leaving the building empty.⁴³ In 1962 Avy Curley founded an organisation called the Bundi Club (“Good” Club), located in the building, which was operating by 1963. The Bundi Club was an Aboriginal social support centre, providing Adult Aboriginal Education Certified courses in cooking, dressmaking, handicrafts for women, and bricklaying, welding and building for men.⁴⁴ Another activity was badminton, which was played in the evenings.⁴⁵

In an interview in 1994, Curley notes that the purpose of the *Bundi Club, Meekatharra* was so that Aboriginal people would have something to do, and a place where Aboriginal people could gather freely as a step towards housing in town. Aboriginal families visiting Meekatharra for funerals were also able to camp at the *Bundi Club, Meekatharra*, and the building was also the venue for Christmas functions, with Avy organising presents for the children and her husband stepping in as Santa Claus. Other family support activities included providing school lunches for local families, church services, and care for the sick.⁴⁶

Another Aboriginal woman who worked at the *Bundi Club, Meekatharra*, Esther Cameron, remembers:

*The Bundi Club was lovely in those days, we were all there. There was dancing, singing, Christmas parties, weddings. Pensioners used to have their Christmas supper there all together. Buying Christmas present, dancing and doing the rock ‘n’ roll there, I was one of the main ones there in those days... That was the only building where Aboriginal people could go.*⁴⁷

Another member of the *Bundi Club, Meekatharra*, Irene Allison, remembers the early days of the organization:

The sewing machine would sit in the pram while I pushed it down to the Bundi Club. I think we all started off with our own machines and a bit of material – whatever that could scrounge around. Later I think Gran Curley applied for funds through the Lotteries Commission.

To begin with we made children’s clothing, then later made school uniforms... We had barbeques. Many times I took my juke box along and we’d all get in there and start

41 ‘First Family Arrives at Adventist’s Camp’, *The West Australian*, 29 February 1952, p.9

42 Jean & Hayes *op cit.*, pp. 12, 31, also information in figures and thematic tables (np).

43 *ibid.*, p. 11

44 Edwards *op cit.*, p. 193; Jean & Hayes *op cit.*, pp. 43-44

45 ‘Community Liaison’, *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Native Welfare*, 1971, p. 19

46 Jean & Hayes *op cit.*, p. 44

47 Cameron, E, interview with Jean, A & Robinson, D, 28 November 1997, as quoted in Jean & Hayes *op cit.*, p. 46

*dancing around the hall... We also had movies and they would have the old projector and get the old screen out and set it up. Once a week or once a fortnight or whenever they could lay their hands on a film, they would put on the pictures.*⁴⁸

The early years of the *Bundi Club, Meekatharra* coincided with a State-wide shift towards greater recognition of how racist policies and attitudes had impacted Aboriginal communities. In 1963 the Western Australian government passed the *Native Welfare Act 1963*, which repealed the *Aborigines Act 1905* and abolished the Commissioner's custodianship over Aboriginal minors. This was then replaced in the 1970s by the *Aboriginal Affairs Planning Authority Act 1972*.⁴⁹ At the same time, a number of the older missions began to be replaced by government and community hostels that focused on the education and well-being of young Aboriginal people.⁵⁰

At a national level, this period saw other improvements in Aboriginal rights. The *Commonwealth Electoral Act 1962* extended non-compulsory voting rights to Aboriginal people for Commonwealth elections, and in 1996 Aboriginal pastoral workers in the Northern Territory were awarded equal wages with non-Aboriginal workers. A significant reform was the *Consultation Alteration (Aboriginals) 1967*, which repealed section 127 of the Australian Constitution to ensure Aboriginal people were counted in the census, which in turn ensured other voting and civil rights, as well as amending section 51 of the Constitution to allow the federal government a greater role in creating legislation for the benefit of Aboriginal people.⁵¹

In 1979 the State government passed the *Aboriginal Communities Act 1979*, arising from the work between Aboriginal Justices of the Peace and Magistrate Terry Syddall, which made provision for Aboriginal communities to make management rules that applied to their own communities.⁵² The same year, Avy Curley was accredited as a Field Officer of the Aboriginal Legal Aid in Meekatharra, and the Legal Aid office was then located in *Bundi Club, Meekatharra*. In an interview in 1994, she noted:

*In them days there were a lot of people taken to court and put in jail, mostly for drinking beer, even if they weren't drunk. The police would round up our people if they were still on the streets after it got a bit dark.*⁵³

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- 48 Allison, I, interview with Jean, A & Robinson, D, 27 November 1997, as quoted in Jean & Hayes *op cit.*, p. 49
- 49 '8. The Laws – Western Australia. Bringing Them Home (1997)', Australina Human Rights Commission, accessed 16 November 2020, <https://humanrights.gov.au/our-work/8-laws-western-australia-bringing-them-home-1997>; 'Aboriginal Affairs Planning Authority Act 1972 (1972-)', Find and Connect website, accessed 16 November 2020, <https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/guide/wa/WE00427>
- 50 *Guide to Institutions Attended by Aboriginal People in Western Australia*, State Solicitor's Office, 2005
- 51 Thomas, M, 'The 1967 Referendum', Parliament of Australia website, accessed 16 November 2020, https://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/FlagPost/2017/May/The_1967_Referendum; Dow, C, Gardiner-Garden, J, 'Overview of Indigenous Affairs: Part 1: 1901 to 1991', Parliament of Australia website, accessed 16 November 2020, https://www.aph.gov.au/about_parliament/parliamentary_departments/parliamentary_library/pubs/bn/1011/indigenousaffairs1#_Toc293318913
- 52 Kamien, T, 'Implementing Self-Government – An Examination of the Aboriginal Communities Act (Western Australia)', *Murdoch University Electronic Journal of Law*, vol 2, no 1, 1995, accessed 16 November 2020, <http://138.25.65.17/au/journals/MurUEJL/1995/8.html>
- 53 Curley, A, interview with Jean, A & Robinson, D, 28 November 1997, as quoted in Jean & Hayes *op cit.*, p. 45

The following year Avy Curley was awarded the Order of Australia for her services to the Aboriginal community. As Mrs Curley was also noted as an accomplished artist, she was invited to present carved emu eggs to Prince Charles and Queen Elizabeth II during this time.⁵⁴ In 1984 Avy Curley became Chair of the Aboriginal Housing Board's State Housing Commission, as well as passing on traditional arts and crafts at the Meekatharra High School.⁵⁵

At the *Bundi Club, Meekatharra*, the Aboriginal-led Miniarra Resource Agency was incorporated at Meekatharra in 1986. This aimed to provide support for the Aboriginal community, constructed a small number of demountable buildings at the site, adjacent to the former courthouse and registrar's building.⁵⁶

However by the 1990s, the *Bundi Club, Meekatharra* was falling into disrepair, and the needs of the local Aboriginal community were changing⁵⁷. Funds were not available for the building to be refurbished, and the *Bundi Club, Meekatharra* building was finally abandoned c.1995. Margaret Mippy, a member of the club, remembers:

*We used to get in and help, everybody just sort of belonged together, we were all there to do something. It was really good. The last get together was Pop's funeral. Two years on Monday just gone. That was the last thing held at the Bundi Club.*⁵⁸

In 2017 the *Bundi Club, Meekatharra* lies vacant, and has been extensively vandalised.

13.2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

Bundi Club, Meekatharra consists of a single story timber framed, weatherboard former Courthouse and Mining Registrar's Office with a galvanised iron roof, built in 1912 and abandoned c.1992. The place demonstrates the nature of building in remote areas, and includes a number of features designed to deal with local high temperatures. Physical evidence for this place has been derived from both the Conservation Plan for the place by Jeans and Hayes (2000) and a site visit in 2017.

Bundi Club, Meekatharra is sited towards the middle of a large block facing Darlot Street in Meekatharra, with three small demountable office immediately adjacent to the southwest, and a small galvanised steel toilet block behind the *Bundi Club, Meekatharra* to the northwest. There is a low wire mesh fence and gate along the front of the block and the *Bundi Club, Meekatharra* has a higher wire mesh fence isolating it from the other buildings at the site. There is no garden however there is a mature *Eucalyptus sp.* to the rear of the building.

The building lies at the end of Darlot Street, in a sparsely populated urban landscape of single storey weatherboard and galvanised steel residences. The lots either side of the *Bundi Club, Meekatharra* (southwest and northeast) are empty, and further northeast the area is undeveloped. The *Bundi Club, Meekatharra* has little streetscape presence along Darlot Street as it is largely screened by the adjacent demountables.

⁵⁴ Jean & Hayes *op cit.*, p. 43

⁵⁵ Edwards *op cit.*, p. 193

⁵⁶ Jean & Hayes *op cit.*, p. 30

⁵⁷ *ibid.*, np (table); *Annual Report*, Office of the Registrar of Aboriginal Corporations, 2000, p. 92

⁵⁸ Jean & Hayes *op cit.*, p. 47; Edwards *op cit.*, p. 193

The building itself is timber-framed, resting on timber piles, which in turn support the timber bearers, floor joists and timber flooring. The exterior walls consist of jarrah chamfered ship lap cladding, attached directly to the frame. An exception is near the top of the walls at the rear portion of the building, where roughcast render has been applied to the exterior wall panels in which the air vents have been installed.

At the rear of the building is a brick chimney, built in stretcher bond on a concrete foundation. The doors and windows are timber framed, the windows timber hopper type, which have been covered with wire mesh security grilles, corrugated galvanised metal or exterior condensers for air conditioning units. The front doors are original four panel solid timber, however the rear door appears to be a modern plain door. Both the main front door and the rear door have been secured closed with wire mesh of galvanised metal, however access is still available from the side door off the verandah.

The roof of the *Bundi Club, Meekatharra* is half-gabled, combining an overall hipped form with small gables at the terminus of each apex. The gables feature timber ventilators, timber fascia and an open timber slat soffit. The roof is clad in galvanised iron with rolled metal ridge capping and ogee galvanised iron gutters. There are also a number of metal ventilator shafts on the roof, protected by metal chimney caps. The rear brick chimney is square, the original crown missing.

The verandah is located below the roof line, separated by another set of ventilators. The verandah forms an L shape wrapping around the northeast side of the building, hipped and identical to the roof in materials. The verandah is supported by original solid timber chamfered square posts, connected by a timber handrail. The posts feature ornate heads. The verandah has a timber deck supported on the same system as the rest of the building.

The asymmetric massing of the building, varied roof shapes, portion of roughcast walling, and ornate timber verandah posts are all features of the Federation Queen Anne style of architecture, a style popularised in domestic-scale buildings during the Federation period of Western Australia as an ornate, reimagined revival of Tudor architecture.⁵⁹ Given the simplicity of material and sparing decoration, *Bundi Club, Meekatharra* is a modest iteration of this style, adapted for a hot climate.

Inside, the interior walls of the building are clad in plasterboard, save for the chimneys in the main room and front room (originally the court room and clerk's rooms respectively), which are rendered and painted brick with an ornamental timber fireplace. The walls are timber clad to dado height framed by timber skirting and capping. The floors are likely timber boards but have been covered in linoleum. The ceilings are also composed of plasterboard.

The Conservation Plan for the *Bundi Club, Meekatharra* also notes:

The design of the building reflects the consideration of the hot dry local climatic conditions. A complex roof ducted ventilation system has been incorporated throughout the building. This feature together with the use of a number of other devices, namely

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Apperly *et al.*, *op cit.*, pp. 132-135; Jean & Hayes *op cit.*, p. 30

*eaves ventilation panels, positioning of openings to the building and verandahs, contribute to make this a special feature of the design and noteworthy.*⁶⁰

There do not appear to have been any significant structural modifications to the building since 1957, save for the installation of electricity. However site inspections in 2015 and 2017 have identified several areas of the damage to the building.⁶¹ Damage includes loose roof sheeting, re-fixing and brick repairs to chimney, open holes in exterior timber cladding into timber frame, replacement of verandah timber decking and structure. Severe vandalism to the building has resulted in multiple areas of damage to internal plasterboard walls, floor and ceiling, including some areas that have become open to the elements.

13.3 COMPARATIVE INFORMATION

PRINCIPAL AUSTRALIAN HISTORIC THEME(S)

- 3.4.3 Mining
- 3.14.1 Building to suit Australian conditions
- 5.7 Surviving as Indigenous people in a white-dominated society
- 8.5 Forming Associations

HERITAGE COUNCIL OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA THEME(S)

- 303 Mining
- 403 Law and Order
- 404 Community services and utilities
- 601 Aboriginal people

Federation Queen Anne Style

The physical evidence indicates that *Bundi Club, Meekatharra* is a modest example of the Federation Queen Anne style of architecture, a residential building style popularised in Western Australia after 1890 due to the greater availability of wealth, materials and influx of new architectural ideas.⁶² A search of the Historic Heritage database for Federation Queen Anne style places returns a total of 691 places, of which 94 are listed on the State Register of Heritage Places (RHP). These places include residences, community buildings, government buildings and educational buildings. The places most comparable to *Bundi Club, Meekatharra* as modest iterations of this style applied to a non-residential building include:

- P579 *Coolgardie Primary School* (RHP): established at Coolgardie in 1897, this design by George Temple Pool and Hillson Beasley shows a strong influence of Federation Queen Anne style in massing and elevation, with a sparing, modest ornamentation.

⁶⁰ Jean & Hayes *op cit.*, p. 31

⁶¹ Habitat Home and Building Inspections, *Courthouse Building Darlot Street Meekatharra*, DAA, 2015

⁶² Pitt Morrison, M, and White, J, 'Builders and Buildings', *A New History of Western Australia*, C T Stannage, (ed.) UWA Press, 1981, pp. 539-540

- P2722 *Wickepin Nursing Post* (RHP): established at Wickepin in 1926, the design of this modest, utilitarian inter-war building was influenced by Federation Queen Anne style.
- P4628 *Dardanup State School (fmr)* (RHP): established at Dardanup in 1896, this brick schoolroom is an intact, modest example of Federation Queen Anne style.

Other modest iterations of the style applied to a residential building include:

- P3344 *Anzac Cottage* (RHP): constructed in 1916 at Mount Hawthorn as a memorial to Anzac troops fighting in World War I, the place is a good example of a modest Federation Queen Anne style cottage.
- P3992 *Brookman & Moir Streets Precinct* (RHP): an almost-complete precinct of late 19th Century workers cottages, largely derived from a single design plan in a modest iteration of the Federation Queen Anne style.
- P9201 *Success Hill Lodge* (RHP): constructed at Bassendean in 1896, this double storey brick building is a fine, intact example of the Federation Queen Anne style.
- P11543 *Parry Street Precinct* (RHP): a row of semi-attached worker's residences, constructed in Perth in the 1890s, an intact streetscape of both modest and elaborate examples of late 19th Century styles, including Federation Queen Anne.
- P13930 *Koogereena Homestead* (RHP): constructed at Greenough in 1911, this a single storey homestead is a fine and intact example of a simplified Federation Queen Anne style building in a rural setting.

Courthouses

The documentary evidence identifies one of the original uses of *Bundi Club, Meekatharra* as being a courthouse building. Courthouses were an essential government service, and some form of centre for legal adjudication was a common feature of colonial towns from the early days of the colony, with small settlements receiving formal courthouses (usually located in close proximity to other government buildings) when the town population grew to a viable level.⁶³

A search of the Historic Heritage database for buildings with the use of 'Governmental: Courthouse' or 'Governmental: Office or Administration Building' returns 341 places, of which 90 are listed on the RHP. By reducing this list down to courthouses or offices built during the Gold Boom, the search returns 138 places, of which 64 are listed on the RHP. By further restricting this search to places with the keyword 'Warden,' four places are found to be comparable as Gold Boom era courthouses that also served a function as a warden's court:

- P179 *Boulder Court House (fmr)* (RHP): a simple storey stone, brick and iron building constructed between 1900 and 1905 in the Federation Free Classical style. The place is closely associated with the development of

⁶³ Heritage and Conservation Professionals, *Cue Public Buildings: Conservation Plan*, Shire of Cue, 1995, pp. 9, 23; Nayton, G, *The Archaeology of Market Capitalism: A Western Australian Perspective*, Global Contributions to Historical Archaeology, Springer/Kluwer, 2011, pp. 40-42, 54-55

Boulder and the 'Golden Mile,' and is associated with a number of regional development projects as well as prominent Warden J M Finnerty.

- P629 *Cue Public Buildings* (RHP): a group of five attached public buildings, including a police station, post office and magistrate's court. The buildings are constructed of local granite in the Federation Arts and Crafts style and reflect the importance of Cue as a major regional centre serving the Murchison Goldfields during the 1890s and early 1900s.
- P814 *Government Buildings* (RHP): a group of buildings established in 1895, these Federation Arts & Crafts style structures are a rare example of a government complex in the East Pilbara Goldfields. The group is associated with the gold and tin boom of the Pilbara and the development of the regional centre of Marble Bar.
- P1291 *Government Buildings, Kalgoorlie* (RHP): a block of two storey buildings surmounted by a clock tower, this group was established between 1896 and 1899 and included the post office, courthouse and Warden's court as well as a branch of the Mines Department. The group demonstrates the architectural and administrative development of Kalgoorlie, and is a significant regional landmark.

Mining Registrar

The documentary evidence identifies one of the original uses of *Bundi Club, Meekatharra* as being a Mining Registrar's Office. Similar to courthouses, these government officials were assigned to developing towns when they had developed to the point where such a service was needed. By consulting the Post Office directories for the year the Courthouse and Mining Registrar's Office at Meekatharra was established, it can be established that there were 21 mineral fields declared (mostly goldfields), each with their own Mining Registrar.⁶⁴ A search of the Historic Heritage database for buildings with the keyword 'Registrar' returns 48 places, of which 19 are listed on the RHP. The places within this group comparable to *Bundi Club, Meekatharra* as government registrar offices (as opposed to private clubs and churches) include:

- P629 *Cue Public Buildings* (RHP): discussed above.
- P814 *Government Buildings* (RHP): discussed above.
- P1291 *Government Buildings, Kalgoorlie* (RHP): discussed above.
- P3233 *Registrar's Office and Residence*, part of P3239, *Cossack Town Site Precinct* (RHP): established c.1887, the original Mining Registrar's Office was replaced with the current masonry building in 1985. As part of a larger group, the place demonstrates the development of frontier settlement in the northwest and is an exceptional archaeological site.
- P1449 *Old Court House Complex* (Local Heritage Survey, or LHS): constructed in 1900 at Laverton, included a Mining Registrar's office.
- P23896 *First Warden's House, Mining Registrar* (LHS): constructed in 1910 at Norseman.

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The Western Australian Directory [Wise's], 1912, p. 1089, available via the State Library Service Western Australia website, accessed 3 December 2020, <https://slwa.wa.gov.au/explore-discover/wa-heritage/post-office-directories/1912>

Community Support Centres

Community clubs, societies and support networks are common and varied throughout the State's history, established by religious societies, sport/activity groups, and commercial or trade fraternities. The Historic Heritage database does not generally give the specific nature or membership breakdown of most of these groups, so it is of limited use in identifying directly comparable examples to *Bundi Club, Meekatharra*.

A search of the Historic Heritage database was undertaken for places with the use of 'Social/Recreational: Other Community Hall/Centre,' returning 658 places, of which 68 are listed on the on the RHP. The places most comparable to *Bundi Club, Meekatharra* as secular social clubs with a group support focus (as opposed to e.g. a religious, commercial or a sport/activity clubs) include:

- P598 *Wanslea* (RHP): established a Cottesloe in 1905 by the Independent Order of Oddfellows to provide accommodation and support for the children of deceased members.
- P2027 *Chung Wah Association Hall* (RHP): established in Northbridge in 1911, this association was formed to provide support for Chinese immigrants.
- P2155 *Rechabite Hall* (RHP): established in Northbridge in 1924 by the Independent Order of Rechabites in Western Australia, this place was central to the efforts of this group in providing conferences, services and entertainment to its members.
- P8736 *Oddfellows Hall (fmr), Leederville* (RHP): established at Leederville in 1897 by the Grand United Order of Odd Fellows to provide medical and financial assistance to members

Three of these places are representative of Friendly Societies, which operated during the late Nineteenth and early Twentieth Centuries to provide financial aid and education to members. Other examples of Friendly Societies operating at this time include:

- the United Ancient Order of Druids (P1059 *Druid's Hall (fmr)* [Removed from the Register])
- the United Friendly Society (P16486 *United Friendly Societies Building (fmr)*)
- Ferguson Buildings, Perth [LHS]).
- P2027 *Chung Wah Association Hall* (RHP) is more comparable to *Bundi Club, Meekatharra*, run as a social support network for a specific cultural group.

Another somewhat comparable, long-running social support group created and run by members is the Country Women's Association, formed in 1922 to provide support for rural women. A search of the Historic Heritage database for places associated with the CWA returns a total of 75 places, including four places on the RHP.

By reducing the original list of 658 places down to social or recreational buildings established in the Late Twentieth Century period (1960-1990), the search returns 132 places, of which 19 are on the RHP.

The Historic Heritage database may not reflect the extent of support centres and organisations initiated and run by Aboriginal people over the late Twentieth Century period, as these places may not always be included in local heritage inventories or heritage surveys. From this list of 132 places, the following are comparable to *Bundi Club, Meekatharra*:

- P5072 *Gnowangerup Noongar Centre (fmr)* (RHP): established by the New Era Aboriginal Fellowship in 1972 within a 1913 cottage at Gnowangerup, this place was an influential initiative by a non-government group to provide social services to Aboriginal members.
- P15365 Koobinya/Nintirri Centres (LHS): established at the Shire of Ashburton in 1983, these c.1966 former single men's quarters for Hamersley Iron were converted into a women's community facility, including childcare a toy library, art studios, legal aid offices and a conference room.

Aboriginal Self-Determination

As with support centres and organisations initiated and run by Aboriginal people over the late Twentieth Century period, the Historic Heritage database may not reflect the extent of places associated with the self-determination of Aboriginal people and their struggle for equal rights under the law, as again these places are often not included in local heritage inventories and surveys. A search of the Historic Heritage database for places with the keyword 'Aboriginal' returns 1293 places, of which 290 are listed on the on the RHP. This includes places where Aboriginal people lived and worked, as well as places where Aboriginal people's lives were institutionalised and places where massacres of Aboriginal people occurred. This list was then reduced down to places established in the Late Twentieth Century Period (1960-1990), and a variety of searches under owners, interested parties, associations, historic theme, and value were performed. The following places were identified as comparable to *Bundi Club, Meekatharra* as a social or business ventures initiated by Aboriginal people as a demonstration of self-determination:

- P2343 *Mount Welcome House (fmr)* (RHP): a group of single storey timber framed homestead buildings, established by the Withnell family in 1864. The place is associated with the Mt Welcome Pastoral Company from 1974 to 1997, an Aboriginal business group consisting of local families.
- P5072 *Gnowangerup Noongar Centre (fmr)* (RHP): discussed above.
- P13516 Karalundi Aboriginal Education Community Inc: established in 1954 by Pastor Dudley Vaughan of the Seventh Day Adventist Church with the help of Aboriginal activist Avy Curley. The place closed as a church mission in 1974 however was reopened in 1986 by former students. The place operates as a parent controlled co-educational boarding school.

A search of the Historic Heritage database for places associated with Aboriginal activist Avy Curley OAM, returns one place besides the *Bundi Club, Meekatharra*:

- P13516 Karalundi Aboriginal Education Community Inc: described above.

Again, it is likely that the full extent of groups and places that Avy Curley has been associated with over her career has been reflected in the Historic Heritage database.

Conclusion

The comparative information for the *Bundi Club, Meekatharra* indicates that the building is a modest representative example of a Federation Queen Anne building, and is a representative example of a Gold Boom era Courthouse and Mining Registrar's Office, the latter of which were restricted by their nature to mineral fields.

It is difficult to determine the comparative nature of *Bundi Club, Meekatharra* as an example of a social support club established in the post war period, or as a place demonstrating the efforts of self-determination by Aboriginal people, or as a place associated with Aboriginal activist Avy Curley OAM.

13. 4 KEY REFERENCES

Jean, A, Hayes, G, *The Bundi Club, Meekatharra: A Conservation Plan*, Australian Heritage Commission, 2000

13. 5 FURTHER RESEARCH
