**HERITAGE COUNCIL OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA**

# REGISTER OF HERITAGE PLACES - ASSESSMENT DOCUMENTATION

## 11. ASSESSMENT OF CULTURAL HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

The criteria adopted by the Heritage Council in September, 1991 have been used to determine the cultural heritage significance of the place.

### 11. 1 AESTHETIC VALUE

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### 11. 2. HISTORIC VALUE

*Pingelly Post Office* provides physical evidence of the growth and prosperity of the Pingelly township and surrounding agricultural areas during the period prior to World War One, as well as the austerities required immediately following. (Criterion 2.1)

*Pingelly Post Office* is directly related to the opening of the Great Southern Railway Line, and the subsequent European settlement of the Great Southern district of Western Australia. (Criterion 2.2)

The original post office at Pingelly, now the residential component of the building, was designed by George Temple Poole. The later addition was designed by W. B. Hardwick. (Criterion 2.3)

### 11. 3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE

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### 11. 4. SOCIAL VALUE

*Pingelly Post Office* is a focal point for the Pingelly district where social interaction and communication take place. (Criterion 4.1)

Built as an addition to the original Post Office building, *Pingelly Post Office* contributes to the town, and surrounding agricultural community's sense of place. (Criterion 4.2)

## 12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE

### 12. 1. RARITY

*Pingelly Post Office* is an example of two post office buildings conjoined, the older building providing the residential component of the place. (Criterion 5.1)

### 12. 2 REPRESENTATIVENESS

*Pingelly Post Office* is representative of the early, standard design produced by the Public Works Department under the direction of George Temple Poole, which was adopted for post offices along the Great Southern Railway and elsewhere in the State. (Criterion 6.1)

The original post office had one room reserved for postal services, the remainder were quarters. The requirement for a whole new building, soon after the completion of the first, is representative of the rapid growth of Pingelly and a simultaneous increase in communications technology. (Criterion 6.2)

### 12. 3 CONDITION

Overall *Pingelly Post Office* is in good condition. The current half of the building used for postal services, particularly the public area, is well maintained. The older fabric in the residential part of the building requires greater attention.

### 12. 4 INTEGRITY

The original functions of *Pingelly Post Office* have been maintained since construction, albeit in substantially larger premises. The first post office accommodated residential and postal facilities in one half of the current building but the post office soon required a greater working area. The addition doubled the size of the building although the original form is still evident. Render which has been applied to the original fabric since construction could be removed.

The current postal fitout reflects a change in Australia Post operating policy with a greater focus towards retail activities. These are accommodated well within the original fabric. *Pingelly Post Office* has a high degree of integrity.

### 12. 5 AUTHENTICITY

*Pingelly Post Office* has moderate authenticity. Since completion of the extension, alterations to the fabric have occurred mostly to the rear of the building and have not involved major structural modifications. Similarly, the removal of original furniture and the modernisation of fittings has affected only finishes.

## 13.   SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

The documentary evidence has been compiled by Irene Ham-Sauman, Historian.  The physical evidence has been compiled by Katrina Chisholm, Graduate Architect.

## 13. 1   DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

*Pingelly Post Office* is a single-storey, brick and iron building constructed in Federation Free Style in 1893, to a design by Western Australian Public Works Department architect, George Temple Poole.[1]  A new post office section, designed by W. B. Hardwick and constructed in brick with a shingle roof, subsequently replaced with iron, was added in 1918, and the original part of the building reverted to living quarters only.

Prior to the 1880s, the south-west of the state was sparsely populated by Europeans.  Sandalwood cutters worked the forests, and a few settlers established  themselves by selecting 16 - 20 acres of  freehold  land  near permanent water, or taking up grazing leases of 1600 - 2000 acres.

A track developed between Perth and Albany, largely as a result of the sandalwood cutters carting their loads to the coast for export to China.  The track became known as the Albany road.  In 1841, a mail service was inaugurated along this route.  In 1869, the Government took over the mail run, and a police guard accompanied the mail coach.[2]  The mail coach made the journey each way twice a month, travelling around 30 miles a day, with seven overnight stops along the way, most of them coinciding with a police station where fresh horses were obtained for the next stage of the journey.  Passengers and freight were also carried.[3]

With the desire to attract more settlers to the area, the Western Australian Government decided to establish a rail link between Perth and Albany.  The desired route was along the Albany road, but York, linked to Perth by the Eastern Railway in 1881, lobbied to be included on the rail link with Albany.  The Government conceded, and extended the Eastern Railway from York to Beverley, while Anthony Hordern's West Australian Land Company Ltd constructed the line from Beverley to Albany.  This section of line, opened in 1889, was known as the Great Southern Railway, and was built in exchange for land grants along the route.[4]

The Government suspended its own land offers to allow Hordern's Company to sell its land grants to migrants, but the Company had difficulty attracting prospective settlers, and its freight charges were twice as high as charges on other lines.  The Government grew impatient, and made land available with The Homestead Act, 1893, which granted settlers 160 acres and allowed them seven years to make improvements, and The Agricultural Bank Act, 1894,

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[1]     Apperly, R., Irving, R. & Reynolds, P. *A Pictorial Guide to Identifying Australian Architecture: Style and Terms from 1788 to the Present.* Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1989, pp.136-139.

[2]     Pederick, M. J. *The Emu's Watering Place: A Brief History of the Wagin District* Churchlands College, Perth, for Shire of Wagin, 1979, p.7-8.

[3]     *Yearbook of Western Australia* 1889. p.97.

[4]     *Western Australian Government Gazette* 25 September 1884, p.491.

which provided long term loans to pay for the improvements.[5]  In 1897, the Government purchased the Great Southern Railway, and all land grants, from the West Australian Land Company Ltd for £1,100,000, and the Great Southern district began to flourish.[6]

Pingelly was created as a station on the Great Southern Railway when residents of nearby Mourambine, which served the local farming area, decided they did not want a railway line running through their town. Residents probably considered Pingelly as simply a railway station, but on completion of the station in October 1889, the postal service was moved to Pingelly from Mourambine, and gradually the population followed until, in 1904, Mourambine's population numbers were included with Pingelly's.[7]  For the first three years, the Stationmaster at Pingelly acted as Postmaster and mail was collected from the railway station.

*Pingelly Post Office* was built in 1893, at a cost of £898, by Thorn, Bower and Stewart.[8]  Like many of George Temple Poole's post office designs, *Pingelly Post Office* had only one room for postal services with the rest of the building as living quarters for the Postmaster.  Poole was the first of four principal architects employed by the Western Australian Public Works Department between 1885 and 1925, when that department was responsible for the design and construction of the State's post offices.  In 1926, responsibility for this work passed to the Commonwealth Postmaster General's Department.[9]

*Pingelly Post Office* served the community adequately, but between 1909 and 1913, the population of the town doubled, and a telephone exchange was opened on 20 April 1910.[10]  This was housed in the Post Office, as was the usual practice, putting further pressure on the capacity of *Pingelly Post Office* to cope with the growing demands for service.

In 1913, requests were made for a new Post Office building, 'one worthy of such a large and important centre'; however, no new building was forthcoming, probably due to the advent of World War One and the need for economy.[11]

In March 1918, an item appeared in *The Pingelly Leader* reporting on a suggestion to provide a timber addition to the front of *Pingelly Post Office* and the subsequent complaint lodged by the local Roads Board with the Premier.[12]  Three weeks later tenders were called for additions to *Pingelly Post Office*, and a new section, in brick, was built by J. H. Brown for £1,370.[13]

The architect of this addition, W. B. Hardwick, was the last of the four architects employed by the Western Australian Public Works Department,

5    *Statutes of Western Australia.* Perth Gov. Printer. The Homesteads Act, 1893, No.18 of 1893; The Agricultural Bank Act, 1894., No.21 of 1894.
6    *Yearbook of Western Australia* 1897, p.69.
7    Pope, B., Bush, F., Bloomfield, W. & Kelsall, D. *Historical and Architectural Assessment of Post Offices in Western Australia* National Trust of Australia (WA)  for the National Heritage Commission, 1993, p.41.
8    *Western Australian Government Gazette* 22 December 1892, p.1063.
9    Pope, B. et al., op. cit., p.17.
10   Documents. PMG Files. Australian Archives K1209/1 B23/404.
11   Lange, S. *Pingelly: Our People and Progress* Pingelly, 1980, pp.65-67.
12   *The Pingelly Leader* 7 March 1918, p.3.
13   *Western Australian Government Gazette* 16 August 1918, p.1183.

between 1885 and 1925, when that department was responsible for the design and construction of the State's post offices.[14]

W. B. Hardwick had worked under all three previous Public Works Department architects and, according to Pope, represents continuity of ideas, designs and details; however, the extension to *Pingelly Post Office* is a utilitarian building compared to the post offices built in the Great Southern region prior to World War One. No attempt was made to reproduce the style of the original building or to make a coherent whole. The building was also affected by the constraints of wartime economy and shortage of material.

According to a plan of 1950, the *Pingelly Post Office* addition had a shingle roof, while the quarters were roofed with iron.[15] The timber shingles have subsequently been replaced with iron.

The new addition to *Pingelly Post Office* was not well received by everyone. In a letter to the editor of *The Pingelly Leader*, a resident wanted to know 'what master mind designed the sepulchral looking affair.'[16]

In December 1960, a press release appeared in *The Pingelly Leader*, under the title 'New Look for *Pingelly Post Office*.'[17] The report detailed work that was to be carried out, to the Post Office section and the living quarters, by J. Roufael of Fremantle, at a cost of £4,594.

Minor repairs and renovations have been carried out to *Pingelly Post Office* at various times over the intervening years as service needs have changed. Since the separation of Telecom (Telstra) and Australia Post on 1 July 1975, telephone exchanges have been removed from Post Office buildings, resulting in one less function to fulfil. The downgrading of services on the Great Southern Railway in the 1970s and 1980s, created a population drift from the district, further lessening the postal services required. By 1985, the Post Office living quarters at Pingelly were no longer required, and they were occupied by a community group. In 1992, following the downgrading of *Pingelly Post Office* to an agency, the building was sold to Mr B. G. Thompson, who now occupies the living quarters and operates the postal agency.

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[14]    Pope, B. et al., op. cit., p.17.
[15]    Plan no. 9911. PMG Files. Australian Archives K1201/1 WA 9911, 7 July 1950 (See Supporting Material)
[16]    *The Pingelly Leader* 3 April 1919, p.3.
[17]    Press release, PMG Files, Australian Archives P101/1, December 1960 (See Supporting Material).

## 13. 2  PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

*Pingelly Post Office* is a single-storey building on the north-west corner of Pasture and Parade streets comprising two distinct but adjoining buildings from different periods of construction.  The earlier post office constructed in 1892 in a domestic style, is set back from the street corner and is now used as a residence by the post master.  The later addition protrudes forward, maintaining the building line of neighbouring commercial buildings in the street.  A weatherboard garage with a corrugated iron roof is located at the north-west corner of the site with vehicle access from Pasture Street and a small cycle shed of similar construction is located immediately behind the current post office.

Both parts of the building are domestic in scale and of standard brick construction with metal clad roofs; however, there is a significant contrast in the style.  This is made more obvious by the fact that the brickwork of the residential section has been rendered, while the post office brickwork remains fairfaced.

The earlier portion of the building, now the residence, is similar to *Gingin Post Office*  (1886), and the former post offices at Narrogin, Wagin and Katanning.[18]  The Parade Street elevation features two triple bay windows.  These distinctive features are further accentuated by the prominent gable ends in the roof form directly over.  The metal cladding of the main roof extends past the gables to form a canopy over the windows supported from the main structure by turned, timber struts.  A more simple roof form is employed over the later addition in keeping with the austere and functional style of construction.  The pitched metal roof has a central, longitudinal ridge with weatherboard cladding, punctuated by timber vents in the gable end.  A flat roof section extends over the verandah and public entrance to the post office.  Four, fairfaced brick chimneys with decorative capping are visible externally, although the capping is missing from the northernmost chimney.

The main entrance to the residence is located on the south side of the building.  A concrete slab path leads from Pasture Street to the front door which is sheltered under a porch created by the extension of the roof line of the protruding gable end.  Originally, the main entrance to the public area of the post office would have been in the east elevation between the two bay windows.  This glazed door has been replaced with a window to match the original sidelights some time after 1950.  The right hand side light has been replaced with an air conditioning unit supported on external brackets.

A hall and passage from the front door gives access to the lounge, three bedrooms, bathroom, dining room and kitchen and leads to the rear verandah.  A fourth bedroom is accessible from the lounge and also has an external door to the rear.  An interconnecting door between the residence and office is located in the lounge room.

Internal finishes are simple with carpet or vinyl to the timber floors, plastered walls and rippled iron or pressed metal ceilings.  The fireplace in the master

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[18]    The former post offices at Narrogin and Katanning have been demolished.  The original post office at Wagin has been rebuilt with much of the original material although with alterations to the standard design.

bedroom has been bricked up and a gas heater has been inserted into the lounge room fireplace. Timber surrounds remain in bedroom number two and a mantelpiece above the stove in the kitchen.

The rear verandah has a concrete floor and exposed timber roof construction with a timber boarded ceiling. A weatherboard storeroom protrudes into the space. The screen wall to the west elevation is partially constructed in brick and also a lightweight cladding material with glazing above, extending across the full length. An unrendered, brick laundry is attached to the south-west corner of the building, immediately behind the kitchen. A fence divides the back garden of the residence from the rear service areas of the post office.

The public area of the post office has been fitted out in the standard Australia Post design. While this may replace some of the original furniture, the new partitioning stands clear of the original structure. Fluorescent light fittings and intrusive air conditioning ducts are suspended from the ceiling. Interesting features include the painted, timber boarded ceiling which is flat across the central part of the room and is pitched at the sides towards the north and south walls and the solid masonry walls of the strong room which is fitted with a heavy iron door inscribed with the maker's name, 'B. Makutz …Perth, W.A.', on an oval plate.

Staff toilets and tea rooms are situated behind the mail room, separated by a passageway with external access. The external walls have been clad with weatherboard and security screens have been fitted to the windows of these rear rooms. The female staff area was inaccessible on the day of inspection, as it is currently leased for production of the local newspaper and staff were not in attendance.

Since completion of *Pingelly Post Office* in 1918, major alterations to the building fabric have centred on the rear service areas as new bathroom and washhouse facilities have been added and verandahs enclosed. The structure and planning of the front of the residence and post office remain substantially intact, despite the application of render and the removal of the front door to the residence and modernisation of furniture and fittings in the office. The fabric of the older building, in particular, requires maintenance.

## 13. 3   REFERENCES

Broomfield, W., Bush, F., Kelsall, D., National Trust Assessment , July 1993.