



# 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 \*

*Albany House* displays considerable aesthetic qualities. The robustness of the masonry as the dominant building material portrays a solid presence on the street corner. The contrast established by the rhythm of the fenestration and decorative detailing creates a handsome and pleasing facade in the Victorian Regency style. (Criterion 1.1)

*Albany House* is located at a major intersection in the town centre and has uninterrupted views of the harbour and an important vista up the main commercial street to the north. (Criterion 1.3)

Due to its prominent location, size and characteristic style, *Albany House* is a distinctive townscape element marking the corner of York Street and South Terrace. (Criterion 1.3)

*Albany House* is an important element in the unity of the Stirling Terrace streetscape. (Criterion 1.4)

### 11.2. HISTORIC VALUE

*Albany House* was a direct result of the construction of the Great Southern Railway and the promise of economic growth in Albany. The place is indicative of the importance of railways in the development of the State. (Criterion 2.1)

*Albany House* has associations with the early development of the commercial area in Albany, which spread northwards from the railway station up York Street. (Criterion 2.2)

*Albany House* is closely associated with the Union and ANZ Banks and the commercial life of Albany and surrounding farming districts. The place was purpose built for the bank's predecessor and housed its banking functions from 1884 to 1973. (Criterion 2.3)

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

### 11. 3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE

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### 11. 4. SOCIAL VALUE

*Albany House* is a substantial pre-goldrush building which contributes to the community's sense of place, having occupied its prominent corner site since 1884. The place has figured prominently in the commercial life of the community. (Criterion 4.2)

## **12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE**

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

*Albany House* is the earliest example of a regional branch of the Union Bank in Western Australia and one of the still extant, pre-goldrush buildings in the Stirling Terrace streetscape. (Criterion 5.1)

### **12. 2 REPRESENTATIVENESS**

*Albany House* is representative of the Victorian Regency style of architecture applied to a bank building in a regional centre of the State. (Criterion 6.1)

The location of *Albany House* is representative of a period when commercial activity in Albany centred on Stirling Terrace. (Criterion 6.2)

The building reflects the expectations for success in commercial activity held by the Union Bank in the pre gold-rush period. (Criterion 6.2)

### **12. 3 CONDITION**

*Albany House* is in good condition and currently undergoing a programme of maintenance.

### **12. 4 INTEGRITY**

*Albany House* has high integrity. The building is currently occupied by an insurance company which is a compatible use. The first floor residence is expected to be re-occupied in the near future. The carpark at the rear of the building maintains a clear zone between neighbouring development which allows views both to and from the first floor balcony of the north elevation.

### **12. 5 AUTHENTICITY**

Exterior additions to the rear elevation have not significantly altered the external appearance and the original external form is still highly recognisable. There have been some internal alterations associated with changing lifestyles of the twentieth century with new bathroom and kitchen facilities at first floor, and changes to the office layout at ground floor. New supporting fabric has been introduced to the north verandah and the cast iron panels have been temporarily removed for restoration. *Albany House* has moderate authenticity.

### 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

*Albany House* is a two-storey building constructed in Victorian Regency style.<sup>1</sup> The place was built in 1884, for the Union Bank of Australia Ltd, to a design by Melbourne based architect George C. Inskip.

In 1827, in order to lay claim to the western half of Australia for Britain and prevent French claims on the area, a penal outpost of NSW, known as Frederick Town, was established at King George Sound. In 1831, the convicts and troops were evacuated, and land in the area made available to free settlers. Albany developed as a trading and servicing post for whaling vessels, ships travelling from England via the Cape, and other vessels. By 1850, most of the suitable pastoral land in the district had been taken up in large holdings. With the advent of steamships, Albany became a coaling station for vessels crossing the Indian Ocean and also the official mail port for Western Australia.<sup>2</sup>

By the late 1870s, the Union, Commercial and National banks each had a branch in the town.<sup>3</sup> The General Manager of the Union Bank of Australia, John Franklin McMullen, acquired Albany Town Lot S33 on the corner on Stirling Terrace and York Street, in 1879.<sup>4</sup> This land had been originally granted to John Mason, an army sergeant who arrived in Western Australia with his family in 1830.<sup>5</sup> His son, Benjamin, inherited the land and in 1861, sold it, for £160, to George Pettit, a former London constable and expirée.<sup>6</sup> Pettit leased 4,000 acres of pastoral land in the Plantagenet District, where he ran sheep until the late 1870s.<sup>7</sup> On at least two occasions, he used Albany Town Lots S33 and 55 as security for money borrowed from John Hassell, but the last of these loans was discharged in 1875.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Apperly, R., Irving, R. and Reynolds, P. *A pictorial Guide to Identifying Australian Architecture: Styles and terms from 1788 to the present*, Sydney, Angus & Robertson, 1994, pp. 46-49.

<sup>2</sup> Garden, Donald S. *Albany: A Panorama of the Sound from 1827*, Melbourne, Thomas Nelson, 1977.

<sup>3</sup> Herald Western Australian Almanac & Commercial Directory, 1881. **Note:** Plaque attached to *Albany House* reads 'This building was constructed for the Union Bank of Australia Limited in 1878....' Not the date of construction but probably the date the branch was established. This plaque was provided by Albany Historical Society.

<sup>4</sup> DOLA Certificate of Title Vol. 5 Fol. 7. (See supporting material)

<sup>5</sup> Deed of Memorial Index, Albany Town Lot S33, 7 March 1839; Deed of Memorial Register Vol. 5 No. 571, 9 July 1855; *Bicentennial Dictionary of Western Australians*, Perth, UWA Press, 1988.

<sup>6</sup> Deed of Memorial Register Vol. 6 No. 1067, 24 July 1861; *Bicentennial Dictionary of Western Australians*, op cit.

<sup>7</sup> *Bicentennial Dictionary of Western Australians*, op cit.

<sup>8</sup> Deed of Memorial Register Vol. 6 No 1225, 2 January 1862 & No 2721, 2 January 1865 & Vol. 7 No 2140, 16 December 1870 & No 1711, 5 January 1875.

Construction of the Great Southern Railway began in 1884, and the prospects for Albany's economic growth were viewed with optimism. That year, Melbourne architect George C. Inskip was commissioned to design a new building for the Union Bank in Albany.

Mr Inskip, an architect from Melbourne arrived by the *Carthage*, to inspect, take the measurements, levels &c, of the site for the new building for the Union Bank of Australia Limited. The position is a commanding one at the north-west corner of York Street and Stirling Terrace. The structure, which will be erected without delay, will no doubt be a handsome one and add considerably to the appearance of the town. We are glad to see that the Directors have at last made up their minds to build, as the present premises are not at all creditable to an institution like the Union Bank.<sup>9</sup>

Tenders were called on 29 April 1884, and the foundation stone laid on 12 August.<sup>10</sup>

The foundation stone of the new Union Bank was laid on Tuesday 12th inst. by Mrs G. H. Bailey in the presence of a good assembly. The ceremony was successfully performed, and since, the contractor has made rapid strides with the building.<sup>11</sup>

George Inskip was also involved with the Fremantle and Geraldton Union Bank buildings.<sup>12</sup> From 1888, he was in partnership with William E. Robertson. They used Perth architect James W. Wright as their representative in Western Australia.<sup>13</sup>

The upper floor of *Albany House* was designed as a residence which was occupied by the bank manager. The land was transferred by endorsement to the Union Bank in 1888, and in 1945, Lot S33 was subdivided and a section at the back fronting York Street was sold.<sup>14</sup>

The Union Bank of Australia was founded in Launceston in 1834, as the Bank of Tamar. Prospectus for the Union Bank of Australia was issued in 1837. Its development was paralleled by that of the Bank of Australasia. This bank began in Launceston in 1828, as the Cornwall Bank. It became the Bank of Australasia in 1835, and six years later took over the Bank of Western Australia. The Union and the Australasia were both British owned banks and were known in the 1800s as the 'Imperial Banks.' They were well respected and successful.<sup>15</sup> In 1898, the Union Bank of Australia had fourteen branches in Western Australia and the Bank of Australasia

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<sup>9</sup> *Albany Mail*, 12 February 1884, p. 2. **Note:** This information refutes claims that architect J. J. Talbot Hobbs was involved with the place. That claim probably stems from Talbot Hobbs other work for the Union Bank where he was responsible for their branch buildings at York, Bunbury, Carnarvon and Kanowna, and the renovations and alterations to their Perth and Fremantle buildings. Talbot Hobbs appears to have taken over Union Bank work in WA from George Inskip c. 1893, but there is no record in his ledgers of any work carried out on their Albany branch. Ledger books of J. J. Talbot Hobbs, 3 vols, 1888-1904, Public Records Office 2780A /1-3.

<sup>10</sup> *Albany Mail*, 29 April 1884, p2.

<sup>11</sup> *Albany Mail*, 19 August 1884, p. 3.

<sup>12</sup> These were built about the same time as the Albany Union Bank building.

<sup>13</sup> Morison, M. P. 'Immigrant Architects and Their Work 1885-1905,' unpublished paper.

<sup>14</sup> DOLA Certificate of Title Vol. 1087 Fol. 159, HCWA File 00058 & Diagram No. 12555. (See supporting material)

<sup>15</sup> Merrett, David, *ANZ Bank: A history of the Australia & New Zealand Banking Group Ltd & its Constituents*, Sydney, Allen & Unwin, 1985.

had seven. The Bank of Australasia did not have a branch in Albany until after World War One. Their branch premises were in York Street.<sup>16</sup>

In the twentieth century, the market share of the Union Bank and the Bank of Australasia declined while other banks grew. After several failed attempts, they finally merged, becoming the Australia and New Zealand Bank on 10 October 1951. In Albany, the ANZ continued to run the two branch premises, York Street and *Albany House*. In 1970, the ANZ Bank took over the English, Scottish and Australian Bank and became the Australia and New Zealand Banking Group Ltd.<sup>17</sup>

The ANZ Banking Group occupied the ES&A Bank building on Albany Highway following the takeover of that bank, and the York Street branch was closed. In 1973, they vacated *Albany House* and relocated that branch in Peel Place.<sup>18</sup>

In 1975, *Albany House* was purchased by Raymond and Orina Wyness and, the following year, by the Bellemore family of Perth.<sup>19</sup> Under their ownership renovations to the place were carried out by architects Hobbs, Smith & Holmes of Albany, who had also been involved with renovations on the place for the Union Bank in the 1950s. The latest work includes the reconstruction of the two-storey back verandah. *Albany House* has always been a residence as well as a business premises.<sup>20</sup> The ground floor of *Albany House* is currently occupied by Western QBE Insurance.

### 13.2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

*Albany House* is a two-storey building occupying a prominent site at the north-west junction of the main commercial and water front streets of the Albany town centre. Constructed in the Victorian Regency style in 1884, the building contributes to the Stirling Terrace streetscape and is directly opposite the *Taxi Rank and Women' Rest Room* (1906)<sup>21</sup>. A single-storey wing on the west side of the building is set back from Stirling Terrace and extends across the site to the boundary with the neighbouring London Hotel which is of a similar scale and proportions. *Albany House* comprises office space at ground floor with residential accommodation above. The entrance to the brick paved carpark located on the north side of the building is from York Street, through an opening in the stretcher bond, face brickwork fence.

The building has a dominant square form with a truncated corner at the junction of the two street frontages. The first floor balcony of the north elevation has a timber floor, a balustrade comprising cast iron panels and a corrugated iron skillion roof. It provides views up York Street and

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<sup>16</sup> Wise's Post Office Directories, 1898-1920.

<sup>17</sup> Merrett, David, op cit.

<sup>18</sup> Western Australian Telephone Directories, 1944-1976.

<sup>19</sup> DOLA Certificate of Title Vol. 1087 Fol. 159, HCWA File 00058.

<sup>20</sup> Telephone conversation by Irene Ham-Sauman with Geoff Holmes, 10 February 1998, Memo, HCWA File 00058; plans acquired from Hobbs, Smith & Holmes by Katrina Chisholm.

<sup>21</sup> 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, pp. 46-49.

overlooks the carpark at the rear of the building. Some smaller forms housing sanitary and laundry facilities are located beneath the balcony at ground level, at either end of the rear verandah along the north facade. The verandah has a concrete floor and is bordered by timber posts supporting the upper balcony. The main roof, presumably also of corrugated iron, is concealed behind a parapet. Chimneys with moulded tops and a flag pole at the south-east corner are visible from street level.

*Albany House* is constructed in rendered, load-bearing masonry. A rendered plinth at the base of the building is continuous around the main facades and is deepest at the truncated corner as the site slopes to the south. A decorative frieze string course divides the ground and first floor with further horizontal mouldings employed beneath window head level of the first floor and in the prominent parapet entablature. The two street facades are identical and broken into bays by the pairing of window elements. The ground floor fenestration has semi-circular arched openings and is emphasised with strongly rusticated quoins. The flat arched windows of the upper floor are accentuated with stucco mouldings with a keystone. The fenestration of both levels is comprised of large, single paned sash windows. The cast iron box receivers to the downpipes at the rear and west side of the building are a notable decorative feature.

The main entrance to the building is at the truncated corner. A stainless steel handrail divides the set of five concrete risers and leads to the public office space. Further offices are provided at ground floor with the strong room equipped with original door and hardware from the former bank immediately behind the public space. Some residential facilities are provided at ground floor with a kitchen, dining room, laundry in the north-west corner of the building, and a hall with a staircase to the upper floor located centrally. A former unpretentious entrance to the residence from Stirling Terrace is situated in the single-storey weatherboard clad portion protruding from the junction of the lower west wing with the main building.

The upper floor accommodation provides four main spaces, one of which has been sub-divided for kitchen and bathroom facilities. The central hall is divided by semi-circular arches with plaster mouldings and leads to the rear verandah. The main spaces of both levels are generously proportioned and together with the high ceilings and large windows contribute to an impression of comfortable grandeur.

Interior wall surfaces are plastered at both levels with particularly elaborate cornice details in the ground floor public space. Elsewhere original skirtings, ceiling roses, panelled doors and the timber joinery in the stair and window architraves are still in evidence.

There is little documentary or physical evidence to show there have been significant alterations to the external form of the building, although the ablution facilities extending from the rear of the building are likely to have added in the early 1950s<sup>22</sup>.

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<sup>22</sup> A print of Proposed Alterations and Additions, ANZ Bank Albany, is currently held at the office of Hobbs, Smith and Holmes in Albany. The drawing is undated but stamped on the back, 25 February 1953 by the State Housing Commission.

Photographic evidence indicates that internal refits were undertaken in the 1930s, when a plasterboard ceiling was installed, and again in the 1950s when some alterations were made to the internal layout. Rearrangements to the office spaces involved the partial removal of some walls, the insertion of some new brick walls and alterations to door openings. Bathroom facilities and additional kitchen facilities have been incorporated in the upstairs residence.

The building is in good condition and undergoing a programme of maintenance at the time of inspection. The cast iron balcony panels have been removed to be sand-blasted but are currently stored internally. The supporting timber posts for the north verandah have been replaced although attempts have been made to match the original profiling as the deteriorated timber and the asbestos fibre cement guttering was still in evidence on the site. Internal plasterwork shows some water damage particularly at high level and along the west wall of the stairwell.

### **13.3 REFERENCES**

Australian Heritage Commission Data Sheet, 22 June 1978.

### **13.4 FURTHER RESEARCH**

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