



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

North Fremantle Post Office (former Police Station, Lockup and Quarters) is a building designed without stylistic pretensions, relying on sophisticated massing and modest detailing to achieve a strong presence and a conservative character at the same time. The limestone materials give a local context to that which remains of the original streetscape of the former Perth Road. (Criteria 1.1, 1.3)

North Fremantle Post Office (former Police Station, Lockup and Quarters) has a landmark quality in the streetscape by virtue of its location at the corner of a busy intersection and through its strong three dimensional form. (Criterion 1.3)

North Fremantle Post Office (former Police Station, Lockup and Quarters) is one of a few remaining buildings in what was once a coherent streetscape in North Fremantle. Its loss would seriously diminish the interpretation of the historical and architectural development of North Fremantle. (Criterion 1.4)

11.2. HISTORIC VALUE

North Fremantle Post Office (former Police Station, Lockup and Quarters) was, in 1897, a significant building in the developing built environment of North Fremantle. It expresses, in architectural form, the confidence of the early development of North Fremantle. (Criterion 2.1)

The simple design of the building is characteristic of Public Works buildings of the era. *North Fremantle Post Office (former Police Station, Lockup and Quarters)* expresses a design philosophy which developed in the Public Works Department in the 1890s and reached its expression in the public buildings of the day. (Criterion 2.1)

The building of the *North Fremantle Post Office (former Police Station, Lockup and Quarters)* demonstrates a commitment of Government to provide growing localities with public services at a time of rapid increases in population due to the gold boom. (Criterion 2.1)

11.3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE

11. 4. SOCIAL VALUE

Classification, registration and listing of the *North Fremantle Post Office (former Police Station, Lockup and Quarters)* by the National Trust (W.A.), the Australian Heritage Commission and the Fremantle Society demonstrates that the *North Fremantle Post Office (former Police Station, Lockup and Quarters)* is held in high regard by the community. (Criterion 4.1)

The building has significance as a surviving remnant of the former North Fremantle townsite and is highly significant in contributing to the community's sense of place. (Criterion 4.2)

12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE

12. 1. RARITY

North Fremantle Post Office (former Police Station, Lockup and Quarters) is not unique, but does have a strong streetscape presence which helps to set the scale and ambience of the original environment of the locality. (Criterion 5.2)

12. 2 REPRESENTATIVENESS

North Fremantle Post Office (former Police Station, Lockup and Quarters) with its simple architectural expression, classical proportions and detail of joinery is representative of the style, standard, technical and architectural accomplishment of Public Works Department design and construction of the 1890s. (Criterion 6.2)

12. 3 CONDITION

The condition of *North Fremantle Post Office (former Police Station, Lockup and Quarters)* is sound. Because of its age and nature, the fabric needs to be properly maintained in the future. In the past, some of the maintenance practices have not been carried out in accordance with conservation principles. The four sections of building need to be maintained at the same level together because they are a tightly related group. A conservation plan has been prepared to ensure this.

Please refer to Campbell, R. McK., 'The North Fremantle Post Office, 211-217 Queen Victoria Street. A Heritage Assessment for the Heritage Council of Western Australia', (HCWA, Perth, October 1991) pp.17-23 and also the report by the Building Management Authority, 'Provisional Conservation Policy for the former North Fremantle Police Station (currently North Fremantle Post Office and Homeswest Houses)', (Building Management Authority, Perth, September 1993).

The property was last inspected, in September 1993, by the Building Management Authority.¹

North Fremantle Post Office (former Police Station, Lockup and Quarters) is in sound condition.

12.4 INTEGRITY

North Fremantle Post Office (former Police Station, Lockup and Quarters) has a high level of intactness in both its external fabric and the internal fabric of the residences.

The current uses are not detrimental to the fabric of the building as they are not far removed, with the exception of the cells, from the original uses of the places as both a public and private building. Continuity of use requires some modification to the public portion. The integrity can, with appropriate and sensitive control of any future intervention, be retained.²

North Fremantle Post Office (former Police Station, Lockup and Quarters) has a high degree of integrity.

12.5 AUTHENTICITY

North Fremantle Post Office (former Police Station, Lockup and Quarters) has a high level of authenticity with most of the external fabric of the building and the residences being intact.

13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

North Fremantle Post Office (former Police Station, Lockup and Quarters) is a two-storey stone building of domestic scale built, in 1898, for the Government of Western Australia to service the rapidly growing district of North Fremantle. In 1969, the building was converted for use as a Post Office and has since been known as the *North Fremantle Post Office*. This report will refer to the place as the *North Fremantle Post Office (former Police Station, Lockup and Quarters)*.

The locality of North Fremantle developed around the river, road and rail connection between Fremantle and Perth. A new bridge across the Swan River was built, in 1866, and lots in North Fremantle were subdivided on either side of the Perth Road. With the completion of the Fremantle-Perth-Guildford railway line, in 1880, the North Fremantle subdivisions spread over the full area north to Rocky Bay.

¹ Please refer to Building Management Authority, 'Provisional Conservation Policy for the former North Fremantle Police Station (currently North Fremantle Post Office and Homeswest Houses)', (Building Management Authority, Perth, September 1993) pp. 9-10.

² Future intervention should be undertaken in line with the policy recommendations contained in the Building Management Authority, 'Provisional Conservation Policy for the former North Fremantle Police Station (currently North Fremantle Post Office and Homeswest Houses)', (Building Management Authority, Perth, September 1993).

The first recording of a Police Station in North Fremantle was in 1887, which is very early for a suburban area. Its location is not known. The gold boom of the 1890s precipitated rapid development of Perth and Fremantle and representations were made to the Premier for many new public buildings. In North Fremantle a post office (1892), primary school (1894), railway workshops and stores (1894-5), and a station master's house (1894-5) were built. In 1895, North Fremantle became a separate municipality. Construction and development continued with expanded railway services, and the construction of another new road bridge, and the development of the inner harbour area. By 1896-97, a new police station was high on the list of public buildings required.³

In 1897, Lot 23 on the Perth Road was chosen for the *North Fremantle Post Office (former Police Station, Lockup and Quarters)*. Stables were allocated to lot 27 across the right of way (now Jewell Parade).⁴

Plans for the *North Fremantle Post Office (former Police Station, Lockup and Quarters)* were drafted by W. H. Illingworth employed by the Public Works Department in 1896-97 and examined by W. B. Hardwick. The design has been attributed to Hardwick under the direction of J. H. Grainger (Chief Architect).⁵ The plans exhibit Grainger's preoccupation with standardised simple architectural forms being used to create a variety of simple, well proportioned buildings for public use.

Tenders for the building were called in July 1897, and a contract was let to J. B. Campbell on 24 July 1897. The work was completed in February 1898.⁶ Upon completion, the building was occupied by one corporal, one mounted and two foot constables.⁷

Between 1912-1917, various repairs and maintenance were made and some partitioning of rooms took place. The building continued in use as a Police Station.

In November 1961, North Fremantle Town was absorbed by Fremantle City Council as part of a rationalisation of local government resources.⁸ In 1966, the North Fremantle Post Office was demolished to make way for road widening and the post office services were moved to the Town Hall, where they remained until 1969, when the former Police Station, Lockup and Quarters was closed and then converted to a Post Office.⁹ A series of post boxes were built into the window openings, and the porch built in front.¹⁰

³ Campbell, R. McK., 'The North Fremantle Post Office, 211-217 Queen Victoria Street. A Heritage Assessment for the Heritage Council of Western Australia', (HCWA, Perth, October 1991) p. 1.

⁴ Building Management Authority, 'Provisional Conservation Policy for the former North Fremantle Police Station (currently North Fremantle Post Office and Homeswest Houses)', (Building Management Authority, Perth, September 1993) p. 3.

⁵ Campbell, R. McK., p. 5.

⁶ *ibid*; Building Management Authority, p. 4.

⁷ Campbell, R. McK., p. 6.

⁸ *Government Gazette*, 3 November 1961, p. 3086.

⁹ *ibid*.

¹⁰ Campbell, R. McK., p. 7.

In February 1991, local newspapers reported on a proposal by the State Government to close the Post Office and sell the building. Some local residents threatened to fight to keep the building in public ownership. A follow-up article reported that the Minister for Heritage had inspected the building and had stated that the *North Fremantle Post Office (former Police Station, Lockup and Quarters)* should remain in public ownership, but that it was appropriate for the three attached living quarters to be sold off. The Fremantle Society was reported as opposing the sale of any part of the property.¹¹

The *North Fremantle Post Office (former Police Station, Lockup and Quarters)* stayed in public ownership with the three quarters vested in Homeswest and the post office services remained. In 1991, Australia Post found the service was no longer viable and sought private concerns to take out a lease on the section of the building occupied by the postal services.¹² Textile Printing and Design W.A. Pty. Ltd. tendered for, and was granted, the lease of that part of the building on the basis that it would be retained as a licensed post office and that an upgrading of the building would be undertaken to enable mixed business. Consultation with the Heritage Council of Western Australia was entered into and a conservation plan to assess the significance of the site and the most appropriate course to be undertaken was done. See Building Management Authority, 'Provisional Conservation Policy for the former North Fremantle Police Station (currently North Fremantle Post Office and Homeswest Houses)', (Building Management Authority, Perth, September 1993).

13.2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

North Fremantle Post Office (former Police Station, Lockup and Quarters) is a two-storey limestone building of domestic scale, built in 1898. It was designed for the Government of Western Australia by the Public Works Department.

It is sited on Queen Victoria Street (formerly Perth Road) and, by 1903, the *North Fremantle Post Office (former Police Station, Lockup and Quarters)* was part of a busy main street, with shops either side and a new Town Hall just down the road.¹³

The building is of limestone with stylistic elements of the Victorian Georgian style combined in the picturesque asymmetry favoured by the Arts and Crafts movement of the same period.¹⁴ The building has exposed stonewalling, simple rectangular openings with rendered sills and lintels and comprises both single and two storey sections with a verandah to the east elevation. The massing of the group is asymmetrical with a fine balance between picturesque roof forms and the bulk of the double storey

¹¹ *ibid*; "Anxiety over Post Office" *Fremantle Gazette* 12 February 1991 p. 17; Hodge, F. "McGinty angry over post office. Inc. link" *Fremantle Gazette* 19 February 1991 p. 13.

¹² Australia Post tender notification, 22 January 1993.

¹³ Campbell, R. McK., p. 6.

¹⁴ 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. 42-45, 140-143.

block and which, together with the stone work, gives the building a domestic ambience.

The combination of public office, lock-up, and residential function is well composed and the form of the building follows the functional planning. The original plans for the building show a public office (charge room), exercise yard and three cells, with three sets of quarters attached. There are two double storey quarters with two upper floor bedrooms and a single storey, two bedroom, quarters with a connecting door to the police station. The quarters front the street, each with a small front yard and verandah.¹⁵ Front verandahs have screen walls of stone separating the residences and timber verandah posts complete with capitals, bases and brackets.¹⁶ The charge room is entered by a side porch on the south and has direct access to the exercise yard. The side porch to the charge room has the same posts and brackets and a spandrel panel of lattice.¹⁷ The cells open directly onto this yard. There are small iron barred windows over the doors and no other openings. The drawings show a latrine built into an arched alcove in the south wall.¹⁸

The drawings indicate main walls are of solid stone on concrete footings and the walls for the kitchen wing are timber frame construction clad in weather boards.¹⁹ Floors are traditional timber construction. The floors of the cells are shown as concrete and the concreted yard is coated in asphalt and falls to a central drainage sump. Roofs are low pitched hips and gables sheeted in corrugated iron in typically short lengths. There are louvred gable ventilators and flued vents to the kitchen/bathroom roof spaces. In the cell block, each cell has a flue from the ceiling vent out through the roof and another from above the slop bucket.²⁰ The ceiling construction appears to have a double lining, with boards above the joists.

The main rooms of the quarters and the charge room are all of generous proportions, typical of government building standards of the day, with 3.3m and 3.0m ceilings, and each one has a fireplace.²¹ Windows are large two-light double hung sashes and are of one size in the main building. Doors are of four panel with openable hopper fanlights.²² Mounted skirtings, architraves, fireplace overmantels and dogleg staircases are standard 1890s Public Works Department designs although the placement of the staircase in the living rooms, rather than in a stair hall, adds space and light to the room in a very modern manner.²³ Cupboards under the stairs are timber panelled.²⁴

North Fremantle Post Office (former Police Station, Lockup and Quarters) has had a number of additions, the first recorded in 1912, when a framed shed was attached to the back of each kitchen. The open porch of 213

15 Building Management Authority, p. 16.

16 Campbell, R. McK., p. 4.

17 *ibid.*

18 Building Management Authority, p. 9; Campbell, R. McK., p. 4.

19 *ibid.*

20 *ibid.*

21 *ibid.* p. 3.

22 Building Management Authority, p. 9.

23 Campbell, R. McK., p. 3.

24 *ibid.* p. 4.

between the back door, kitchen and bathroom was enclosed around this time, including a new double-hung window and a ledged, braced and battened door.²⁵ Subsequent alterations comprised additions to the fabric of the place. Additions and alterations to the quarters have been confined to the enclosure of the verandah, the addition of timber framed and asbestos clad washhouse, and porches which abut the later brick outhouse. The internal room layouts have not been altered. In the quarters the limestone load bearing wall, timber floors, timber casement windows, timber panelled doors and roof structure are all of a high level of intactness. Services have mostly been supplied using external conduit.²⁶

In 1957, alterations to the place included the replacement of the south stone wall to the exercise yard with the existing brick gabled wall and new roof over, the insertion of a stud division wall to create a passage way in front of the cells and the conversion of two of the cells into one, a store and a water closet respectively. Windows in the east wall ventilate the water closets. The opening between the charge room and the adjacent quarters was boarded up but the opening frame remains intact.²⁷

The change of use from police station to post office in 1969, involved the placement of postboxes in the window opening of the former charge room, the installation of suspended fluorescent lighting and the addition of a porch to the south entry.²⁸

Homeswest upgraded their facilities in 1992, undertaking painting, minor repairs and upgrading bathroom facilities for tenants. The water closets remain outside. No structural changes were made to the quarters which retain the original layout, timber joinery, floorboards, lath and plaster ceilings and fittings. Only one original door to number 215 is missing and the floor boards to the south bedroom of 213 have been replaced. The most significant change in appearance from the street has been through insensitive landscaping. There are palms outside number 212 and an intrusive sidewalk fence of link mesh on a steel frame. Dense planting of native plants outside the area now used as a post office obscures the south elevation of the building and the entry to this part of the building.

The level of intactness of the residences and the external fabric of the building contributes to its interpretive value and will necessarily impact on future development in the post office section of the building.

13.3 REFERENCES

Campbell, R. McK., 'The North Fremantle Post Office, 211-217 Queen Victoria Street. A Heritage Assessment for the Heritage Council of Western Australia', (HCWA, Perth, October 1991).

Building Management Authority, 'Provisional Conservation Policy for the former North Fremantle Police Station (currently North Fremantle Post Office and Homeswest Houses)', (Building Management Authority, Perth, September 1993).

²⁵ *ibid.* p. 6.

²⁶ Building Management Authority, pp. 9, 15.

²⁷ See Campbell, R. McK., pp. 6, 9-11 for further detail.

²⁸ Building Management Authority, p. 16.

National Trust Assessment Exposition, 1974.
Australian Heritage Commission Data Sheet.