



## REGISTER OF HERITAGE PLACES – ASSESSMENT DOCUMENTATION

### 11. ASSESSMENT OF CULTURAL HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

The criteria adopted by the Heritage Council in November 1996 have been used to determine the cultural heritage significance of the place.

#### PRINCIPAL AUSTRALIAN HISTORIC THEME(S)

- 6.2 Establishing schools

#### HERITAGE COUNCIL OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA THEME(S)

- 307 Intellectual activities, arts and crafts
- 402 Education and science
- 404 Community services and utilities

#### 11.1 AESTHETIC VALUE\*

*Beaconsfield Primary School (fmr)* demonstrates, particularly with the former Senior School,<sup>1</sup> a good example of the Federation Arts and Crafts style. The northern aspect and western canopy appear similar to Beaconsfield Post Office, designed by George Temple Poole. (Criterion 1.1)

*Beaconsfield Primary School (fmr)* is an integral part of, and makes a positive contribution to, the streetscape of Hampton Road. (Criterion 1.3)

#### 11.2 HISTORIC VALUE

*Beaconsfield Primary School (fmr)* demonstrates the development of the suburbs immediately south of Fremantle. The earliest parts of the school (1894) and the George Temple Poole designed Post Office (1896) were among the first civic buildings constructed in Beaconsfield. (Criterion 2.1)

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

For consistency, all references to garden and landscape types and styles are taken from Ramsay, J. *Parks, Gardens and Special Trees: A Classification and Assessment Method for the Register of the National Estate*, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1991, with additional reference to Richards, O. *Theoretical Framework for Designed Landscapes in WA*, unpublished report, 1997.

<sup>1</sup> Although part of *Beaconsfield Primary* is referred to as 'Senior', the whole of the site was a primary school. The term 'senior' refers to the division of the primary school into two sections: a little school for 'the bubs to first standard', and the big school 'for the rest of the school' (see 'Fremantle-Peel District Education Office', Hocking Planning & Architecture, with Robyn Taylor, pp. 42, 44).

As a school for more than 80 years, *Beaconsfield Primary School (fmr)* played an important role in the education of people from Beaconsfield. (Criterion 2.2)

*Beaconsfield Primary School (fmr)* demonstrates the changing ideologies in the Education Department from 1894-1978, and in particular the philosophical approach of Maria Montessori, introduced into Western Australian schools after 1912. (Criterion 2.2)

It is likely that *Beaconsfield Primary School (fmr)* was designed by George Temple Poole, as it is typical of his work, and he was responsible for many of the civic buildings in this area during the 1890s. (Criterion 2.3)

The place is associated with former pupil, Kim Beazley Snr., Minister for Education in the Whitlam government and Labor member of the House of Representatives for 32 years, 1945-77. (Criterion 2.3)

### **11.3 SCIENTIFIC VALUE**

### **11.4 SOCIAL VALUE**

*Beaconsfield Primary School (fmr)* is highly valued by Beaconsfield residents. When the new Beaconsfield Primary School opened in 1977, there was a celebration for all current and ex-students of the school. In 1990, a book was published celebrating the centenary of the school, with memories and memorabilia contributed by ex-students and staff. (Criterion 4.1)

## **12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE**

### **12.1 RARITY**

The former Infants Classroom is rare in Western Australia as an educational building whose design reflects the philosophical approach to teaching of Maria Montessori. (Criterion 5.1)

The Infants School is rare as a single classroom design which displays philosophical approach to teaching associated with the open air teaching method. (Criterion 5.1)

### **12.2 REPRESENTATIVENESS**

*Beaconsfield Primary School (fmr)* is representative of the changes in educational philosophies in Western Australia which influenced the architectural design of schools. (Criterion 6.1)

*Beaconsfield Primary School (fmr)* is representative of schools locating both the Infants and Senior Schools on one site. (Criterion 6.1)

The former Senior School is representative of the Federation Arts and Crafts style State Government school buildings. (Criterion 6.1)

### **12.3 CONDITION**

*Beaconsfield Primary School (fmr)* is in sound to good condition. There is rainwater damage in Conference Room 2, and fretting brickwork on Conference Room 2, the former Senior School and the former Infants School.

The current management of the place shows awareness of heritage significance, and the fabric, on the whole, has been developed in a manner consistent with the general character of the place.

#### **12.4 INTEGRITY**

*Beaconsfield Primary School (fmr)* has a moderate degree of integrity. It no longer functions as an educational establishment, and its change of use is reflected in modifications to the interiors and, in particular, the grounds. The grounds have a low to moderate degree of integrity.

#### **12.5 AUTHENTICITY**

Different elements of *Beaconsfield Primary School (fmr)* vary in authenticity from a moderate to a high degree.

The former Senior School and the former Infants School have a moderate to high degree of authenticity, with respect to both interiors and exteriors.

The former Infants Classroom has a high degree of authenticity, although some original fabric is covered with later developments.

Conference Room 1 has a moderate degree of authenticity, but no connection to the Federation period during which the majority of the place was constructed.

The grounds have a low degree of authenticity, since, for the most part, they have been converted to car parks.

#### **13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE**

The wording of this document has been adapted from 'Fremantle-Peel District Education Office (fmr Beaconsfield Primary School): Conservation Plan' prepared by Hocking Planning & Architecture, with Robyn Taylor, Historian, for Department of Housing and Works on behalf of the Department of Education and Training in January 2005 with amendments and/or additions by HCWA staff and the Register Committee.

##### **13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE**

For documentary evidence see 'Fremantle-Peel District Education Office', Hocking Planning & Architecture with Robyn Taylor, pp. 25-57

Beaconsfield is named after a property known as 'Beaconsfield', located in the area in the 1880s. The name was officially adopted for the Post Office in August 1894. The origin is unknown, but is probably from the English town or after Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli, created Earl of Beaconsfield in 1879.<sup>2</sup>

The educational philosophy of Maria Montessori began to influence educational ideology and practices in Western Australia from 1912. Although her major work was not translated into English until that year, Montessori kindergartens were already operating in Adelaide by 1911 and it was partly as a result of a visit to Perth by the Adelaide instructor that the first Montessori kindergarten was opened in Perth in 1912, and a Kindergarten Training College was opened in 1913.<sup>3</sup>

As the Education Department began to adopt some of her methodology, changes were made to school design and classroom furniture. The Education Department advised in 1913 of the new plans drawn for Infants' Schools in the State, and included as an example the plan for Albany Infants' School, drawn by Hillson

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<sup>2</sup> Department of Land Information, <http://www.dli.wa.gov.au>, consulted 20 November 2006

<sup>3</sup> Gregory, J., & Smith, L., 'A Thematic History of Public Education in Western Australia' (Centre for Western Australian History, 1995), p. 25

Beasley in April 1914.<sup>4</sup> Other early classrooms of this style include those at North Cottesloe, Fremantle, Eden Hill, Palmyra, Maylands and Collie.<sup>5</sup>

The innovative design was characterised by a 20 ft wide verandah, preferably on the north side of the building, in contrast with earlier school designs with the verandah generally located on the south. Locating the wide verandah to take advantage of the sunlight in all seasons, all classrooms opened directly onto it, in keeping with Montessori's philosophy. Lightweight school chairs and tables were introduced, 'which can easily be moved by the children, so that in fine weather much of the teaching can be carried on in the open air'.<sup>6</sup>

However, the Infant Classroom at Beaconsfield was set on the north-south McCleery Street, which necessitated the open-air verandah being developed to the west, rather than the north, as is the case at, say, Albany Primary School.

By the mid-1930s, WA teachers decided that pavilions were not satisfactory as they were cold and draughty in winter and very hot and dusty in summer.<sup>7</sup> In any case, from the 1920s the use of wide verandahs as open air teaching spaces was phased out, and they became narrower and served principally as sheltered circulation corridors.

### **13.2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE**

For physical evidence see 'Fremantle-Peel District Education Office', Hocking Planning & Architecture with Robyn Taylor, pp. 58-120

### **13.3 COMPARATIVE INFORMATION**

Schools built in the 1890s usually demonstrate the influence of the Arts and Crafts movement: steeply pitched roofs, half-timbered gables, tall double hung sash windows (grouped in threes), elegant chimneys, and asymmetrical elevations. George Temple Poole, Chief Architect of the Public Works Department (PWD) during this time, demonstrated flamboyant design and this continued under the leadership of John Henry Grainger (1897-1905).

Schools built prior to 1914 typically followed the Central Hall design, where classrooms are arranged around a large hall serving as a common teaching and play area. The first school of this design was probably North Fremantle (1894), and others include East Perth (1895), Cottesloe (1896, central hall 1910) and Subiaco (1897).

Following the substantial building programme implemented in 1914, 35 new schools were opened in Western Australia, including Albany Infants' School, North Cottesloe, and Fremantle (all 1914). Construction of new schools slowed somewhat during World War I, although 26 new schools were constructed in 1915, and five single-roomed schools were enlarged. Of these, Eden Hill, Maylands, Collie, and Palmyra Infants Schools were built to the 1914 plan for new Infants' Schools.

There are 115 school buildings on the HCWA database constructed before 1900. Of these, 27 are on the Register. Eighteen of these are in the Metropolitan

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<sup>4</sup> *Report of the Education Department for 1913*, p. 7 and opposite p. 42, in *Votes and Proceedings of the Parliament of Western Australia 1914*, Vol. 1

<sup>5</sup> Gregory & Smith, 'Thematic History', p. 25

<sup>6</sup> *Report of the Education Department for 1914*, p. 7, in *Votes and Proceedings 1915*, Vol. 1

<sup>7</sup> Gregory & Smith, 'Thematic History', pp. 25-26

Region, six of which are listed as being in the Federation Arts and Craft style. These are:

03135 *North Fremantle Primary School (fmr)* (1894): Federation Arts and Crafts style limestone building featuring brick quoins, distinctive roof forms, together with two Tuart trees. It is associated with the settlement of the North Fremantle district, and development of the design of state school buildings by the PWD during the gold boom in the late 19th century.

02180 *Highgate Primary School* (1895): Senior School (1895) and former Infants School (1900) in the Federation Arts and Crafts style; former Teacher's Quarters in a modest Federation Queen Anne Style (1898); former Manual Training Room (1914) and Pavilion Classroom. Constructed in varying combinations of face brickwork, limestone, render and corrugated iron, it is a rare example of a group of school facilities predominantly in Federation styles. The former Teacher's Quarters is one of the few remaining in the metropolitan area.

02434 *Subiaco Primary School* (1897): comprising the Senior School (1897), a brick building in the Arts and Crafts style with consistent additions (1900-12), Infants School (1901) and Intermediate School (1914), brick buildings in Federation Free Style, together with significant early plantings and the site of an 1896 well. Elements of the Senior School – the ornately turned eaves brackets, truncated ceilings with pressed metal linings, and sculpted entrance portico – are uncommon architectural features. A number of trees within the grounds are significant, particularly the Sugar Gums and Moreton Bay Figs.

01933 *Cottesloe Primary School & Cottesloe School for the Deaf & Hearing Impaired* (1898): single-storey, red brick and limestone building with corrugated roof sheeting. Designed by the PWD under George Temple Poole, it is an attractive and well-proportioned building, still used for its original purpose.

02208 *West Leederville Primary School* (1898): brick and iron primary school in the Federation Arts and Crafts style, together with shelter sheds, pavilion classroom, and a pre-primary, in an open bitumen paved and grassed setting. The pavilion classroom (1915) is rare as an example on its original site, with few later changes.

16789 *North Perth Primary School* (1898): single-storey brick and corrugated iron Primary School to Federation Central Hall School design, built in sections as the school expanded (1898-1933); single-storey brick and tile Infants School with deep verandahs constructed in stages (1924-33); ancillary buildings include an Arts & Crafts centre (consisting of three Pavilion classrooms [1914-18] joined into one building). The Primary School is rare as a late example of Central Hall planning, completed in the interwar period after this design was abandoned in favour of the lineal classroom plan.

A comparable school building designed according to the educational philosophy of Maria Montessori is: 03464 *1915 Block, Albany Primary School* (1915), an administration and teaching block constructed of speckled greyish brown brick and a corrugated iron roof.

Although there are several places in the State with open-air teaching areas, *Beaconsfield Primary School (fmr)* is rare for containing a single-room classroom variant of this design. In addition, the Seniors School is a good example of a Federation Arts and Crafts style educational building.

#### 13.4 KEY REFERENCES

'Fremantle-Peel District Education Office (fmr Beaconsfield Primary School): Conservation Plan' prepared by Hocking Planning & Architecture, with Robyn Taylor, Historian, for Department of Housing and Works on behalf of the Department of Education and Training in January 2005

### **13. 5 FURTHER RESEARCH**

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