



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)

- 3.13.1 Building to suit Australian conditions
- 3.13.2 Using Australian materials in construction
- 6.2 Establishing schools
- 6.5 Educating people in remote places

HERITAGE COUNCIL OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA THEME(S)

- 402 Education and science
- 404 Community services and utilities
- 408 Institutions
- 602 Early settlers

11.1 AESTHETIC VALUE*

Old Vasse Primary School Precinct has aesthetic value as a well defined space with distinct features which provide a sense of long term human occupation. Architecturally, the 1901 schoolroom is significant for its proud proportions, and together with the ex-Cowaramup schoolroom, is of a pleasing scale, form and material character, and the cypress trees are fully matured landscape elements. (Criterion 1.1)

Old Vasse Primary School Precinct is distinct from the surrounding native vegetation in that it is created, but the timber frame and weatherboard construction of the schoolrooms relate to the context in that it is derived from many natural materials evident on the site. (Criterion 1.3)

11.2 HISTORIC VALUE

The history of the *Old Vasse Primary School Precinct* has been to a large extent continuous with that of the surrounding district, and has been associated with the present site since the early 1880's. (Criterion 2.1)

* 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.

The survival of the *Old Vasse Primary School Precinct* is a noteworthy achievement of the local residents who struggled to keep the school open through many years when low enrolments threatened the school with closure, a recurring theme in the history of rural schools (Criterion 2.1)

The theme of rural schools closing due to low enrolments is echoed by the placement of the ex-Cowaramup schoolroom on the site in 1961, after the first Cowaramup school was forced to close. (Criterion 2.1)

The *Old Vasse Primary School Precinct* buildings have some value for what they reveal about the nature of educational buildings and the factors that historically were taken into account for the health and hygiene of the pupils, in particular light and ventilation. The rainwater tanks illustrate the ongoing reliance of the school on rainwater for drinking, personal hygiene and the watering of gardens. (Criterion 2.2)

11. 3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE

11. 4. SOCIAL VALUE

Old Vasse Primary School Precinct is highly valued by the local community as it has functioned as a vital and integral part of the community's social life since the first years of settlement in the Vasse region. The Parents and Citizens Association of the school has played an important role in the social history of the district, and in maintaining the school's operation. (Criterion 4.1)

The principal and his family of the school have historically also been an important part of the social history of the school and the area. (Criterion 4.2)

The continued use of the buildings for their original purpose has further contributed to the community's sense of place. (Criterion 4.2)

12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE

12. 1. RARITY

The 1901 schoolroom is one of few examples of a single room school which is still in use, and as such has some rarity in terms of its social significance. (Criterion 5.2)

12. 2 REPRESENTATIVENESS

The two early schoolrooms are representative of the single-teacher, one-classroom schools which were established throughout Western Australia during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. (Criterion 6.2)

The 1901 classroom is a good example of a particular design established by the Public Works Department which was then slightly modified and enlarged for subsequent schools built around the First World War period. The ex-Cowaramup classroom is typical of the demountable structures that were built in the Group Settlement Areas. The representational value of the toilet block has not been established although it is known that its design is characteristic of Public Works Department design in the first decades of the post-World War II period. (Criterion 6.2)

12.3 CONDITION

The external fabric and landscape of the *Old Vasse Primary School Precinct* is kept in a fair condition. The mature native trees and two cypress trees are in fine condition, and the lawns around the school yard are well kept. Some difficulties are, however, experienced with drainage on the site. Some timber posts and verandah fascia boards show signs of weathering and rot at ground level. Recently the old toilet block was re-conditioned and is very tidy both inside and out. The interiors of the 1901 and ex-Cowaramup schoolrooms are, however, not particularly well kept, due mainly to the inappropriate functions currently served by these spaces, and the poor quality of furnishing.

12.4 INTEGRITY

The site retains a high degree of integrity. Recent development has not really encroached on the old schoolyard, allowing an accurate perception of the historic space. The three buildings on the site have potential for reinstatement of features that have been altered. Specific items that have the potential to be reinstated are earlier colour schemes, the face brickwork of the chimney, gravelling of the yard, and the interior finishes. Although the school quarters have been replaced, the scale or function of the present building is not alien to the former and as such some of the integrity of that part of the site has been maintained. Documentation of the former building exists, enabling its reconstruction should this be considered desirable.

12.5 AUTHENTICITY

The *Old Vasse Primary School Precinct* retains a moderate degree of authenticity. The placement of elements in this old school yard has not altered since 1960. However, the development of the adjacent areas of the site has markedly affected the patterns of use on the site. The buildings themselves have undergone some change that has affected their authenticity; most obviously their interior finishes and external colour schemes are no longer original. Although research has not yielded information on the matter, it may be assumed that the buildings were repainted with no reference to their original schemes in 1960 when the ex-Cowaramup building and toilet block were added to the school.

13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

Attached are key sections of the supporting evidence prepared by Palassis Architects for the Department of Contract and Management Services, 'Vasse Primary School Conservation Plan', in March 1998.

Key sections used: 3.1 Documentary Evidence (p7-33), 3.2 Physical Evidence (p34-65), 3.3 Analysis of Documentary and Physical Evidence (p66-70).

For suggested curtilage, refer to key sections of supporting evidence, page 76, 'grading of significant areas', ('zone of considerable cultural heritage significance')

13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

For a discussion of the Documentary Evidence refer to Palassis Architects 'Vasse Primary School Conservation Plan', prepared for the Department of Contract and Management Services in March 1998.

13.2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

For a discussion of the Physical Evidence refer to Palassis Architects 'Vasse Primary School Conservation Plan', prepared for the Department of Contract and Management Services in March 1998.

13.3 COMPARATIVE INFORMATION

For a Comparative Analysis refer to Palassis Architects 'Vasse Primary School Conservation Plan', prepared for the Department of Contract and Management Services in March 1998.

13.4 KEY REFERENCES

Palassis Architects, 'Vasse Primary School Conservation Plan', prepared for the Department of Contract and Management Services in March 1998.

13.5 FURTHER RESEARCH

Further research may be necessary to establish the particulars of the origin of the ex-Cowaramup schoolroom, in Cowaramup.