



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)

- 3.6 Establishing lines and networks of communication
- 3.13.2 Building to suit Australian conditions
- 3.14 Developing economic links to Asia
- 7.5.7 Dispensing justice
- 8.1 Organising recreation

HERITAGE COUNCIL OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA THEME(S)

- 210 Telecommunications
- 403 Law and order

11.1 AESTHETIC VALUE*

Broome Court House holds aesthetic value for its interesting combination of features, including wide verandahs with cast iron detail, corrugated iron walls and roof, and two ventilated roof lanterns. The dense tropical landscape setting also contributes significantly to the aesthetic value of the site, enhanced by garden features from earlier plantings including the tamarind tree on the northern side of the building and a number of boab trees; in particular, the large specimen adjacent to the public office. (Criterion 1.1)

The site is of aesthetic significance for its design and construction methods and material that originated in the UK and were a unique response to the tropical climate of north Western Australia. The design and construction methods of the building had an aesthetic influence on later buildings in the region. (Criterion 1.2)

The site has become an aesthetic symbol for the town of Broome. It has been used, along with Chinatown, for promotional purposes to establish the town's identity and sense of place. It is a major landmark in the centre of the town and, through its scale and proportions in relation to adjacent buildings, forms an important visual focus. (Criterion 1.3))

* 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 open landscaped setting of the building is also significant providing a green space around the building and creating an appropriate context for the building. Together, the building and grounds form a significant cultural landscape. (Criterion 1.4)

11. 2. HISTORIC VALUE

Broome Court House is historically significant for its role in the developing history of Broome and the Kimberley region. Firstly, it has significance as the town's first major building and for the major communication links it provided during its use as the Cable Station 1889 - 1914. Secondly, it has historic significance for its use as the court house and represents the continuous use of the site for court purposes from 1922 to 2001. It is significant to the history of the development of the town of Broome and the Kimberley region and represents the evolving history of communications and subsequently law and order in the area. (Criterion 2.1)

The site has historic significance representing the laying of the communications cable between Java and Roebuck Bay in 1889 and its subsequent role in communications transmission until its closure in 1913. It represents the colonial lifestyle enjoyed by the residents of the Cable Station, based on patterns more common to Asian colonial outposts than to northern Western Australia in the period around the turn of the century. The presence of the Cable Station in Broome, which was developing its own Asian lifestyle unique in the Australian context, is of significance. (Criterion 2.2)

The site is historically significant as a unique example of an imported iron framed prefabricated building in the north of Western Australia in the late nineteenth century. (Criterion 2.4)

11. 3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE

Broome Court House is of scientific significance for its ability to contribute to an understanding of international communications networks established during the colonial period in South East Asia and Australia.

The design and construction of the site is significant for its influence on the development of the unique Broome style of architecture, which also drew influences from colonial architecture and developments within the local construction industry. (Criterion 3.1)

11. 4. SOCIAL VALUE

The site has social significance to the representatives of the Crown Law Department who are engaged in its functioning as a court. It is also significant to those who have been involved in the law and order process carried out there from 1922 to 2001. (Criterion 4.1)

The site and in particular the grounds around the building are of social significance to the people of Broome as a community meeting place. The landscaping of the site undertaken in 1984 gave the community a sense of ownership of the place, which has been increased by the use of the grounds for the Broome Saturday market. (Criterion 4.2)

12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE

12. 1. RARITY

Broome Court House is a unique instance of an imported prefabricated iron framed building in the north of Western Australia and, as such, is very significant within the Australian context. (Criterion 5.1)

The use of the site is an example of the British colonial lifestyle, including the employment of Indian servants, typical of life in the outposts of the British Empire in the late nineteenth century. This use is probably unique in the context of the north of Western Australia. (Criterion 5.2)

12. 2 REPRESENTATIVENESS

From 1922, *Broome Court House* has been used as a court house and, as such, has been a representative example of a regional court house in the north of Western Australia. The site is representative of the system of law and order practices in this region from that time. (Criterion 6.2)

12. 3 CONDITION

Broome Court House has undergone a major program of conservation works to the external fabric and is now in very good condition.

12. 4 INTEGRITY

The use of *Broome Court House* has changed from Cable Station to Court House over time which has affected the integrity of the place to the degree that certain changes were required to be made to the building in 1922 and subsequently in order to accommodate these changes of use. The continuing use of the place for commercial or civic purposes has been sustained. The site can be considered, however, to retain a fair to high degree of integrity.

12. 5 AUTHENTICITY

The authenticity of *Broome Court House* has been affected by the changes that have been made to the building and grounds over the period of its history; in particular the alterations to convert the building for court house purposes. However, alterations have largely been undertaken with regard to the significance of the place and with an emphasis on retention of original materials. The essential original elements of the building including the structural frame, external and internal wall cladding, decorative cast iron work, original teak door and window frames and sashes and other elements remain intact and give the building a high degree of authenticity.

The grounds around the building have been altered to accommodate the changing needs of the building users and the Broome community over time. An area that was principally vegetable garden, fowl yards and tennis court in 1889 is now a botanical garden. As such the grounds have lost some authenticity, however the changes to the grounds have largely been a response to the changing use of the building and as such remain relevant.

13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

Attached are key sections of the Supporting Evidence prepared by Heritage and Conservation Professionals, 'Broome Court House (Former Cable Station) Conservation Plan' prepared for The Building Management Authority in February 1996.

Key sections used: 3.0 Documentary Evidence (pp 12-36), 4.0 Physical Evidence (pp 37-57)

13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

For a discussion of the Documentary Evidence refer to Heritage and Conservation Professionals, 'Broome Court House (Former Cable Station) Conservation Plan' prepared for The Building Management Authority in February 1996.

13.2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

For a discussion of the Physical Evidence refer to Heritage and Conservation Professionals, 'Broome Court House (Former Cable Station) Conservation Plan' prepared for The Building Management Authority in February 1996.

13.3 COMPARATIVE INFORMATION

For a Comparative Analysis refer to Heritage and Conservation Professionals, 'Broome Court House (Former Cable Station) Conservation Plan' prepared for The Building Management Authority in February 1996.

13.4 REFERENCES

Heritage and Conservation Professionals, 'Broome Court House (Former Cable Station) Conservation Plan' prepared for The Building Management Authority in February 1996.

13.5 FURTHER RESEARCH

Further research is necessary to establish the international significance of *Broome Court House*, as an example of a prefabricated building in the context of the British colonial period.