



# 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)

- 4.3 Developing institutions
- 6.2 Establishing schools
- 8.10.4 Designing and building fine buildings

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

- 402 Education and science
- 404 Community services and utilities
- 407 Cultural activities

### 11.1 AESTHETIC VALUE\*

*Princess May Reserve* has great aesthetic value to the community as a well composed set of places in a partly-walled setting, important for both the individually aesthetically pleasing characteristics of the component parts and the collective effect of the buildings and their spatial relationship. The place is an important community landmark at the northern entry to the city. (Criterion 1.1)

Fremantle Boys School (fmr) is a complex interpretation of architecture in the Victorian Tudor manner, with a rich, picturesque roofline and refined details. Princess May Girls' School (fmr) is a very competent, classically derived building, with a distinctive belvedere that dramatically organises what would otherwise have been a simple utilitarian two storey structure arranged around a central hall. It is unusual in the Western Australian context for a two-storey school building to be made of stone, making the Princess May Girls' School distinctive in this respect. Household Management Centre (fmr), while not demonstrating creative artistic excellence, is an elegant utilitarian structure, which has significant aesthetic value in its own right as well as contributing significantly to the complex of remaining structures. (Criterion 1.2)

Fremantle Boys School (fmr) and Princess May Girls' School (fmr), in particular, contribute to the aesthetic values of their setting by their landmark quality and as an entry statement in the northern approach to the City of

\* 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.

Fremantle. Together with the associated trees around Princess May Girls' School (fmr) and remaining sections of limestone wall, the buildings on site contribute to the aesthetic quality of the cultural environs in which they are located, and are an important element in a group of places that also contains the *Proclamation Tree*, *The Marmion Memorial*, *The Basilica of St. Patrick*, St. Patrick's Presbytery and Elders Wool Stores. The trees immediately around the entry to the Princess May Girls' School (fmr) also pose a dilemma, in that they obscure some important elements of the north elevation. Because of the size of the site and its context as noted above, the group makes a significant contribution to the streetscape. (Criterion 1.3)

The original limestone boundary walls are a significant part of the Fremantle townscape identity and contribute to its aesthetic unity. (Criterion 1.4)

## 11. 2. HISTORIC VALUE

The construction of the Fremantle Boys School (fmr) in 1854, together with the Old Perth Boys School, marked the beginning of the State Government's involvement in school provision programs. While the Old Perth Boys School remained static and close to its original concept, subsequent development of various elements of Fremantle Boys School (fmr) chart Fremantle's demographic growth and the development of planning primary education buildings. The complex is important in the history of state schools in that it reflects the segregation of sexes in separate institutions, differences in provision of facilities between boys' and girls' schools, and the educational emphasis on women as homemakers. Household Management Centre (fmr) is a particularly important demonstration of this emphasis. Additionally, the site, and Princess May Girls' School (fmr) in particular, should be read in connection with the girls' and infants' school in South Terrace as part of the historic continuum. (Criterion 2.1)

The first stage of Fremantle Boys School (fmr) is associated with the convict period of development of Fremantle and the building forms part of the stock of buildings associated with the Convict Establishment. Rapid growth and change of the place during the late 1890s and up to the time of the First World War are an indication of the growth of Fremantle as a consequence of the Eastern Goldfields boom and the consolidation of Fremantle as the state's principal port. (Criterion 2.2)

The place has associations with a number of eminent Public Works Department chief architects, including the State's earliest architect, James Austin. Others include James Manning, John Grainger, William Hardwick and Hillson Beasley. The place is also associated with George Humble, who taught there for the first 25 years of the school's existence. The naming of the infants' and girls' school after the Duchess of Cornwall, later Queen Mary, is linked with the royal visit of 1901 and is a demonstration of imperial ties. (Criterion 2.3)

*Fremantle Boys School (fmr)* and Princess May Girls' School (fmr) have significance as places of high artistic achievement of two separate periods: *Fremantle Boys School (fmr)* as a nostalgic interpretation of Victorian Tudor architecture and Princess May Girls' School (fmr) as a very fine and restrained composition with a landmark quality. The group of buildings represents artistic excellence as a collective. (Criterion 2.4)

The place has significance in that the establishment of the Perth Institute of Film and Television at *Fremantle Boys School (fmr)* in the 1970s was innovative

at the time, as was the creation of the Education Centre in the former Princess May Girls' School building. (Criterion 2.4)

### **11. 3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE**

As one of the State's earliest schools, and one upon which so little has been done in the way of succeeding layers of development, the site has scientific value in its potential to yield information to corroborate documentary evidence on the nature of its progressive development and so flesh out our knowledge of an early institution. (Criterion 3.1)

### **11. 4. SOCIAL VALUE**

*Princess May Reserve* has high social value, as its role in the early development of education, on-going association with education, and more recent cultural and entertainment roles are important to the community. The strong expression of interest in the retention of the precinct by the City of Fremantle, in 1970, is evidence of the social significance of the place. (Criterion 4.1)

With its pleasing buildings, large trees and remnant limestone walls, the place is a familiar part of Fremantle people's existence and contributes to the community's sense of place. (Criterion 4.2)

## **12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE**

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

*Fremantle Boys School (fmr)* is particularly rare, as one of a small number of early buildings surviving in an urban area, the more so for being in Victorian Tudor style. The whole reserve is comparatively rare as a reasonably complete early educational institution on its original site. (Criterion 5.1)

The place is significant for its physical demonstration of a segregated system of state education, which is no longer implemented. Further, as state education buildings have become increasingly utilitarian through time, the rich design of the structures at *Princess May Reserve* and their predominantly stone wall construction, make them rare in the sense of a practice long past. (Criterion 5.2)

### **12. 2 REPRESENTATIVENESS**

*Princess May Reserve* is clearly representative of educational institutions of the mid and late nineteenth century, in spite of many adaptive changes to the buildings. The loss of various outbuildings, fences and other site elements, and the almost total redevelopment of the grounds considerably reduce the representative value. (Criterion 6.1)

*Princess May Reserve* demonstrates the evolution of a small school into a fully developed site, with school accommodation and ancillary facilities, illustrating both changing notions of how to accommodate teaching activities, and methods of adaptation to retain important and useful structures of buildings once their original purpose is no longer being served. (Criterion 6.2)

### **12. 3 CONDITION**

*Princess May Reserve* is a mainly grassed and treed open reserve, which has little connection with its values as a school and more to do with its present. Trees appear not to be managed and are in conflict with principles of good

building maintenance. The grounds are basically maintained and are in fair condition.

A free standing toilet block adjacent to the Adelaide Street boundary, which is of low significance, is in a derelict state.

Princess May Girls' School (fmr) had conservation works completed on areas of serious deterioration and to effect damp control in 1997. Most of these strategies have been successful. Some strategies, such as lowering ground levels have not been completed correctly and may lead to further rising damp. The interior is well maintained and is in good condition. Cumulative work and maintenance has left the exterior of the building in reasonably good order. Overall the Princess May School (fmr) is in fair to good condition.

Household Management Centre (fmr) is run and maintained by the lessees of the restaurant and the fabric is generally in fair to good condition.

*Fremantle Boys School (fmr)* is the oldest building on the site and there are many instances of fretting stone, rising damp, and mechanical damage to the fabric arising from its present use. Ground levels have been allowed to accrete around the building perimeter and the damp proof course is covered in many locations. Some of the 'Eternit' asbestos cement slates have become dislodged and sections of gutter are loosed or detached from the building. Though the bulk of the significant fabric is in fair condition, there are many serious instances of deteriorating fabric. This is the most significant building on the site and the most neglected. There appears to be no maintenance regime in place. Overall *Fremantle Boys School (fmr)* is in fair to poor condition, with some of the fabric in very poor condition.

#### 12.4 INTEGRITY

The greening of the reserve and removal of most of the limestone perimeter walls has reduced the integrity of the precinct as an example of nineteenth century educational philosophies. The original intent of Princess May Girls' School (fmr) as an educational institution is still intact, although the nature of the education has changed. The building has very high integrity and will easily allow the original fabric to be maintained or restored. Substantial internal alterations to both Fremantle Boys School (fmr) and the Household Management Centre (fmr) are in danger of obscuring the original intent of the buildings, but are clearly discernible from the original concept fabric. Most such changes could be reversed and still allow viable usage of the buildings because of the functional nature of the internal spaces.

#### 12.5 AUTHENTICITY

There is a high level of authentic fabric existing in all three structures and much of what is visible, especially externally, is authentic. Despite significant adaptive work in all structures, a high level of authentic fabric survives, in addition to spatial authenticity in many of the rooms, and across the reserve as a whole. Alterations to Princess May Girls' School (fmr), in particular, are mostly quite superficial. Alterations to the *Fremantle Boys School (fmr)* is more thoroughgoing and has impacted significantly on the interior fabric, with only the school hall and former science rooms escaping major alteration. Much of this interior alteration to the *Fremantle Boys School (fmr)* makes its legibility as a school very difficult. The nature of these changes would allow reversal to occur and for the authentic fabric to be revealed once more in many instances.

### **13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE**

Attached are key sections of the supporting evidence prepared by Considine and Griffiths Architects Pty Ltd, 'Princess May Reserve Conservation Plan' prepared for Western Australian Building Management Authority in 1995.

Key sections used: 1.0 Documentary Evidence (p1-35).

#### **13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE**

For a discussion of the Documentary Evidence, refer to Considine and Griffiths Architects Pty Ltd, '*Princess May Reserve Conservation Plan*' prepared for Western Australian Building Management Authority in 1995.

#### **13.2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE**

For a discussion of the Physical Evidence refer to Considine and Griffiths Architects Pty Ltd, '*Princess May Reserve Conservation Plan*' prepared for Western Australian Building Management Authority in 1995.

#### **13.3 COMPARATIVE INFORMATION**

For a discussion of the Comparative Information refer to Considine and Griffiths Architects Pty Ltd, '*Princess May Reserve Conservation Plan*' prepared for Western Australian Building Management Authority in 1995.

#### **13.4 KEY REFERENCES**

Considine and Griffiths Architects Pty Ltd, '*Princess May Reserve Conservation Plan*' prepared for Western Australian Building Management Authority in 1995.

#### **13.5 FURTHER RESEARCH**

It is possible, through research on this site, that a wider understanding of the nature of an early educational place would be available through archaeological and further documentary research.