1. **NUMBER** 1979

2. **NAME** *General Post Office*

3. **DESCRIPTION OF ELEMENTS INCLUDED IN THE ENTRY (GENERAL)**

A building in the Beaux-Arts style, with seven main storeys plus basement and roof level rooms. It has a concrete encased steel frame faced with brick and stone. The ground floor of the east elevation is faced with granite from Mahogany Creek with Donnybrook sandstone above. Paired ionic columns rise through three upper storeys. Red brick walls trimmed with stone are set back above the cornice, between stone towers and form the side and back walls. The interiors have large spans creating open spaces on each floor, which was a radical departure from traditional construction. The central two-storey postal hall has large roof lights which emphasise the sense of space. The design was conceived in 1912 by Commonwealth architect, John Smith Murdoch, in association with Hillson Beasley (Western Australian Public Works Department) with the initial contract signed in 1914 and another (after delays due to a steel embargo and a strike) in 1921 for an additional two storeys. By then W B Hardwick had succeeded Beasley. Construction was completed in 1923.

4. **LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA** Perth

5. **LOCATION** Forrest Place, Perth

   Portion of Perth Town Lots V13, V14, V15 & V16   P 4845   C/T 1832/432

6. **OWNER**

7. **STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE OF PLACE (ASSESSMENT IN DETAIL)**

The place has been assessed by the Australian Heritage Commission and has been entered in the Register of the National Estate with the following statement of significance:

Perth GPO is a key element of the townscape, being the central building of Forrest Place, intended to be Perth's major civic space. The aesthetic attributes of the GPO, which combine well with the Commonwealth Bank and the Railway Station to create the Forrest Place Precinct, are important in establishing the identity of the city of Perth.

Perth GPO is a fine example of monumental civic architecture. It is of architectural significance as a rare example in Australia of a large buiding in the Beaux-Arts style. The characteristics of this style are well demonstrated in both the exterior and interiors of the building. The exterior is monumental in scale, symmetrical and has a facade of sculptural quality arising from the use of large

scale classical motifs (eg giant order ionic columns), and high quality local materials (Donnybrook freestone and Mahogany Creek granite) and craftsmanship. Similar neo-classical details are also evident in the interior, particularly in the significant postal hall. The interiors are noteworthy for their extensive use of Western Australian Jarrah. They are of value for their large spans: considered a radical departure from traditional construction techniques. Of particular significance is the two storey high postal hall with its large roof lights which emphasise the sense of space in this public area.

Perth GPO is of historical significance for its association with architect J S Murdoch who, as Commonwealth architect, was responsible for many important Commonwealth buildings throughout Australia. The Perth GPO, together with the Commonwealth Bank and Forrest Place itself constitute an historically important civic group undertaken by the Commonwealth Government. The design concept reflects the new sense of importance and civic pride in Perth at the time. It was, at the time of construction, Perth's tallest building and recognised by contemporary writers as its most grandiose public edifice. Its use since 1923 as the State's principal postal facility is of considerable historical and continued social significance. The use of the GPO to accommodate other Commonwealth departments for part of its history is of some importance, particularly as this provided the motivation for the addition of the attic storey to the original design.

8.   **REGISTER OF HERITAGE PLACES (DATE OF GAZETTAL)**

Interim Entry   22/6/1992
Permanent Entry   16/10/1992

9.   **CONSERVATION ORDER**

10.   **HERITAGE AGREEMENT**

11.   **REFERENCES**

The National Trust of Australia (W.A.)