



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.

The wording of this document has been adapted from 'Kalgoorlie Regional Hospital Conservation Plan' with amendments and/or additions by HCWA staff and the Register Committee.

PRINCIPAL AUSTRALIAN HISTORIC THEME(S)

- 3.4.3 Mining
- 3.14.1 Building to suit Australian conditions
- 3.26.2 Providing hospital services
- 4.5 Making settlements to serve rural Australia
- 8.10.5 Advancing knowledge in science and technology

HERITAGE COUNCIL OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA THEME(S)

- 303 Mining
- 404 Community services and utilities
- 408 Institutions
- 602 Early settlers

11.1 AESTHETIC VALUE*

Commonwealth Health Laboratory (fmr) is a simply expressed twin roofed building from the Federation period, which employs classically derived proportions and details, such as acroteria, as a means of expression. In its original form with perimeter verandahs, the building was not typical of Goldfields construction, but rather, reflected a thoughtful resolution of a building type developed for a hot dry climate. The building is raised on steel stumps with inverted hemispheres at the top of the stumps. The verandahs are deep and put the timber weatherboard walls into deep shadow. The interior and exterior of the building are detailed in a consistent manner and the overall effect is a visually pleasing one. The adjoining structures associated with the *Commonwealth Health Laboratory (fmr)* reflect the inter-war period of construction and play a visually complementary role to the main building. (Criterion 1.1)

The environment created by the remnants of the *Eucalyptus camuldunensis*-river gum grove along the Maritana and Piccadilly Street boundaries provides

* 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.

a distinctive setting for *Commonwealth Health Laboratory (fmr)* at the Maritana Street and St Albans Road junction. (Criterion 1.3)

11. 2. HISTORIC VALUE

The creation of a government hospital in 1894 was one of the earliest building developments in the establishment of the young town of Kalgoorlie and served the two towns of Kalgoorlie and Boulder, together with the outlying districts. The rapid expansion of the government hospital throughout the period 1896-1910 reflected the rapid development of the Goldfields. The curtailing of the growth of the site by 1910 reflected the slowing of the rush of gold prospectors due to the exhaustion of easily won surface gold, together with the onset of a more general low-level depression in Australia. (Criterion 2.1)

Commonwealth Health Laboratory (fmr), as a place for scientific advancement, assisted in the cultivation and expansion of the gold industry, an industry which became crucial to the economic and social development of the whole of Western Australia; (Criterion 2.2)

Commonwealth Health Laboratory (fmr) is associated not only with those who operated the Laboratory, but also with the owners and operators of the Brown Hill Mine, as well as those associated with the Kalgoorlie Regional Hospital. People of particular importance include Frederick William Ponsonby (Larry) Cammilleri, the original discoverer of the 'Golden Mile' and the Brown Hill-Oraya source, and Dr L Deihl of the London and Hamburg Gold Recovery Company, who adapted the German filter press system and perfected a method for extracting the sulphide and telluride gold ores. This increased the returns, and ensured the continued prosperity of the Kalgoorlie-Boulder region as a source of gold. (Criterion 2.3)

Commonwealth Health Laboratory (fmr) was said to be the most up-to-date building of its type when it was brought to Kalgoorlie. The inclusion of an entirely new set of laboratories and testing works as part of the mill was said to be an innovative concept at the time of its construction in 1900. (Criterion 2.4)

Commonwealth Health Laboratory (fmr) is important for the three main phases of its usage, first for its association as part of the Brown Hill Mine, where it was erected in 1900, and then from 1923 when it was purchased by the Commonwealth Government and relocated to its present site. In its present location, the building continued both its mining and laboratory associations, first as a metallurgical laboratory, and then a pathology laboratory, until 1984. (Criterion 2.4)

11. 3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE

Commonwealth Health Laboratory (fmr) was the site of the bromo-cyanogen gold extraction process, developed originally for pyrites but adapted by Dr Diehl for gold. In Western Australia this process was adapted for the treatment of Kalgoorlie ores which are finely ground 'slimes' and difficult to treat. The Diehl process compressed and concentrated these slimes to allow treatment, as well as allowing the extraction of gold from the difficult to refine sulphides and telluride ores. Between 1923 and 1982, *Commonwealth Health Laboratory (fmr)*, located at the Kalgoorlie Regional Hospital, was involved in pathology and the screening of miners. The compulsory testing of miners under the Miner's Phthisis Act of 1925 was also conducted by the *Commonwealth Health Laboratory (fmr)*. *Commonwealth Health Laboratory (fmr)*

may also have been involved in the making or supply of industrial chemicals. (Criterion 3.1)

Though prefabricated buildings had been used since the earliest days of the Australian colonies, the *Commonwealth Health Laboratory (fmr)*, as the Brown Hill Mine laboratory, proved to be a construction type that was very well suited to Australian conditions and one of the more unusual examples of its kind. The methods of construction are quite unusual in the Australian context and a thorough study of the building and its detailing would be instructive in the context of the history of building technology in Australia. (Criterion 3.3)

11. 4. SOCIAL VALUE

Commonwealth Health Laboratory (fmr) has had a long and continuous historic association with its present location and has been a valued community resource since 1900, as a place for health care, employment and as a focus for community endeavour. The goldfields were said to have had two fevers, gold and typhoid. Conditions, particularly sanitary conditions, were poor in the early days of the Kalgoorlie goldfields and the government hospital, together with private hospitals, was sorely needed to deal with mining accident victims and those who fell ill with fever. The goldfield population was initially a predominantly male domain, with hospital care focused on fevers and accident treatments. As the towns developed following the introduction of rail transport, and women and families arrived, the hospital assumed the role of a more general community hospital. It became similar to others, which developed in large towns, gradually developing into a small scale city hospital, providing care for most health requirements. (Criterion 4.1)

Commonwealth Health Laboratory (fmr) is part of the Kalgoorlie Regional Hospital, one of the key institutions of the City of Kalgoorlie-Boulder, as its major medical facility since 1899. The place has significance to the region as the regional health centre, and it contributes to the community's sense of place, as evidenced by inclusion in Kalgoorlie-Boulder's Municipal Inventory of Heritage Places, and its classification with the National Trust and the Register of the National Estate. (Criterion 4.2)

12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE

12. 1. RARITY

Commonwealth Health Laboratory (fmr) is as an imported building and one of a small number of surviving early prefabricated building structures in Western Australia. Its twin roof construction is also unusual. It has some similarities as a type with the former Broome Cable Station, now the Broome Courthouse. Other significant prefabricated structures to survive in Western Australia include lighthouses and a small number of drill halls. (Criterion 5.1)

12. 2 REPRESENTATIVENESS

Commonwealth Health Laboratory (fmr) is representative of prefabricated construction and of a purpose designed mine laboratory, though the representation is incomplete since much of the detail of how the building worked and its contents have long since been lost. (Criterion 6.1)

12. 3 CONDITION

Commonwealth Health Laboratory (fmr) is in a fair condition, having been partially conserved in 1994. There remains outstanding works to be

completed and some of the intrusive fabric on this building is in poor condition compared to the elements of the original building. The interiors are in good condition.

12.4 INTEGRITY

Commonwealth Health Laboratory (fmr) continued to serve as a laboratory on its hospital site and has since been converted for use as an office and meeting accommodation and thus has a medium level of integrity.

12.5 AUTHENTICITY

The former Brown Hill Laboratory was altered to accommodate the *Commonwealth Health Laboratory (fmr)* in 1923 and on several occasions subsequently. The changes involved the moving of partitions and the partial infilling of verandahs. The conservation works carried out under Vincent Mullins in 1994 involved the partial reversal of some of these changes. It also involved the replacement of some materials, such as flooring timbers. The building retains elements from almost all periods of its history and therefore retains a moderate to high degree of authenticity.

13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

Attached are key sections of the supporting evidence prepared by Considine & Griffiths Architects Pty Ltd with Erickson & Taylor, 'Kalgoorlie Regional Hospital Conservation Plan', prepared for Health Care Consulting Services on behalf of Northern Goldfields Health Service, June 1999.

Key sections used: 1.0 Documentary Evidence (p1-86), 2.0 Physical Evidence (p87-124), 3.0 Analysis of Documentary and Physical Evidence (p125-130)

13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

For a discussion of the Documentary Evidence, refer to Considine & Griffiths Architects Pty Ltd with Erickson & Taylor, 'Kalgoorlie Regional Hospital Conservation Plan', prepared for Health Care Consulting Services on behalf of Northern Goldfields Health Service, June 1999.

13.2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

For a discussion of the Physical Evidence, refer to Considine & Griffiths Architects Pty Ltd with Erickson & Taylor, 'Kalgoorlie Regional Hospital Conservation Plan', prepared for Health Care Consulting Services on behalf of Northern Goldfields Health Service, June 1999.

13.3 COMPARATIVE INFORMATION

For a Comparative Analysis, refer to Considine & Griffiths Architects Pty Ltd with Erickson & Taylor, 'Kalgoorlie Regional Hospital Conservation Plan', prepared for Health Care Consulting Services on behalf of Northern Goldfields Health Service, June 1999.

13.4 KEY REFERENCES

Considine & Griffiths Architects Pty Ltd with Erickson & Taylor, 'Kalgoorlie Regional Hospital Conservation Plan', prepared for Health Care Consulting Services on behalf of Northern Goldfields Health Service, June 1999.

13.5 FURTHER RESEARCH

Further research may be warranted on the operation of the place and the exact work undertaken during its role as the Commonwealth Health Laboratory, and also the changes to community health and therapies which impact on the need for space to deliver them in relation to the historic buildings.