



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.

11.1 AESTHETIC VALUE *

The Federation Arts and Crafts 'west building' has exceptional value for its aesthetic qualities. The building is well composed architecturally and is of imposing scale. The front elevation has a formal symmetry with a pleasing balance of colours, textures and detailing. (Criterion 1.1)

Notable details of fine design and craftsmanship in the 'west building' include the stained glass transom windows and fanlights, executed in the Art Nouveau style, and fitted only to the north front of the building and inside the entrance foyer. Notable details within the foyer include the carved panels on the front doors, tessellated floor tiling and pediments over the doorways, all of which provide a human scale and feel to this part of the building. The core of the building contains a fine hall with a hammer beam ceiling resplendent in dark stained timberwork. Daylight into the hall is filtered by stained and coloured glass windows at clerestory level on three sides of the hall, as well as through clear dormers in the ceiling and the central lantern. The entire composition evokes an ecclesiastical ambience. (Criterion 1.2)

The former gymnasium is of considerable interest for its detailed carpentry work, specifically the unusual construction of the former hall which is constructed using a traditional cruck truss. The generous volume of the hall space lends it an unusual spaciousness, adding to its aesthetic quality. Both the former gymnasium and the adjacent manual training building are significant for the traditional character of their exterior, which relates well to the architecture of the 'west building'. (Criterion 1.2)

The 'east building' and gymnasium are of some significance for their modern functionalist aesthetic qualities. The aesthetic of these buildings is significant in reflecting the aspirations of the period. Both buildings are fine examples of the Post-War International style, of a grand scale and confidently sited. (Criterion 1.3)

11.2. HISTORIC VALUE

Perth Modern School, opened in 1911 as the State's first government funded secondary high school, has considerable significance for the history and

* 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.

development of secondary education in Western Australia. The decision to create such a school developed from the need for more and better qualified teachers to educate a rapidly growing population, and the increasing need for a workforce educated beyond elementary level. The school was also to prepare students for entry into University. The establishment of the school reflected the government's growing realisation that it had to take responsibility for making post primary education available to all children regardless of class or wealth. Such education had formerly been left to the private sector. Because of the heavy demand for places at *Perth Modern School*, students had to pass a Secondary Schools Scholarship examination or the Modern School Entrance Examination. It remained a scholarship school until 1959 when it became a comprehensive school, in line with other government secondary schools. (Criterion 2.2)

The building and furnishing of *Perth Modern School* reflected the government's commitment to modernity. Historically the school is significant as the first to offer a 'modern' education, with the teaching of modern languages and science based subjects in purpose-designed, well-equipped classrooms and laboratories, and as the first co-educational high school in the State. It was also the first school in the State to abolish corporal punishment of students. In 1968, it became the first special music school to be established in Western Australia. (Criterion 2.2)

The physical growth and development of *Perth Modern School* is illustrative of the history of the demand for educational opportunities in government schools. In 1917, *Perth Modern School* became a five year high school, and over the next decade there was increasing pressure to take in students wanting to complete 4th and 5th year in order to matriculate to university. This meant the conversion of existing rooms and the building of new structures to accommodate increased enrolments. The government's introduction of comprehensive schooling and the decision in 1959 that *Perth Modern School* had to conform to this system resulted in the building of the main teaching block. The building of the school's new library in 1970 was part of the Commonwealth Secondary Schools Library Programme. (Criterion 2.2)

Considerable significance may be attributed to the school's role in educating many persons who later rose to prominence in Australian social, cultural and political affairs. The foundation of *Perth Modern School* furthermore has significance for its association with educational pioneers Cyril Jackson, the then Inspector General of Education, and his successor Cecil Andrews, who between them convinced the Western Australian government of its responsibility to offer post primary education to all students in the State. (Criterion 2.3)

Perth Modern School has some significance for its role in the advancement of scientific education in Western Australia. It was the first high school in the State to teach science, from 1911, and its curriculum was specifically designed to teach science as a modern subject. The school has a collection of scientific equipment and museum specimens that are significant for illustrating the types of equipment and objects formerly used in the teaching of science at secondary high school. Documentary evidence such as text books illustrating the nature of some of the school's early science courses are part of the museum collection. (Criterion 2.4)

11. 3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE

11. 4. SOCIAL VALUE

The school has a high level of social significance in relation to its former role as a special school for scholars (it produced the first Rhodes Scholars in Western Australia) and the achievements of many of its students, a number of whom have held high office in the country and the State. (Criterion 4.1)

The school was also the first co-educational senior high school in the State and the first in the State to abolish corporal punishment of students. A number of its traditions were based on those existing in the private English school system such as school factions for competitive sports, school uniforms and codes of behaviour based on self discipline. These have contributed to a strong sense of identity with the school by ex-students, the formation of the Old Modernians' Association and the holding of school reunions. Because it was a school for scholars, the school was seen as elite. This status was to change when *Perth Modern School* became a comprehensive school. (Criterion 4.1)

Perth Modern School has high social and cultural significance as the first special music school in the State. It has played an important role in the fostering of music in schools throughout Western Australia. The school is also renowned for its achievements in music and holds many awards which are on display in the hall's music auditorium. (Criterion 4.1)

12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE

12. 1. RARITY

The 'west building' at *Perth Modern School* is an outstanding and substantial example of the work of Hillson Beasley, former chief architect of the Public Works Department. The calibre of the building is unusual for government schools of the time and few comparable examples exist in the State. (Criterion 5.1)

12. 2 REPRESENTATIVENESS

The 'west building' represents the more substantial commissions of the Public Works Department during the design leadership of Hillson Beasley. Comparable examples include the Central Schools (James Street, Northbridge), the Newcastle Street Technical School, Fremantle Technical School, Perth Library (James Street), and Midland Courthouse. The 'east building' and gymnasium are representative of post-war Public Works Department school design, with comparable examples being the Kent Street High School, John Curtin High School, Hollywood High School, and Armadale High School. The Public Works Department took a similar design approach to a range of other buildings during the late 1950s and early 1960s. (Criterion 6.1)

12. 3 CONDITION

The fabric of the buildings generally appears to be in a fair condition. It appears that recently the buildings have not had a regular and comprehensive maintenance programme carried out on them. The following items were noted:

West Building

- Extensive areas of damp are visible within the building. These include the top of the wall in the auditorium, the ceiling of the first floor level of the

south corridor, and the ceilings of offices on the north side of the building. It appears that this is caused by defects in the valley and parapet guttering.

- There are signs of rising damp in the offices on the north side of the building.
- Externally the maintenance of the building seems to have been restricted to the lower or easily accessible parts of the building. Elements such as the tower, the dormer windows and the cupola require attention.
- Rendered trims on west end of building are cracked and crazed.
- Windows and rendered elements on west face of building require painting.
- Areas of brickwork, particularly on the north side, require re-pointing.

East Building

- Concrete ledge just above ground level is finely cracked in many places and in some locations has been damaged. Signs are that the reinforcement is beginning to rust in these locations.
- Signs of termite infestation.

Intensive Language Centre

- Externally the maintenance of the building seems to have been restricted to the lower or easily accessible parts of the building. Elements such as the high level windows above the central hall require maintenance.
- Isolated areas of lath and plaster ceilings are cracking.
- Sections of some downpipes are missing.
- Areas of walling, particularly the chimneys, require repointing of brickwork.

Weights Gymnasium

- The timber weatherboarding and trims are in urgent need of repair.
- Some downpipes are rusting through.
- Areas of roofing tiles are not properly seated.

12.4 INTEGRITY

Perth Modern School continues to function as a high school and has a high degree of integrity.

12.5 AUTHENTICITY

Perth Modern School has a high degree of authenticity.

13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

Attached are key sections of the supporting evidence prepared by Palassis Architects: 'Perth Modern School Conservation Plan - Draft' (prepared for the Department of Contract and Management Services on behalf of the Education Department of Western Australia, October 1997).

Key sections used: 3.0 Documentary and Oral Evidence (p9-52), 4.0 Physical Evidence (p53-88), 5.0 Analysis of Documentary and Physical Evidence (p89-98).

13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

For a discussion of the documentary evidence refer to Palassis Architects: 'Perth Modern School Conservation Plan - Draft' (prepared for the Department of Contract and Management Services on behalf of the Education Department of Western Australia, October 1997).

13.2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

For a discussion of the physical evidence refer to Palassis Architects: 'Perth Modern School Conservation Plan - Draft' (prepared for the Department of Contract and Management Services on behalf of the Education Department of Western Australia, October 1997).

13.3 REFERENCES

Palassis Architects: 'Perth Modern School Conservation Plan - Draft' (prepared for the Department of Contract and Management Services on behalf of the Education Department of Western Australia, October 1997).

13.4 FURTHER RESEARCH
