



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 *

Activ Foundation Workshop has aesthetic value as a group of two buildings, constructed in similar materials and of similar design and scale. (Criterion 1.1)

The Workshop is an unusual 1940s building. The limestone elevation, facing the street, has strong stylistic and detailing references to the west elevation of the former Infants' School. (Criterion 1.2)

The two buildings, located on a curve in Stirling Highway directly opposite the North Fremantle Railway Station, contribute to the streetscape. (Criterion 1.4)

11.2 HISTORIC VALUE

The place has significance for its association with education, the military and for its use by the State Health Department. (Criterion 2.1)

The Infants' School has significant associations with the development of North Fremantle, a residential suburb with industrial, manufacturing and port-related activities. The Infants' School and the associated State School, which was built on the other side of Stirling Highway about 100m to the south, provided educational opportunities for the children of North Fremantle. (Criterion 2.1)

Activ Foundation Workshop has associations with the Australian Army and the United States Navy, who occupied the place during World War Two when it was known as the U.S.N. Public Works Office. The Workshop, the second building on the site, was constructed during this period. (Criterion 2.2)

The place is also significant for its associations with the Activ Foundation and its Workshop for Intellectually Disabled Persons. (Criterion 2.3)

The design of the 1940s Workshop building is unusual in that it has strong stylistic and detailing references to the former Infants' School, which is 40 years older. (Criterion 2.4).

* 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.

11. 3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE

Both buildings and the site itself are potential areas of archaeological interest. The details of the history of the use of Infants' School could add to the body of knowledge on the history of education in Western Australia. (Criterion 3.1)

11. 4. SOCIAL VALUE

Activ Foundation Workshop has a long association with life in North Fremantle. The place is valued by the local community, some of whom attended classes there or remember the premises being occupied by the defence forces. (Criterion 4.1)

The place also has social significance for the teachers, students and families who are associated with the *Activ Foundation Workshop*. (Criterion 4.1)

12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE

12. 1. RARITY

The Workshop is a rare building as the two workshop rooms are finished quite differently, resulting from the use of different finishing techniques for the purpose of training the apprentices involved. No comparative examples have been located, though there are a number of military workshops in the State and several naval workshops in Fremantle. (Criterion 5.1)

12. 2 REPRESENTATIVENESS

The former Infants' School is representative of the Government schools built at the time. Other examples, such as Cottesloe Primary School which is still used as a primary school, are of a superior quality and condition. (Criterion 6.2)

12. 3 CONDITION

Generally, the place is in a sound state of repair; however, there is need for ongoing maintenance to the exterior of the buildings to maintain its condition.

Recent repairs to the stonework under the eaves of the Former Infants' School is of a good standard and is compatible with the original work. The roof is generally sound and recent repairs have minimised water penetration; however, but the rain water pipes are in poor condition and need to be replaced.

Some of the mortar in the brick walls of the Workshop is deteriorating and sections of the exterior walls are in poor condition where wind and rain has damaged the brick and stone. The interior is in a sound state.

12. 4 INTEGRITY

The Former Infants' School has a moderate level of integrity. It is no longer used for the purpose for which it was designed and is highly unlikely to return to that use. The current use (*Sheltered Workshop*) makes reasonable use of the spaces except the office.

The Workshop has a moderate level of integrity. The *Sheltered Workshop* makes good use of the spaces and its function is similar to that for which the building was designed.

12.5 AUTHENTICITY

Both the buildings have a high level of authenticity, as there has been little substantial change over time. The Former Infant's School has undergone minor internal alterations while there is no evidence of substantial alterations to the Workshop.

The grounds have a low level of authenticity, with only a woodshed from 1901 and part of a limestone retaining wall remaining from pre-1940.

13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

The documentary evidence has been compiled by Katrina Chisholm, Conservation Consultant. The physical evidence has been compiled by Craig Smith, Architect, of Smith and Hooke Architects.

Key supporting evidence from the Draft Conservation Plan is attached in the appendices.

13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

Until the arrival of convicts in Western Australia and a ready made labour force, European settlement in North Fremantle had been limited. The allocation of land to Pensioner Guards, retired British Army personnel responsible for guarding the convicts, established a small but significant residential and agricultural community in the area.

The convicts were employed on constructing the Fremantle to Perth road and the bridge across the Swan River. The completion of the latter in 1866 linked the north and south sides of the river and assisted in the development of the North Fremantle community easing the spread of population from the larger settlement of Fremantle.

Proximity to the river, the port and transport facilities made available by the establishment of the Perth to Fremantle railway in 1881 provided the impetus for some industrial development in the locality encouraging further expansion and the growth of the population in the area. The density of the suburb increased as the original lots to the pensioners were sub-divided.

The dramatic influx of immigrants to Western Australia in the 1890s brought about by the discovery of significant gold fields and a depression in the east, precipitated development in North Fremantle as in other suburbs located along the railway line. In 1895, North Fremantle became a separate municipality, having formerly been encompassed and administered by the Fremantle council.

This sudden population expansion placed an immense strain on the provision of community facilities and physical infrastructure in the last decade of the nineteenth century. The newly established Public Works Department was stretched to service this demand for schools, courthouses, roads and bridges and the like. In the North Fremantle area a new primary school was designed in 1888, although the school is officially regarded as having opened two years earlier. A post office was constructed in 1892 and a police station, lock-up and quarters was built in 1898. Extensive harbour works were also carried out in the last years of the century.

The primary school was located north of the town centre and adjacent to the railway reserve. Infant classes were initially housed within this school building but towards the end of the century consideration was given to establishing a separate Infant School within the community. This reflected

both the educational policy of the era and the need to expand the school accommodation.

The annual report of the Minister of Education in 1898 reported that:

It is with much pleasure that I am able to record progress in the matter of suitable and efficient education of infants. The Infant's Schools as opposed to Infants' classes, found at Perth Central, Beaconsfield and Fremantle are capital institutions, taught by devoted and able teachers, where every effort is made to impart instruction to the little ones on the most modern and approved methods. The progress in such schools has been far more rapid and thorough than in those where the infants are an appendage to the senior school, and I would strongly recommend the establishment of separate schools for the younger children wherever a sufficient number of little ones can be found.¹

In the same year, attempts were made to find suitable land within the district for a separate Infants' School. An agent, W.C. Owtram, was instructed to make discreet inquiries as to the availability of land in the proximity of the primary school. In the intermediate period, a temporary iron building was transported from the school site in Newcastle Street to the North Fremantle school site and a gallery was moved from the main to the temporary building to accommodate infant classes in January 1899.²

Government records give the official opening date of the North Fremantle Infant School as the 10 April 1899. Jean Hawkes was appointed the first head teacher of the Infant School. She was supported by an assistant and two pupil teachers, all female. The average enrolment for the first year is given as 105 students.³

Efforts continued to try and locate suitable land for a separate infants' school. In August 1899 Cyril Jackson, the Inspector General of Schools wrote to the Minister for Education on the matter.

North Fremantle is never likely to diminish and property will hardly go down much in value. Our school is terribly overfull and the infants are crowded in two iron rooms which sadly curtail the limited playground space. The land we want is the R. C. reserve opposite but this appears hopeless. The nearest land available is that mentioned by Mr Wray. What do you think of resuming?⁴

There was the possibility of resuming a block of land to the north of the existing school site and east of the main road, still called Victoria Avenue or the Perth Road at that time, although presently known as Stirling Highway. When negotiations for this block fell through, part of Lot P58 was acquired on 1 September 1899 by the government for approximately £300.

North Fremantle Reserve 6928 was classified as a 'Class B' reserve under the Permanent Reserves Act, 1899 as noted in the Government Gazette 31 August 1900.

A search of the North Fremantle Ratebooks for Lot P58 at 98 Stirling Highway show that the Lot was in private ownership between 1888 and approximately 1899. The owner is given as a Mrs. B. (Bridget) McLoughlin and a two-room cottage is mentioned on the site. The Education Department file relating to the acquisition of land for the North Fremantle Infants' School indicates that a

¹ Education Department Annual Report, 1899.

² Education Department files, North Fremantle School, State Archives: Acc/Cons 1653, Item 596-98.

³ Statistical Register, 1899, Part X, p.6.

⁴ Education Department files, North Fremantle School, State Archives: Acc/Cons 1653, Item 596-98.

Mrs McGlaughlin [sic] had been approached in early 1898 about the possible sale of her land. The Lot is described in a letter to the Secretary for Education in March 1898 discussing possible land for the new school and a sketch shows the position of a house close to the boundary with Lot P57.

Lot P58. - Formerly belonged to McGlaughlin - Mrs McGlaughlin now owner, resides on the ground. Partly subdivided and given to her children, and some of it resold - of the portion which remains, Mrs McGlaughlin intends to give to her son one half, and the balance will keep herself, which she resolutely declines to sell.⁵

It is not known what factors lead to the ultimate resumption of the land by the Education Department.

At the end of December the Public Works Department informed the Education Department that the contract for the new North Fremantle Infants' School was ready for advertising. Appeals for tenders were duly sought in the Government Gazette closing on 30 January 1900. A subsequent notice informed that Thomas Bate had been awarded the contract for £1434-11-0.⁶ Bate had previously been involved in school buildings in the Fremantle area. The contractors Bate and Annear having been awarded the Plympton School (east Fremantle) in 1897. Contract Registers of the Public Works Department record that Thomas Bate also won the tenders for the Fremantle Court House, completed 18 April 1899; Fremantle Boys School Additions, completed 21 February 1900; Additions to the North Fremantle School where his tender of £352-9-3 was accepted on 21 December 1900; the Plympton Infants' School, 1 June 1901 and the Cottesloe Infants' School and Teachers Quarters, 26 November 1901.⁷

Original drawings for the Infant School do not appear to exist, although a print of plans and section for the place is located in the Buildings and Works File.⁸ Unfortunately, a PWD site plan of the area dating from circa 1900 which could show the main building in relation to associated outbuildings and neighbouring properties, is also missing from the State Archives collection. The print shows modifications to the standard plan of the Public Works Department. There is reference in the file to an earlier, but condemned Infant School Plan. A further unannotated sketch plan within this file may be this condemned plan.

The standard school plan arose out of the sudden demand for large numbers of schools to provide facilities for the expanding population at the end of the last century. Designed to take into account factors of materials and location and considerations of climatic responsiveness, the standardised plan was just one of the initiatives of the relatively new Education Department which had been established in 1893, taking over from decentralised district boards. New approaches to education were introduced, roughly based on European and British methods. Amongst these reforms which included a changes to the school curriculum, were the provision of facilities for infants and a more rigorous system of school inspection.⁹

⁵ Education Department files, North Fremantle School, State Archives: Acc/Cons 1653, Item 596-98.

⁶ *Government Gazette* February 23 1900, p.639.

⁷ PWD Contracts Register, Book 3a.

⁸ Education Department files, North Fremantle School, State Archives: Acc/Cons 1653, Item 596-98.

⁹ Gregory, J & Smith, L. A Thematic History of Public Education in Western Australia. Centre for Western Australian History, 1995, pp. 8-18

At this time of construction of the North Fremantle Infants' School, John Harry Grainger was the Principal Architect of the Public Works Department, having succeeded George Temple Poole in the position in 1897. He was absent from this position for lengthy periods due to ill health, with his role being fulfilled by the senior assistant, Hillson Beasley. During 1899-1901, Grainger was abroad, involved with preparations for the Paris Exhibition.¹⁰ The building is not significantly representative of the work of either of these architects.

The school provided accommodation for 150 pupils and is reported as having been occupied on 30 July 1900 although not formally opened by the Inspector General until a ceremony in September of that year. Almost immediately, criticisms and maintenance problems were identified. A letter from Cyril Jackson, the Inspector General of Schools was sent to the Secretary of Education on 2 August 1900 commenting on the building and concluding on a rather terse note about the work of the Public Works Department.

The Education Department Building Files contain correspondence regarding building works at the school. The majority of items in these files deal with minor maintenance works such as defective locks, leaking taps, broken windows and sash cords and continual references to damp in the walls. Early correspondence suggests that the arches at the front of the building provided entrance to a basement area. There are a number of references to the provision of seating under the school in the 'Shelter Sheds' and whether some of the arches could be boarded up to form a woodshed as in the first year, wood had to be carted across the road from the State School. The latter proposal was deemed a fire risk and the wood shed was built elsewhere on the site. A quote of £12 was given for the erection of a ten foot by eight foot wood shed in the yard and a minute from the Superintendent of Public Buildings confirms that the erection of a wood shed and provision of seats had been completed by early July 1901.¹¹

There is no obvious evidence of the 'Shelter Sheds' at the current building. The present ground level does not enable easy access beneath floor level, however, early plans of the building show a greater number of risers in the stairs leading to the front door of the west elevation than is visible. The balustrade at the base of these stairs appears to be at an abnormally low height, set close to the ground. In addition, there are numerous letters on file dealing with flooding at the front of the school as the ground level was lower than the street. If the surrounding ground level has been raised the stairs may continue beneath the present level of the bitumen and the balustrade would then be at the more usual handrail height. It may be possible to confirm the existence of a sheltered space under the school through discussion with residents and former students, although these have not been located to date.

Building reports by the Inspector General of Schools and later by the Medical Officer for Schools were carried out on a regular basis. These provide valuable sources of information about the state of the fabric and suggestions for improvement although not necessarily implemented. Examination of these reports and other items contained in the files detailing building works

¹⁰ Van Bremen, I. George Temple Poole. New Architecture of the Gold Boom. Ph.D. Thesis, UWA.

¹¹ Education Department files, North Fremantle School, State Archives: Acc/Cons 1653, Item 384-01.

provides no evidence of any major additions or alteration to the fabric at the school.¹²

At the end of 1925 the North Fremantle Infant School amalgamated with the North Fremantle State School. Whilst the building was still used for infant classes, the administration was carried out from the main primary school.

At the end of 1941, plans were being considered to convert the building for Army Training Purposes. This was recorded in correspondence from Under Secretary of Works to Director of Education, 11 December 1941.¹³

These appear to have been accomplished by July 1942 as there are subsequent instructions for the accounts to be charged to the Commonwealth Training Trust Account.

A second building was erected to the south of the site in 1942. (See Figure 3, Appendix 1) No plans or further primary source information have been uncovered, however a limestone plaque on the front facade of this building records that the building was erected by army trainees during World War Two. Unfortunately, some of the lettering of the plaque has been eroded and is illegible but the names, W. H. Kitson and L.W. Phillips are evident. In 1942, William Henry Kitson, MLC, was the Chief Secretary and Minister for Education and Police and Leslie William Phillips was the Superintendent of Technical Education.

In 1944, the Director of Education was advised that the building at 98 Stirling Highway was to be occupied by the Commonwealth for an indefinite period under National Security Regulations. Further correspondence reveals the buildings were occupied by the United States Navy and known as the U.S.N. Public Works Office.

The buildings reverted to the care of the Education Department in February 1946.¹⁴

The Parents and Citizens Association of the North Fremantle School attempted to reclaim the original use of the place as an infant school after the war. They appealed on the grounds that there had been some conflict over the younger pupils sharing playground facilities with the more senior students. A reply from the Minister for Education, John Tonkin, informed them that the premises were required for woolclassing classes and accountancy instruction for the training of ex-servicemen under the Commonwealth Rehabilitation Scheme.¹⁵

It appears the place retained this 'technical school' function until the site was occupied by the Health Department and used as a workshop for patient rehabilitative purposes in 1965.¹⁶ Associated with the hospital at Graylands, the place was known as the Industrial Rehabilitation Unit. Shortly afterwards, a new primary school was constructed in John Street.

In 1990, the ACTIV Foundation, formerly the Slow Learning Children's Group, took over operations of the workshop under lease from the Minister for Health. The absence of a formal transfer from the Education Ministry to the Health Department was rectified and Reserve 6928 cancelled. In 1991,

¹² ibid, Acc/Cons 1629, Item 2790-14.

¹³ ibid, Acc/Cons 1629, Item 200-44.

¹⁴ ibid.

¹⁵ ibid.

¹⁶ Draft letter to DOLA from Hadyn Lowe, Director, Authority for Intellectually Handicapped Persons, 18 April 1990.

North Fremantle Lot 460 was set apart as Reserve No 41712 for the designated purpose of a Workshop for Intellectually Disabled Persons.¹⁷ The ACTIV Foundation occupy the site at the present time.

13.2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

The site is on the east side of Stirling Highway and faces the North Fremantle Railway Station to the west. To the east is a group of recent Homeswest medium density houses. To the north and south are buildings with predominantly mixed commercial uses.

There are no contemporary buildings in the immediate vicinity. The former North Fremantle Primary School is about 100 metres to the south on the other side of Stirling Highway. There is no precinct involved.

RELATIONSHIPS ON SITE:

The following structures are currently located on the site:

- The former Infants' School, a stone and corrugated iron building of 250 square metres built in 1900.
- A small wood shed on the northern boundary completed in 1901.
- A drinking trough immediately east of the classroom gable. (undated)
- The Workshop (fmr Military Workshop) of 150 square metres built in 1942 in brick, stone and asbestos roof.
- A limestone retaining wall and bituminised ramp to the rear of the site.
- A male and female toilet block central to the rear of the site.
- Shed structures to the east of the former Infants' School.
- The remains of a garden centre to the north-east corner of the site, 1980s.
- A modern steel shed of 170 square metres, c1993, to the east of the Workshop.
- A domestic steel shed, 1997, to the south of the Workshop.

There is very little in the way of existing landscaping. The grounds are in a functional but Spartan state. More than half the site is bituminised. The raised rear section to the south east of the site is partially grassed and planted. There is a *Eucalyptus ficafolia* to the west of the toilet block, which is large enough to be about 25 years old.

There is a hedge to the street alignment a little older (There is little evidence of detailed landscaping in a 1968 aerial photograph. The *E.ficafolia* is not to be seen, but the hedge is evident.)

EXTERNAL FORM AND STYLE OF THE BUILDINGS:

The former Infants' School was built to a modified standard plan signed by PWD Architect Hillson Beasley.

The twin gable roof is clad in corrugated iron, has lined eaves overhangs of about 600mm on all sides and a box gutter between. There is a sectioned triangular roof vent to each gable. The exterior walls are rock-faced limestone in random stone size with a minimum dimension of approximately 120mm

¹⁷ Letter from DOLA to Director, Authority for Intellectually Handicapped Persons, Ref. 12911/899 DC:N.

and a maximum of about 600mm. A 100mm high painted rendered strip runs around the building 170mm below floor level. Windowsills in the lean-to sections are rendered with sloping tops that run 150mm to each side of the openings. The west and east elevations of the classroom gables have blind windows with small toplights and the south elevation has combination double hung/toplight sashes. A rendered strip runs at sill level around full height walls (without lean-to rooms). The form is typical of turn of the century school buildings, but most similar examples are in brick rather than stone. The west elevation presents awkwardly to the street, the lean-to verandah and office giving the appearance of a rear elevation. The stone walls of the lean-to entry porch, breaks the scale of the larger spaces within the building and diminishes the visual clarity of the street elevation. The rear elevation has no lean-to sections.

The Former Infant's School has had problems with leaking walls and damp since it was built. Despite numerous calls for changes, no modifications were carried out to eliminate the cause of the problems, namely, the porous stone walls. The external stone walls are in an extremely exposed location and wind and rain damage is widespread. A fundamental problem exists with the type of stone and the exposed location. Recent repairs to the stonework under the eaves are good and compatible with the original work. The roof is generally sound, but the rain water pipes are in poor condition and need to be replaced.

The Workshop is an unusual 1940s building. It has a limestone west elevation, facing the street, with strong stylistic and detailing references to the west elevation of the former Infants' School. Such deference to style was not common in free-standing buildings of the time and may have had as much to do with on-site training for apprentice stone masons as it did with aesthetics.

The building is a rectangle with a gable to the street and hip and lean-to to the rear. The roof and gutters are of asbestos and the 600mm eaves boxed and lined with flat asbestos sheet. The side and rear walls are of State Reds bricks, the north and south walls have a stone footing to 2 courses below floor level and rendered strips at window sill and head levels. The eclectic street elevation is in rock faced stone with an array of details that suggest exercises for apprentices, realised in a building, rather than stylistic endeavour.

Mortar in the external brick walls of the Workshop is decomposing and there is also widespread damage to the brick and stone sections of the walls due to wind and rain. The use of asbestos in the roof, ceilings and claddings is a health concern and the asbestos needs to be removed in line with current regulations.

Although both of the buildings have been in public ownership since they were built, there is little evidence of normal government standards of repairs and maintenance having been applied to the place, nor is any regular programme in place in early 1998.

INTERNAL LAYOUT AND DETAILS:

The Former Infants' School form is of a gable-ended hall 8.53m by 15.24m and two gable-ended classrooms each 6.71m by 7.92m immediately south of the hall, sharing a common wall. The west wall of the classrooms is 3.96m west of the corresponding wall of the hall. The rear offset of the two gables is 3.05m. A 3.05m wide lean-to abuts the north and west walls of the hall.

The Workshop building consists of two interconnected workshops with a lean-to office and verandah to the rear. The details are shown in the plans and internal elevations.

SUBSEQUENT ALTERATIONS:

The development of the buildings has been a very simple process. Neither the former Infants' School nor the Workshop have had additions and the alterations have been minor.

After the former Infants' School was completed and occupied in July 1900, a woodshed (still standing) was added and seating for children added under the school in 1901. The drains, not evident from the standard PWD plan caused, problems as early as 1907. Given the fact that the drains were below street level this not surprising. The existing surface drains are predominantly of 1940s military type detail.

Waterproofing problems, which were reported in 1912, were a predictable outcome of building without cavities in a very exposed location, as were further drainage problems reported in 1921. The east elevation has been modified by the addition of three double hung windows in the east wall of the hall - date undocumented, but requested in a 1921 report. They are lower than the windows in the classrooms, affording a view from within and have a rendered reinforced lintel over.

The 1940 map shows the building and outbuildings almost unchanged from their 1901 layout. The Army proposed changes to the place in 1941 but the only substantial change was the addition of the stud wall dividing the hall into two areas and the addition of the ablution block to the rear. The ablution block has not been dated from the documentary evidence but details suggest further changes c1965.

There have been no substantive alterations to the Workshop. A sawdust hopper was added c1965 and a stud wall and storage loft was added to workshop 1 in 1993.

PROGNOSIS, SETTING AND LOCATION:

Whilst the buildings have some substantial construction problems the prognosis for their continued commercial usefulness is good. The Highway frontage ensures an ongoing situation with a busy road and awkward access. There is a plan for the continuation of West Coast Highway on the western side of the railway reserve opposite but, whilst this might reduce traffic in Stirling Highway, it is unlikely to substantially change the character of the location.

There is little of note in the existing landscaping and the documentary evidence fails to give light to any detailed information on the former state of the site. In particular there are very few photographs of the site even over the last 50 years.

Little of the fabric of the buildings in the place has changed and most parts of the older buildings represent elements of the original uses.

13.3 REFERENCES

No specific references.

13.4 FURTHER RESEARCH
