



**HERITAGE
COUNCIL**
OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

REGISTER OF HERITAGE PLACES

Assessment Documentation

11. ASSESSMENT OF CULTURAL HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

Cultural heritage significance means aesthetic, historic, scientific, social or spiritual value for individuals or groups within Western Australia.

In determining cultural heritage significance, the Heritage Council has had regard to the factors in the *Heritage Act 2018* and the indicators adopted on 14 June 2019.

PRINCIPAL AUSTRALIAN HISTORIC THEME(S)

- 5.4 Working in offices
- 7.2.3 Working to promote civil liberties
- 7.6.4 Dispensing justice
- 8.10.2 Creating visual arts

HERITAGE COUNCIL OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA THEME(S)

- 104 Land allocation & subdivision
- 111 Depression & boom
- 307 Intellectual activities, arts & crafts
- 308 Commercial & service industries
- 403 Law & order

11(a) Importance in demonstrating the evolution or pattern of Western Australia's history

Law Offices (fmr), Albany illustrates the type and standard of accommodation designed and built for a prominent legal practice in Western Australia in the late 19th century, having been completed in 1894 for local law firm Haynes and Robinson.

Law Offices (fmr), Albany demonstrates the expansion of Albany during the Western Australian gold boom period, when Albany was the State's principal port, and the business confidence in the town at this time was high.

Owners and occupants of the place were associated with the development of Albany in the inter-war years, with owner R.T. Robinson contributing significantly to the development of Albany woollen mills in the 1920s and legal partner G.A. Cooper in the early 1930s allowing the place to be used as the meeting place for the Albany Agricultural and Horticultural Society, of which he was president.

11(b) Importance in demonstrating rare, uncommon or endangered aspects of Western Australia's heritage

Law Offices (fmr), Albany is the earliest surviving purpose designed and built suite of private legal offices in Western Australia, and retains much of its original layout. The high quality of materials and workmanship of the varnished paneling extant on the first floor are rare survivors.

11(c) Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of Western Australia's history;

Law Offices (fmr), Albany has the potential to be used as a reference site to demonstrate the nature and high standard of accommodation of a regional legal practice in an important regional town in Australia in the late 19th century.

The remnants of the early ducting for the services, which are rarely found extant in the 21st century, demonstrate the installation of comparatively new technical innovations into the building at the time of its construction.

11(d) Its importance in demonstrating the characteristics of a broader class of places;

Law Offices (fmr), Albany is characteristic of the substantial design and construction applied to professional chambers in the late 19th century. The use of the classical design style reinforced the importance, stability and prestige of the legal function of the building and its occupiers, as did its location in the main street of the Albany.

The substantial construction and classical design style of the building is characteristic of a number of buildings in Western Australian port towns and reflects Albany's status as the premier port town of Western Australia in the 1890s.

11(e) Any strong or special meaning it may have for any group or community because of social, cultural or spiritual associations;

Law Offices (fmr), Albany is highly valued for its association with the legal practice of Haynes Robinson over more than 75 years, and its association with SGIO in the 1980s and 1990s, and for aesthetic reasons, as a well known and admired late 19th-century building in the heart of the city of Albany.

Law Offices (fmr), Albany contributes to the community's sense of place as an integral part of the 19th century heritage precinct in central Albany.

11(f)¹ Its importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics valued by any group or community;

Law Offices (fmr), Albany is a solid and well-proportioned example of the Federation Free Classical style applied to a symmetrically composed double frontage office building in the main street of Albany, with restrained decorative treatments and very high quality original varnished timber paneling to the first floor interiors.

Law Offices (fmr), Albany is one of a number of fine Victorian and Federation buildings that contribute to the heritage character of Albany's central business area.

Law Offices (fmr), Albany is an important component in the streetscape of the heritage precinct of York Street, which contains a number of heritage Victorian and Federation buildings. The proportions and design details of *Law Offices (fmr), Albany* reflect nearby buildings, including those on Stirling Terrace, and provide a link between the two significant heritage streetscapes.

11(g) Any special association it may have with the life or work of a person, group or organisation of importance in Western Australia's history;

Law Offices (fmr), Albany was built for Haynes and Robinson, the most enduring legal practice in Western Australia and one of the oldest in Australia, founded in 1889, by S.J. Haynes, (MLC, 1894-1910) and R.T. Robinson (MLA, 1908-21), and was occupied by the firm as its offices until 1970.

Law Offices (fmr), Albany was designed by architect R.P. Greenshields, Town Clerk of Albany and built by J. Green, Jnr, son of notable local expirree builder, J.U. Green, and was used in the 1930s by prominent artist John Barker as a studio and exhibition space.

11(h) Its importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement;

Law Offices (fmr), Albany is a fine building with very fine timber paneling, and technically expert architraves, demonstrating a high level of achievement by the architect and builder.

12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE

12.1 CONDITION

Law Offices (fmr), Albany is in good condition. The building was solidly constructed with high quality workmanship and materials and has been well maintained. On

¹ For consistency, all references to architectural style are taken from Apperly, R., Irving, R., Reynolds, P. *A Pictorial Guide to Identifying Australian Architecture. Styles and Terms from 1788 to the Present*, Angus and Robertson, North Ryde, 1989.
For consistency, all references to garden and landscape types and styles are taken from Ramsay, J. *Parks, Gardens and Special Trees: A Classification and Assessment Method for the Register of the National Estate*, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1991, with additional reference to Richards, O. *Theoretical Framework for Designed Landscapes in WA*, unpublished report, 1997.

acquiring the building, the current owners embarked on a programme to upgrade it in 2006, while remaining respectful of the heritage nature of the fabric of the place.

12.2 INTEGRITY

This section explains the extent to which the fabric is in its original state.

Law Offices (fmr), Albany retains a moderate to high degree of integrity. The place was largely intact until the SGIO conversion of 1981. The major changes were to the front and north-west corner offices of the ground floor, where the dividing walls and fireplaces were removed. The stair and safe vault were also modified at this period, when a number of smaller changes were made, and the extension to the rear was added. The first floor has received little modification and original joinery and timber panelling retains its varnished finish. The street frontage retains a high degree of integrity.

12.3 AUTHENTICITY

This section explains the extent to which the original intention is evident, and the compatibility of current use.

Law Offices (fmr), Albany retains a moderate to high degree of authenticity. Much of the ground floor, including the front offices, is now used as a retail art gallery, which is a compatible use. The first floor accommodation is used for its original and intended purpose of office accommodation.

13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

The documentation for this place is based on the heritage assessment completed by Robin Chinnery, Historian and Lynne Farrow, Architect, of Howard & Heaver Architects, in November 2006, with amendments and/or additions by the Heritage Council and the Department.

13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

Law Offices (fmr), Albany is a two storey stuccoed brick building in the Federation Free Classical design style, with a hipped and parapeted corrugated fibre cement roof. Designed by architect R.P. Greenshields as legal chambers and offices for Haynes and Robinson, it was built by J. Green, son of J.U. Green, in 1894. In 1981, architect G. Holmes of Hobbs, Smith and Holmes designed the alterations and additions, and supervised restoration work, implemented by McBride and Westerberg.

In 1827, King George Sound was the site of the first European settlement in Western Australia, established under Major Lockyer, and known as Frederickstown. In March 1831, King George Sound was officially proclaimed part of the Swan River Colony. The town was surveyed the same year, with York Street, the main street on the north-south axis. From early 1832, the name Albany was in use.²

The town developed slowly through the 19th century, and by 1886, the southern portion of Albany Town Lot S34 was advertised for sale. It adjoined the Union Bank built in 1888 (P58 *Albany House*), with a frontage to York Street, and was the location of 'substantial and handsome buildings known as the Albany Bon Marché'.³ From 20 November 1887, Anna Maria House leased portions of Albany Building Lot 34 to Edward Thomas Hope, draper, of Perth, the proprietor of Bon Marché, for a period of nine years, at an annual rental of £100, payable quarterly.⁴

In 1887, Samuel Johnson Haynes, who was completing the requisite six month probationary period with the Perth legal practice of Stone & Burt, purchased Mr. Hare's legal practice at Albany. Haynes, (b. Leek, Staffordshire, England, 1852) had come to Australia as a child with his parents in 1854, returning to Leek to complete his education, before passing the preliminary examinations of the Law Society. After this he returned to Victoria, where he engaged in mercantile pursuits for some years before moving to South Australia, where he completed his legal studies and was admitted as a barrister and solicitor in 1886.⁵ In March 1889, Robert Thomson Robinson joined Haynes' practice, which became Haynes and Robinson,⁶ which continues in practice in 2015, the longest surviving legal business in Western Australia and one of the oldest in Australia.⁷

² Garden, Donald S. *Albany: A Panorama of the Sound from 1827* (Thomas Nelson (Australia) Limited, West Melbourne, 1977) pp. 17-25, and p. 40.

³ *Albany Mail* 15 May 1886, p. 2.

⁴ Certificate of Title Vol. XXXI Fol. 394.

⁵ *Twentieth Century Impressions of Western Australia* P. W. H. Thiel & Co., Perth, 1901, fac. edition Hesperian Press, Victoria Park, 200) p. 25; and Battye, J.S. *The Cyclopaedia of Western Australia* The Cyclopaedia Company, Perth, 1912-13, Facsimile Edition Hesperian Press, Victoria Park, Western Australia, 1985, Vol. 1, pp. 336-37.

⁶ *Albany Mail* 16 March 1889, p. 3.

⁷ Haynes Robinson Lawyers <http://www.haynesrobinson.com.au/> accessed 18 June 2015

R.T. Robinson (b. Ireland, 1867, d. Mount Lawley, 1926) immigrated to Victoria with his family in 1873 and came to Western Australia when his father was appointed manager of the National Bank at Albany. His father, John Robinson, was later a partner in notable local firm Drew Robinson, merchants, and a prominent local citizen. After completing his education in South Australia, R.T. Robinson commenced his articles with E.G.S. Hare at Albany, after whose death in 1887, he moved to Perth to complete them under Septimus Burt, KC, before returning to Albany to join Haynes' practice.⁸

In 1890, Samuel Johnson Haynes and Robert Thomson Robinson purchased a portion of Albany Building Lot 34, nine and a half perches in area, which had a frontage to York Street at the east and adjoined Albany Town Lot 33 at the south. It was registered in their names as tenants in common on 14 June 1890.⁹ In 1893, they mortgaged it to secure the sum of £1,000 and interest at £6 per annum,¹⁰ to finance building a two storey building as offices and legal chambers for their practice. Architect Robert P. Greenshields was commissioned to design the building and in October the contract was awarded to Albany builder W. Sangster at a cost of £971 11s 10d.¹¹ However, on completion of the building, it was reported in April 1894, 'Mr Green, Jnr, was the contractor, and he has carried out his work in a creditable manner at a cost of £1056 5s 6d'.¹² He was in business with his father, established Albany builder, J.U. Green, an expirée, whose previous work included the Albany Co-operative Society Building (fmr) (1870), 'Hillside' (1886; RHP 03572) and the Hall at St. John's Church (1889).¹³ On 20 April 1894, *Australian Advertiser* reported of the new building:

The accommodation provided for the legal firm is ample and well arranged. On the ground floor they have two offices, the rear one being the chief clerk's, and the front which is entered from a vestibule and fitted up with a counter will be used by the other clerks of the firm. Out of the latter office you rise by jarrah stairs to the upper landing, from which four doors open to the library, which is fitted up with roomy shelving; the accountant's office with counter desk and fittings, and the front door into each of the partners' offices, which are both well ventilated and lighted chambers, with jarrah mantels and Spanish tiled hearths, and the woodwork grained in cedar throughout. They are also fitted up with speaking tubes, gas, and electric bells. Special attention has been given to the drainage of the premises.¹⁴

The offices were considered modern and up-to-date for this period, and the technological advances of gas lighting, speaking tubes and electric bells, were relatively recent in Western Australia. Research in 2006 found no documentary evidence to support the statement in the Municipal Inventory for Albany that the

⁸ Battye, J. S. *The Cyclopaedia of Western Australia*, 1912-13, p. 575; and Erickson, Rica (Ed.) *The Bicentennial Dictionary of Western Australians pre-1829-1888* University of Western Australia Press, Nedlands, 1988, p. 2653; and Johnson, Les *An Honourable Career: 100 Years of Haynes Robinson Haynes Robinson*, Albany, 1989, p. 8.

⁹ Certificate of Title Vol. XXXI Fol. 394.

¹⁰ Certificate of Title Vol. XXXI Fol. 394. Note: This mortgage was discharged on 22 August 1901.

¹¹ *Australian Advertiser* 18 October 1893.

¹² *Australian Advertiser* 20 April 1894, p. 3.

¹³ *Inquirer* 17 August 1870, p. 4; HCWA Place No. 3572, Assessment Document, p. 5; and *Australian Advertiser* 23 October 1889, p. 2e.

¹⁴ *Australian Advertiser* 20 April 1894, p. 3. Note: A.Y. Hassell & Co. were prominent merchants at Albany. Refer to biographies of A.Y. Hassell, in Pike, Douglas (Ed.) *Australian Dictionary of Biography* Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1972, pp. 358-59, and Battye, J. S. *The Cyclopaedia of Western Australia*, 1912-13, Vol. 2 pp. 270-73.

place was subject to a re-fit in 1914, and as is evident in the above report, the improvements supposed to have been implemented at that time, including the speaking tubes, gas, and electric bells, were part of the original building.¹⁵ So far as can be ascertained, there was little if any change to the place in the lifetimes of S.J. Haynes and R.T. Robinson.

During the Western Australian gold boom of the 1890s thousands of passengers passed through Albany on their way to the goldfields. The town developed rapidly, not only as a port and a supply centre, but also as a destination for people on holiday from the goldfields seeking the coolness and refreshment of a coastal holiday and those returning from the goldfields. Commercial development, with mainly two-storey buildings, predominated along the eastern section of Stirling Terrace, and there was further development northward up York Street.¹⁶ In February 1898, the new courthouse was completed at 184-190 Stirling Terrace, west of York Street,¹⁷ in closer proximity to Haynes and Robinson than the earlier court house at the east end of the Terrace.

In December 1897, Haynes and Robinson, in conjunction with Charles Baxter Cox took over the practice of Sholl & Foulkes in Perth, establishing the well-known and long enduring legal practice of Haynes, Robinson & Cox. The latter were to work in Perth, while Haynes remained in Albany, where Robinson also continued to work on his visits to the town.¹⁸ Robinson took up residence in Perth, where he became a prominent landowner as joint owner of the Mount Lawley Estate Swan Location Z. His 'brilliance and energy soon advanced him to a prominent position in the legal profession', and in public life he would serve on Perth Road Board (1908-26), and as a Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA, 1914-21), serving as Attorney General (1916-19), Minister for Industries, Minister for Mines, and Minister for Woods and Forests.¹⁹

While Haynes and Robinson (also recorded as Haynes & Robinson) remained in partnership at Albany through until Robinson's death, other partners came and went, including Cox, and Charles Townsend Russell. In 1909, John Patrick Dwyer was admitted to the practice at Albany, where he remained until he enlisted in the services during World War I, after which he returned to Perth, where he later established the practice of Dwyer and Thomas, eventually rising to become Chief Justice of Western Australia.²⁰ With each partnership, the name(s) of the current partner(s) were appended, thus it was styled Haynes, Robinson and Braham from January 1913 until December 1915, when Algernon Charles Braham also enlisted. From January 1916, when Charles Thomas Watkins became a partner, the practice was styled Haynes, Robinson and Watkins.²¹ Through the next decade, Watkins 'helped to cement the practice's reputation for work in the courts'.²²

15 Heritage Today Municipal Inventory Albany.

16 Campbell, R. McK. and van Bremen, I. 'Albany Court House, Lock-up and Keeper's Quarters: Conservation Plan' prepared for the Building Management Authority, September 1995, p. 3.

17 Garden, Donald S. *Albany*, 1977, p. 236.

18 *Albany Advertiser* 25 and 30 December 1897, p. 3 and p. 2 respectively.

19 Batty, J. S. *The Cyclopaedia of Western Australia*, 1912-13, p. 575; and Erickson, Rica (Ed.) *Bicentennial Dictionary*, 1988, p. 2653.

20 Johnson, Les *An Honourable Career*, 1989, p. 17; and *Albany Advertiser* 11 November 1903, p. 2

21 *Albany Advertiser* 4 January 1913, 11 December 1915 and 8 January 1916.

22 Johnson, Les *An Honourable Career*, 1989. pp. 17-18.

On 19 September 1926, Robert Thomson Robinson died, and probate was granted to his widow, Elizabeth Gordon Robinson, the Executrix during widowhood and the executor, Perpetual Executors Trustees and Agency Company (WA) Limited of Perth. On 18 February 1927, their interest in portion of Albany Building Lot 34 was transferred to S.J. Haynes.²³

On 7 March 1927, Haynes Robinson's partnership with Watkins was dissolved and George Alexander Cooper (b. Geraldton, 1885) was admitted as a partner in the Albany business, which was subsequently styled Haynes, Robinson and Cooper until Hayne's death on 3 February 1932, and the death of Cooper in autumn 1934.²⁴ The property, by then designated Lot 4, then changed hands several times in quick succession.²⁵ Haynes and Robinson was operated by Brian Carson, a Sydney University Law School graduate, following Cooper's death in 1934. In early 1936 it was taken over by another Sydney graduate, Geoffrey D. White, and for some years thereafter it was styled Haynes, Robinson & White.²⁶

In the 1930s, artist John Barker had his studio '(upstairs) at Haynes, Robinson and Cooper's premises', where he advertised his annual exhibition of 'Paintings in Water Colours, etc.', held in early February 1934.²⁷ Barker (b. York, England, 1867, d. Albany, 1943), had served his apprenticeship as a church glass-painter and decorator in England, where he established his reputation as a pottery artist and water-colourist before World War I. After the war, John Barker and his wife emigrated to Western Australia to manage a new pottery being established at Narrogin. On arrival, he discovered the kilns were incorrectly built, and, after the failure of the business, the Barkers went to live with their son Leo and his family at Albany, where John Barker concentrated on his painting. His work was 'quickly appreciated', and the review in the *West Australian* of a joint exhibition in 1928, by which date he was concentrating largely on subjects at Albany, stated 'Mr Barker's evening pictures will probably attract most attention. They possess a depth of colour not often seen in watercolour work'.²⁸ His 1934 painting entitled 'Land of his Fathers', depicting an Aboriginal man (later identified as Johnny Cockles, who was well known in Albany) gazing over Perth and the Swan Valley, 'caused quite a stir', and is considered to be 'probably his most memorable' painting.²⁹ In the 1930s, Barker was prominent in Western Australian art societies, and exhibited widely. Described in a 1937 art magazine as 'the master of Western Australian lighting conditions', the reviewer of an exhibition of Barker's work at the University of Western Australia and at Albany in 1984, asserted

Seen all together like this, Barker's paintings and ceramics demonstrate a dignity and workmanship which, at the least, rank him as a remarkable craftsman. There are

23 Certificate of Title Vol. 856 Fol. 88.

24 *Albany Advertiser* 16 May 1927, p. 2 and 'Obituary' 9 April 1934, p. 4. Note: Johnson, Les *An Honourable Career*., 1989, mistakenly stated Cooper's partnership dated from 1928.

25 Certificate of Title Vol. 973 Fol. 55.

26 Johnson, Les *An Honourable Career*, 1989, p. 21. Note: While Johnson states Carson purchased the practice from Cooper's Estate, as *Wise's Post Office Directory* (1935-36 and 1936-37) recorded it as 'Haynes, Robinson & Cooper (B.M. Carson)' it appears unlikely.

27 *Albany Advertiser* 5 February 1934, p. 1.

28 Quoted Britton, David 'Barker deserves acclaim', *West Australian* 17 October 1984.

29 Britton, David 'Barker deserves acclaim', *West Australian* 17 October 1984.

perhaps a dozen works – mostly from his later years – which show Barker as an artist of rare vision.³⁰

During World War II, after White enlisted in the army, Edward Leslie Seymour operated the practice until his enlistment in the air force. Although Johnson's history of the practice states Seymour took over the practice in 1941,³¹ *Wise's Post Office Directory* continued to record it as Haynes, Robinson & White throughout the World War II period.³² On his return from service, Seymour resumed in the practice, which was styled Haynes, Robinson & Seymour from 1946.³³ In the post-war years, the practice thrived, and Seymour 'won a reputation known beyond the boundaries of Albany' enabling the admission of another partner, Alexander D. MacKay, in 1950, after which the practice was styled Haynes, Robinson, Seymour & MacKay, through to the early 1970s, when MacKay retired.³⁴

In February-March 1956, four w.c.'s at *Law Offices (fmr), Albany* were connected to sewerage, one at the first floor, and three in the outbuilding at the south-west. The latter were demolished in early 1982, when additions were made to the place.³⁵

In the 1950s and 1960s, Haynes, Robinson, Seymour & MacKay continued to operate from *Law Offices (fmr), Albany*.³⁶ While Johnson's history infers the practice continued to operate there until completion of 'Frederick House' in August 1982, its address per the *WA Telephone Directory* was 142 Stirling Terrace from 1970.³⁷ Further research may reveal details of the occupancy of *Law Offices (fmr), Albany* between 1970 and 1981. Meanwhile, on 4 April 1977, *Law Offices (fmr), Albany* was Classified by the National Trust of Australia (WA).³⁸ In 1981, the place was entered in the Register of the National Estate.³⁹

In 1981, the State Government Insurance Office (SGIO) purchased *Law Offices (fmr), Albany*.⁴⁰ SGIO commissioned architect Geoff Holmes of the well known practice of Hobbs, Smith and Holmes of Albany, to prepare plans for alterations and additions to the place, then known as York House, and for its restoration, which were carried out by local builders McBride and Westerberg, under Holmes' supervision. The works included an addition to the rear of the building comprising an entry lobby, tea room and male and female toilet facilities, which required some alterations to the existing building, including the stairs, as shown on the working drawings. The alterations to the ground floor included removal of the dividing wall

30 'Barker deserves acclaim', *West Australian* 17 October 1984. Note: In 2006, the exhibition catalogue is missing from the Scholars' Collection of the Library at University of Western Australia in 2006, and Art Gallery of Western Australia does not have a copy.

31 Johnson, Les *An Honourable Career*, 1989, pp. 21-22.

32 *Wise's Post Office Directory* 1941-45.

33 *Wise's Post Office Directory* 1946, p. 271.

34 Johnson, Les *An Honourable Career*, 1989. Note: His name was also spelled Mackay, as in *WA Telephone Directory*, 1960-, p. 240.

35 Records for York Street, Lot 4 of 34, Water Corporation, Albany, 1956 and 1981-82; and Hobbs, Smith and Holmes Alterations and Additions, for SGIO, September 1981.

36 *W. A. Telephone Directory*, 1952 to 1969.

37 Johnson, Les *An Honourable Career*, 1989, p. 23; and *WA Telephone Directory*, 1970-74.

38 133-135 York Street, Albany, National Trust of Australia (WA), Assessment, 1977.

39 Registration No. 5/01/070/0018/01

40 Annual Report, SGIO, 1982, p. 4; and Certificate of Title Vol. 1087 Fol. 158; Certificate of Title Vol. 856 Fol. 88; Certificate of Title Vol. 973 Fol. 55; Certificates of Title Vol. 1498 Fol. 816 and Vol. 1087 Fol. 158

between the front offices and installation of a beam, a new window to the south-west office, an arch made through to the rear room at the north-west and a new door or window opening made, and the safe vault converted to a corridor. The original lower leg of the stairs was removed and the space converted into a store with a sink opening to the west, with a new lower leg of stairs added in the rear addition. At the first floor, the rear window in the south-west office was bricked-in, the partitioning to the south-west room was altered and a toilet removed from this area, which was to become the conference room, and new windows to match the existing in the south wall, overlooking the adjoining lot, also owned by SGIO. The safe was removed from the north-west corner of the north-east office.⁴¹

On 17 February 1982, the Hon. R.G. Pike, MLC, Chief Secretary and Minister for Cultural Affairs and Recreation, hence in charge of the SGIO, officially opened the Albany Branch Office, in the presence of 'about 100 businessmen and dignitaries', including a number of Members of Parliament. He said the place was 'an expression of the State Government's faith in the Great Southern'.⁴²

Up to this time the land parcel had comprised several portions across several titles. In 1982, these were amalgamated and re-subdivided.⁴³ On 20 April 1982, Lot 22, together with the right-of-way on Plan 781, was transferred from Bevis Nominees to the State Government Insurance Office, which owned the place until September 1994.⁴⁴ This is the site of *Law Offices (fmr), Albany*.

On 5 June 1992, *Law Offices (fmr), Albany* was entered into the Register of Heritage Places on an Interim basis.⁴⁵

On 10 December 1992, SGIO Insurance Limited was established following the decision to privatise operations of the State Government Insurance Corporation by means of a public float.⁴⁶ From 1 January 1993, SGIO Insurance Limited leased *Law Offices (fmr), Albany* on an annual basis.⁴⁷ On 6 September 1994, *Law Offices (fmr), Albany* was transferred from the State Government Insurance Office to Lowe Pty. Ltd. and Rural Oak Pty. Ltd., of Mosman Park, as tenants in common. SGIO Insurance Ltd. continued to lease the premises through the 1990s.⁴⁸

In 1999, Lot 22 was sub-divided. The southern lot, Lot 51, was to be excluded from the Register of Heritage Places, as it was not occupied by *Law Offices (fmr), Albany*. The northern lot, Lot 50, 470 square metres, which has the easement for the right-of-carriage-way, is the site occupied by *Law Offices (fmr), Albany*.⁴⁹ On 14 May 1999, when new Certificates of Title were issued, Rural Oak Pty. Ltd. and Lowe Pty. Ltd. were registered as the owners of Lot 50 on Diagram 97527, with SGIO Insurance Limited the lessee.⁵⁰

41 Hobbs, Smith and Holmes Alterations and Additions, for SGIO, September 1981.

42 *Albany Advertiser* 18 February 1982.

43 DOLA Diagram 62692, 2 March 1982.

44 Certificate of Title Vol. 1616 Fol. 925.

45 HCWA Place No. 0075; and *Government Gazette* 5 June 1992, p. 2290.

46 Annual Report, State Government Insurance Commission, 1993, p. 68.

47 Certificate of Title Vol. 1616 Fol. 925.

48 Certificate of Title Vol. 1616 Fol. 925.

49 DOLA Diagram 97527, lodged 15 March 1999.

50 Certificate of Title Vol. 2161 Fol. 128.

In 2001, the place was included in the Municipal Inventory for the City of Albany, with a Management Category A+, and included in the Town Planning Scheme as a place of heritage value.⁵¹

In 2001, *Law Offices (fmr), Albany* was purchased by Esport Pty Ltd of Esperance, as registered on 2 October 2001.⁵² While the ground floor operated as a shop, the offices at the first floor continued to be leased to tenants.⁵³

On 27 January 2006, Richard Gerald James Ball and Angela Diana Fryer-Smith, of 15 Bridges Street, Albany, acquired the property as joint tenants.⁵⁴ Subsequently, the ground floor was refurbished and fitted out to serve as a shoe store operated by Ms Fryer-Smith, while the offices at the first floor continued to serve their intended purpose.⁵⁵

In 2010 plans for a mixed-use residential and commercial development at 131 York Street were supported by the Heritage Council, immediately adjacent to the *Law Offices (fmr), Albany*. This development, on a site believed to have always been vacant, would have largely hidden the south elevation of *Law Offices (fmr), Albany*.⁵⁶ However, photographs from February 2015 indicate the development did not go ahead.⁵⁷

In 2015, the ground floor was operating as a shoe store, 'Bravashoes'.

In 2020 the place is operating as Blush Retail Art Gallery.

13.2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

Law Offices (fmr), Albany (1894) is a two-storey stuccoed brick building in the Federation Free Classical design style, with a hipped and parapeted corrugated fibre cement roof.

Siting

Law Offices (fmr), Albany is located in Albany, a regional town of 32,000 people located 450 kms south-east of Perth, which is the administrative centre of the Great Southern Region of Western Australia. Albany contains a high proportion of intact and functioning buildings with heritage value which are highly valued by both residents and visitors. A large proportion of these, including *Law Offices (fmr), Albany*, were constructed in the last two decades of the 19th century, which was a time of great economic growth in Albany due to the construction of the Great Southern Railway in the 1880s.

Law Offices (fmr), Albany is located on Lot 50 at the lower end of York Street, the main street of Albany, a wide street which falls gently to Princess Royal Harbour and has views of the water. York Street is a significant heritage precinct that contains a number of buildings with heritage value. *Law Offices (fmr), Albany* is

51 Municipal Inventory for City of Albany, Adopted 30 June 2001.

52 Certificate of Title Vol. 2161 Fol. 128.

53 Angela Fryer-Smith, conversation with Robin Chinnery, October 2006.

54 Certificate of Title Vol. 2161 Fol. 128.

55 Angela Fryer-Smith, conversation with Robin Chinnery, October 2006.

56 SHO file P00075

57 Google streetview, <https://www.google.com.au/maps/@-35.026466,117.883668,3a,75y,258.57h,85.43t/data=!3m6!1e1!3m4!1sh9soeMgCqXaOCCBDA6HVdA!2e0!7i13312!8i6656> accessed 17 June 2015

located close to P14922 *Stirling Terrace Precinct*, which contains the present and former Albany Courthouses, and the place forms a link to Stirling Terrace, with its form, scale and detailing reflecting many of the buildings on Stirling Terrace, particularly Albany House, its neighbour to the south on the corner of Stirling Terrace and York Street.

Law Offices (fmr), Albany has been constructed close to the boundary of York Street and was constructed without a verandah. The public footpath that abuts the building is paved with concrete slabs. The north façade is a parapet constructed against the adjacent restaurant building (P00076 'Nonna's Restaurant', no longer trading with this name). The western portion of the lot at the rear of *Law Offices (fmr), Albany* is paved extensively with bitumen and used as a car park. To the south, the area between the place and P00058 *Albany House*, on the corner of York Street and Stirling Terrace, is used for carparking, with some moderate-size native plantings and a retaining wall separating two paved parking areas at different heights.

External description

The front façade of the building is a double frontage that displays elements of the Federation Classical Style. The façade is symmetrical, and the ground floor of the building is treated as a base with the stucco finished with grooved lines to represent coursing. There is a plinth at the base of the building below the coursed stucco. The two front entrances are each located in projecting porticos, which are located at each end of the façade. Three steps lead up to the southern entrance. A plain entablature at the head of the portico has a moulded string line at its base over the doors and is capped with a moulded cornice. There is also individual lettered signage to this area of the facade. Each entrance previously incorporated original double timber-paneled doors which have since been replaced with a single glazed door and fixed side panel. A plain fixed glazed semi-circular fan light is above both door openings. There are two windows located between the porticos, each with a semi-circular head and with the coursing lines returning down to form the arch and keystone.

A string line over the portico spans the full width of the building. Paneling under the windows projects forward beneath each of the windows. A moulded string line over the paneling spans the whole width of the building and forms the sill. There are four double hung timber sash windows with plain glazed sashes and moulded casings at the first floor. The two central windows are placed directly over the ground floor windows. The two outer windows have been placed symmetrically within the first floor façade. Rusticated stucco quoining at the edges of the façade and also in the centre of the facade divides the first floor into two bays. There is a vertical signage banner fixed to the central bay of the first floor. A string line approximately 200 mm above the windows spans over the quoining. The roof is parapeted. The head of the parapet is plain, but a deep moulded cornice spans the parapet approximately 300 mm below the head. A substantial centrally-located rendered chimney with a moulded capping is visible behind the front parapet.

The extreme corners of the front façade are plain, with the detailing applied to the plane of the façade and not returning around the corner to the side facades.

The south side façade is also parapeted and rendered with plain stucco. There is one double hung timber sash window on the ground floor and three on the first floor, one of which is located over the ground floor window. The ground floor

window and the two eastern windows on the first floor were introduced in 1981. A tall chimney with a moulded capping rises behind the parapet towards the west side of the façade. A down pipe with a moulded header is located adjacent to the front façade.

At the rear of the building, the single-storey addition of 1981 contains a separate rear entrance, stairs, toilets and small kitchen. This addition is rendered and painted and has a hipped roof with a skillion awning over the rear entrance.

The original two-storey section of the rear facade is rendered and painted with a hipped roof clad in asbestos cement sheeting and with a wide asbestos gutter. A door and window at ground floor level on the north side of the ground floor are in their original locations. The door has been modified but the window appears original. There are two windows at the first floor level located symmetrically in the facade, with the northern window positioned symmetrically over the ground floor window.

The single storey rendered and painted addition of 1981 projects from the centre and south side of the façade. This extension has a hipped corrugated iron roof, with a small section at the centre of the façade constructed as a gable over the introduced first leg of the stairs.

Two tall chimneys with moulded cappings rise from each of the side parapets approximately two metres from the two storey façades at either side of the building.

The north façade is also a parapet, constructed very close but not quite butting onto the adjoining restaurant building. This façade is faced with brick.

Internal description

The layout of the ground floor consists of a large room spanning the front of the building, which has been created by the removal of the original central dividing wall. A former office on the north-west corner has also been opened up to this space by an arch in the former dividing wall. A small office on the south-west corner of the building largely retains its original form. The original first leg of the stairs, which was located to the north of the south-west office, and was accessed from the front office, has been removed and this space is now used as a store. The original safe vault, which was located to the north of the stairs, has been modified to create a corridor. An introduced door at the rear of this corridor opens up into a short corridor located in the single storey addition of 1981. This corridor returns to the south and leads past a kitchen and toilets on the west side, with a small lobby at the south end containing the rear entrance doors on the south wall. The first leg of the stair rises off this lobby up the original external rear (west) wall and joins the original second leg of the stair at a half landing.

The room on the ground floor at the front of the building is now a large space, approximately ten metres long and five metres wide, with the office to the north-west also opening off the space. The original dividing wall is marked by a deep beam in the centre of the ceiling supported on brick nibs at either side of the space. The fireplaces had been removed prior to 1981. The ceilings are high and the room is dominated by the large round arched double hung timber sash windows on the east (front) wall. The windows have timber sills and deep moulded architraves that curve around the arch. The original external double doors at each end of this wall have been retained but re-hung to swing outwards, and a pivoting glass door has been introduced to swing inwards from the inner leaf of the wall. The fanlights over

the doors are also a feature of the room. The original vents with a foliate motif are extant at a high level in the front wall.

A door at the south end of the west wall is original and leads into a room on the south-west corner of the building. An adjacent door has been introduced in the place of the first riser of the original stair.

The space that opens up off the north-west corner was a former office. A wide square arch was introduced in 1981 to incorporate this room into the new large front office and the fireplace was removed. The area retains its original deep moulded skirtings, original double hung timber sash window and window and door architraves, which are painted. A new door was introduced to the rear (west) wall in 1981.

The office on the south-west corner of the building largely retains its original form. The rear (west) window was bricked-in in 1981, and a new window introduced to the south wall. The original back door was removed and the space behind (west), became a small safe under the stair area. The door in the north-west corner of the room is the original safe door. The fireplace with its painted timber surround on the south wall appears original but has been blocked up.

The corridor was the original safe vault and retains its original coved corrugated iron ceiling lining. The walls are painted brick, and a door was introduced to the east wall in 1981.

The rear addition has been constructed of brick with plastered walls. The corridor and stair area has a high raking ceiling with exposed varnished jarrah rafters. The stair has a solid plastered brick balustrade.

The first floor layout consists of two equal rooms at the front of the building and two rooms at the rear separated by the stairwell. Again, ceilings are high. The finishes to the rooms are similar throughout and consist of timber floors and deep moulded skirtings, four panel doors with moulded edgings, double hung timber sash windows with a single pane of glazing in each sash, 125 mm moulded architraves to windows and doors with a stopping block at the base of the door architraves, timber sills with scotia under, and lathe and plaster ceilings with no cornice. The most striking feature of the upper floor fabric is the joinery which all retains its original varnished finish. While the front rooms have brick perimeter walls, the rear rooms have timber-panelled walls adjacent to the stair and the original upper leg of the stair is also lined with timber paneling. All the paneling also retains its original varnished finish. A store has been constructed from matching paneling next to the stairwell.

The front two rooms are medium sized spaces, approximately five metres by five metres. The room layouts are mirrored, with back-to-back fireplaces, which retain their original chimneybreasts, surrounds and mantle shelves. The original linings are missing. Each room has two double hung timber sash windows on the front (east) wall. The room on the south-east corner retains most of its original features, apart from the lining to the fireplaces. Two double hung timber sash windows in the south wall were installed in 1981. The room on the north-east corner was unable to be inspected, but the owner informed that the features were similar to the south-east room.

The rear room on the north-west corner retains its original form and most of its original features. The fireplace in the north wall retains its original varnished

surround and mantle shelf, the window on the rear (west) wall is original, and the paneling on the south wall is original.

The room to the south-west also largely retains its original form and features, apart from the fire surround, which has been removed, although the chimney breast and opening are extant. The double hung timber sash on the west wall is original and the window on the south wall was extant in 1981.

None of the original services such as speaking tubes, gas and electric bells are extant, although a small opening on the stairs appears to be an indicator of these early services.

Appearance and condition of the building to date.

Law Offices (fmr), Albany is in good condition. The building was solidly constructed with high quality workmanship and materials and has been well maintained. There is no evidence of rising damp, which reflects the close attention given to the drainage of the place during its initial construction. The current owners completed a cosmetic upgrade in 2006, soon after purchasing the place, which respects the heritage nature of the fabric of the place.

13.3 COMPARATIVE INFORMATION

Private Legal Offices

While there were legal practitioners residing and practicing in Western Australia from the earliest years of European settlement, there are no buildings surviving from the pre-gold boom period that are known to have been designed and built as private legal offices, or chambers, as they were known in the late 19th and early 20th century.

It is not possible to search the SHO database for offices specifically constructed for legal firms. However, keyword searches for 'lawyer', 'law firm', 'legal', 'solicitor' or 'barrister' within places noted with the commercial use 'office' or 'other' identify the following places:

- P00370 Solicitor's Rooms (fmr), Bunbury, (1910), a two-storey brick office building in the Federation Free Classical style with Georgian elements, constructed in 1910 as offices for Bunbury law-firm Stanley, Money & Walker Solicitors, and serving as the firm's offices until 1965. The place is in the HCWA assessment program and a draft heritage assessment has been prepared.
- P02023 *18 & 20 Howard Street* (1905, RHP), a two-storey and three-storey pair of buildings, purpose-built for Haynes, Robinson and Cox in 1905, shortly after Haynes and Robinson took over Sholl and Foulkes, and used by that firm (with several name changes) until the 1980s. No.18 is in Federation Free style but is a more elaborate representations of the styles than *Law Offices (fmr), Albany*.
- P02024 Commercial Building, 21 Howard Street, Perth (1905), a two-storey Federation Anglo Dutch style brick, stone and stucco building, purpose-built as legal offices for Parker and Parker Solicitors, which is in the assessment program as part of P02022 Commercial Buildings, 15-21 Howard Street.
- P16828 Offices – Shire of Broome (unknown date, RHP as part of P00291

Chinatown Conservation Area), a single storey timber-framed building with enclosed perimeter verandahs, clad in corrugated iron, that served as offices and residence for the solicitors H.D. Forbes & Walter Clarke Hall.

- P00244 Lawyers' Office, Bridgetown (c.1900), a small, single-storey brick and stone building with minimal detailing
- P23859 Berridge Building, Denmark (1954), built as legal offices and in use from 1987 as Denmark Environment Centre
- P18678 Legal & General House, 167 St George's Terrace, Perth (1981)

Solicitor's Rooms (fmr), Bunbury is very comparable with *Law Offices (fmr), Albany*. The place is of similar scale and restrained detailing, located in the centre of Bunbury's business district, and is a comparable example of legal offices in a regional town centre.

The Howard Street buildings are a particularly notable legal precinct, located around 300 metres from the Supreme Court, with grand buildings designed to reflect the status of some of the State's top law firms. Some of the buildings remain in use as legal offices. Other places noted above have little in common with *Law Offices (fmr), Albany* beyond their original use.

Many buildings constructed for other purposes have also at some time in their history been used as offices for law firms.

Law Offices (fmr), Albany is the earliest surviving building known to have been designed and built as legal offices in Western Australia, and is a good example of private legal offices constructed for a regional town centre. Its value as original legal chambers and offices is heightened by the extent of the remaining original layout and fabric, particularly the fine timber paneling at the first floor.

Office buildings

The SHO database lists 226 places originally constructed as 'commercial use: office buildings', of which 30 are on the Register. The majority of these are from the Federation era (1890-1915), with 44 dating from 1905 to 1915. Many of these are located in the central business districts of their respective towns, often sited with zero setback and no verandahs or awnings as part of a commercial precinct. Eight are on the Register, including four in central Perth and two outside the Metropolitan area:

- P14922 *Stirling Terrace, Albany*, a large collection of buildings dating from the nineteenth century onwards, including comparable office buildings such as P00063 Edinburgh House, P00064 National Bank (fmr) and P00058 Albany House .
- P02634 *Butterick's Building, Wagin* (1906), a larger and more elaborate building that includes shops at ground floor and offices above.

The other six places are generally larger and more elaborately detailed than *Law Offices (fmr), Albany*. This includes extensive Federation-era office buildings within P25225 West End, Fremantle.

Of the 226 offices noted in the database, 60 are listed as Federation Free Classical style (14 Registered).

Law Offices (fmr), Albany is a good example of an office building designed for the

central business district of a regional town, with restrained detailing. It is representative of the approach to design and siting for such buildings in the Federation period, but displays less elaborate façade detailing than many comparable examples.

Architectural Style

There are 471 places in the SHO database noted as being in Federation Free Classical style, of which 123 are on the Register. Fifty-five of these Registered places are outside the Metropolitan area, with six in Albany, all within P14922 *Stirling Terrace Precinct*.

Law Offices (fmr), Albany is the only two-storey office building in the Federation Free Classical design style constructed in Albany in the decade 1890-1900. The large curved architraves of the ground floor windows demonstrate a high level of technical expertise, only seen elsewhere in Albany on the interior of the Town Hall. More often (as, for example, at *Albany House*) a panel was inserted on the inner wall to square the head of the opening which could then be trimmed with square architraves.

Law Offices (fmr), Albany is a good example of a Federation Free Classical style, which was very common in this period, especially for commercial buildings, and many fine examples have been retained. It features technical expertise in its architraves.

Albany

In Albany, a number of two storey buildings were constructed in the decade 1890-1900, most of which were located in Stirling Terrace, which was extensively re-developed in the 1880s and the Federation period, and York Street, where most of the development followed opening of the Great Southern Railway (1889), including

- P00080 Premier Hotel (1891) Federation Free Style, York Street.
- P15571 Albany Hotel (1890s) Federation Free Style, York Street.
- P00060 *Western Australian Bank (fmr)* (registered) (1890), two-storey Commercial Bank on Stirling Terrace (east of York Street) in Federation Academic Classical style. This building was also linked to Haynes Robinson as listed under 'other names' on the Municipal Heritage Inventory extract, as it accommodated their offices for a period in the 1970s, as noted in the Documentary Evidence.
- P15552 *Drew Robinson & Co. (fmr)* (registered) (1891), next to the above, a two storey department store also in the Federation Academic Classical style.
- P00076 Nonna's Restaurant, (next to *Law Offices (fmr), Albany*) 1894, Federation Free Style.
- Albany Courthouse (1896-98) (part of P00051 *Albany Courthouse Complex*, registered) in the Federation Arts and Crafts style under George Temple Poole. Until recent (2005) extensions and alterations to the Courthouse, the courtroom contained partitions of timber paneling, which, while somewhat similar, was not of such high quality of finish as that at *Law Offices (fmr), Albany*. The paneling at the Courthouse is no longer extant in 2006.

- The 1896 extensions to P00030 *Old Albany Post Office* (registered) (1868) by George Temple Poole, also in the Federation Arts and Crafts style.
- P0069 *Vancouver Arts Centre Group* (registered) (1887) George Temple Poole, also in Federation Arts and Crafts style.

None of these places were constructed as offices.

Law Offices (fmr), Albany is an excellent representative example of the commercial buildings that were constructed in central Albany in the 1880s and 1890s as the town expanded. It is a rare example of a Federation Free Classical design style office building in Albany.

SGIO

While the SGIO decided to purchase *Law Offices (fmr), Albany* for its offices at Albany as 'the most suitable building available for this purpose' that fulfilled its criterion in regard to having architectural and historical significance, photographs show the premises utilised for its offices at Bunbury, Kalgoorlie and Karratha in 1982, were all modern buildings, and when it was decided to open a branch office at Geraldton, SGIO purchased a property at the corner of Chapman Road and Cathedral Avenue, where their new building was completed in 1985.⁵⁸

Law Offices (fmr), Albany is an unusual example of the SGIO utilising nineteenth century premises for its offices in the 1980s.

Architect: Robert Greenshields

The SHO database lists three other places noted as designed by Robert Greenshields:

- P00053 *Rotunda*, Queens Gardens, Albany (1898, RHP)
- P15516 House, 14 Parade Street, Albany (1897)
- P15549 *Commercial Building*, 96-102 Stirling Terrace, Albany (1890-1911, RHP)

Little information about Greenshields has been gathered to date. It appears he worked from Albany in the Federation era. He was also town clerk in Albany in the 1890s.⁵⁹ *Law Offices (fmr), Albany* demonstrates a commitment to local businesses in the 1890s, being designed and built by local firms, for the use of a local legal practice.

13.4 KEY REFERENCES

No key references

13.5 FURTHER RESEARCH

Further research may reveal additional information about the place, including use of the name York House and signage indicated, but not detailed, on the 1981 plans.

⁵⁸ Annual Reports, SGIO, 1982-86.

⁵⁹ Various items held at Albany History Collection, http://history.albany.wa.gov.au/index.php?option=com_search&Itemid=5 (items not viewed; listings only)