



REGISTER OF HERITAGE PLACES - ASSESSMENT DOCUMENTATION

11. ASSESSMENT OF CULTURAL HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

The criteria adopted by the Heritage Council in September, 1991 have been used to determine the cultural heritage significance of the place.

11.1 AESTHETIC VALUE

The majority of buildings have been built using similar materials and embellishing details which create an architectural harmony and unity within the place. (Criterion 1.2)

Although the school buildings do not contribute to the overall quality of the adjacent commercial streetscape that has developed on Albany Highway, they do contribute to the residential character of Cargill Street and the neighbourhood. The open playing fields on the western side of the school (fronting onto Geddes Street) form part of a green band which is repeated by the playground of the Catholic School further south and ultimately by Raphael Park (on the western side of Geddes Street), south of Victoria Park School. (Criterion 1.4)

11.2. HISTORIC VALUE

Victoria Park Primary School was the first school built for the Education Department in the developing suburb of Victoria Park. (Criterion 2.2)

The alterations to the interiors of the buildings reflect the changes in teaching methods and the social structures of schools over time. (Criterion 2.2)

The demonstrates the historical development of school buildings constructed by the Public Works Department (PWD). The earliest buildings represent the phase when the PWD was so overwhelmed by the demand for new schools and other public buildings, that often private architects were used for some projects, to the latest architectural style. (Criterion 2.4)

The incomplete appearance of Building A displays the Department's practise, in the early twentieth century, of making government buildings adaptable for future extensions. (Criterion 2.4)

11.3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE

Buildings A, B and C, within the school complex, have the potential to yield archaeological material from the sub-floor deposits. (Criterion 3.2)

11.4. SOCIAL VALUE

As the first school in the suburb of Victoria Park, the place has played a major role in community life. The place continues to be valued by the broader community as a venue for educational and community activities. (Criterion 4.1)

The continual provision of education at *Victoria Park Primary School* since the establishment of the suburb in the 1890s contributes strongly to a sense of place in Victoria Park. In addition to the primary school students who attended the place, *Victoria Park Primary School* also has social value for students who attended the post-primary classes at the school in the 1940s. (Criteria 4.1 & 4.2)

The mature trees in nearby Raphael Park, which is used by the primary school students and the general community as a sports and recreational field were planted by students from *Victoria Park Primary School*. The trees contribute to the sense of place of the area and reinforce the connection between the primary school and the local community. (Criterion 4.2)

12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE

12.1. RARITY

Victoria Park Primary School is a rare example of a two storey suburban school building. (Criterion 5.1)

12.2 REPRESENTATIVENESS

Victoria Park Primary School is representative of the architectural design of various government architects. The buildings are similar in design and demonstrate similar stylistic details to other school buildings constructed in the metropolitan area during the 1890s - 1930s. (Criterion 6.2)

Victoria Park Primary School is representative of school buildings specifically designed so they could be added to and altered over a period of time in order to accommodate the changing demands of student numbers and teaching methods. (Criterion 6.2)

12.3 CONDITION

Building A displays evidence of rising damp on portions of the western, northern and southern walls, which has caused fretting to the brick faces. There is some minor cracking in the north east corner of the porch.

Building C has some minor cracking on the northern facade (upper floor), where the 1925 section of the building was joined to the 1919 section.

Other buildings on site do not appear to have any obvious structural problems. *Victoria Park Primary School* is generally in sound condition.

12.4 INTEGRITY

All of the school buildings continue to be used for their original function. *Victoria Park Primary School* has a high degree of integrity.

12. 5 AUTHENTICITY

During the lifetime of the school, all of the buildings have been subjected to some alterations and additions. These alterations and additions reflect changes in the number of pupils and shifts in teaching practices.

Many of the alterations and additions, particularly those in the early development of the school, were anticipated in the architectural design and therefore can be seen as a positive feature of the evolution of the place.

The school buildings retain a high degree of authenticity.

13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

Gold was discovered in Western Australia in the 1880s and as the finds proved to be profitable, fortune seekers flocked to the State in vast numbers. The Gold Boom led to a population explosion in metropolitan Perth during the 1890s; Victoria Park, a new residential subdivision, south of the river, attracted many of these immigrants.

In 1893, petitions were sent to the Education Department, by the residents of Victoria Park, requesting the construction of a school for their children.¹ In 1894, the Department bought three residential blocks and commenced planning the new school. During the 1890s the Public Works Department (PWD) experienced considerable pressure in the design and construction of numerous public buildings (post offices, schools, police stations and so forth). To address the demand, the PWD often tendered out to private architects for the designs for such buildings. Therefore, it was a private architect, Clarence Wilkinson, who prepared the plans for a single, brick classroom, with verandah.

The school opened in July 1894 under the direction of Miss Elizabeth Julius; the new school was named *Victoria Park*.² Increased enrolments at Victoria Park necessitated the erection of a further classroom, in 1895, again designed by Clarence Wilkinson. In 1897, the two room school building was extended with the addition of two classrooms and a corridor.³ (Building A) In 1904, additional classroom space was required and it was decided that a separate building should be constructed for the use of the younger pupils. This was referred to as the Infants School.⁴ (Building B) The building was designed by the government architect, Hillson Beasley and completed in 1905. By 1906, overcrowding led to the construction of an additional room on the western side of the 1904 Infants School.

In 1910, a new lavatory was added on the northern side of Building A. In the same year that this room was added, complaints about the poor drainage of the site reached a point where both the Town Clerk and parents proposed moving the school to a new site.⁵ A compromise was reached by improving site drainage and inserting sub-floor vents in the building. In 1913, Beasley designed a further extension to the northern side of the Building A. The new rooms consisted of a classroom, hat room and lavatory. The old lavatory (1910) was converted into a teacher's room. The northern side of this extension featured a brick portico, while the eastern side (which was the corridor) was clad with weatherboards.

The plans which Beasley drew up in 1910 for the lavatory, indicate that later extensions were anticipated. When the additions were constructed in 1913, the Department further anticipated the future growth of the school and drew

¹ Education Department Correspondence files, E1204/93

² P. & C, *Victoria Park School 75 Years, Victoria Park School 1894 - 1969*, 1969, p.6.

³ Public Works Department. *Annual Report 1897*.

⁴ PWD Plan No. 11147, 2/12/04.

⁵ Education Department Correspondence file, 2888/13.

up provisional plans for future rooms on the eastern side of the new corridor, which explains the use of weatherboard cladding on the eastern side of the corridor. However, no further additions were made to Building A, although minor alterations to both the interior and exterior have been made.

In 1913, overcrowding continued to be a problem and the Department was forced to erect a tent to temporarily relieve the problem. The Department was financially unable to provide a new school room so the school hired a room in the Town Hall to temporarily assist with the overflow of students.⁶ The Town Hall was located nearby on the northern side of Albany Highway. Around the turn of the century, a new Town Hall was constructed on the southern side of Albany Highway, further to the east of the old Hall. The old Town Hall was later demolished.

During the First World War the school's accommodation problems were solved with the erection of three pavilion classrooms. This type of classroom was constructed from weatherboards and appears to have had sliding canvas shutters.⁷ Two classrooms were constructed in 1915 and another added in 1917. However, these classrooms provided only temporary relief and in 1919, two additional classrooms were added to the northern side of Infants School (Building B). This section became the Senior School (Building C). The pavilion classroom which had been erected close to the Infants School was removed.

Enrolments reached their peak in 1923, (692 pupils) and by 1924, two classes were being held in the Town Hall, another in a hat room and one class used the local Methodist Hall.⁸ The PWD proposed building a two storey addition on the northern side of the 1919 classroom block and additional classrooms above the 1919 classrooms to provide the school with four new classrooms. The building was designed by the chief government architect, William Hardwick, and the contract was let in two parts. Part one was completed in September 1924 and consisted of a double storey classroom block, with stairwell, constructed on the northern end of the 1919 block (Building C). Part two was completed in August 1925, and consisted of two classrooms built above the existing 1919 classrooms. The ground floor (1919) rooms were remodelled to the same specifications as the new upper storey rooms.

In 1926 weatherboard Pavilion 2, was relocated to Lake Gwelup.⁹ Pavilion 3 (Building D) remains on site, but was relocated in 1982.

During the 1920s, on Arbor Day, students planted trees in nearby Raphael Park. (The park is bounded by Geddes, Washington, Gloucester and Armagh Streets.) Many of these trees have survived until the present. Raphael Park is used by the local community and by *Victoria Park Primary School* for their yearly Sports Carnival.

In 1929, further improvements to the school comprised the installation of three new brick latrine blocks and a brick store shed. The senior girls and boys had their own separate toilet blocks (Buildings G & I), and the third

⁶ P. & C, p.16.

⁷ Education Department Correspondence file, 5171/14

⁸ P. & C, p.15.

⁹ *ibid*, p.16.

block was divided into two separate sections to accommodate infant girls and boys (Building H).

In 1935, the Manual Training Centre (Building E) was constructed at the school. This building was specifically constructed for manual training courses and was used by the Kent Street High School boys. Kent Street High School, (originally called Southern River High School and now called Kent Street Senior High School) was established circa 1942, and students from Victoria Park often went on to attend this high school. Kent Street Senior High School is located on the corner of Kent and Berwick Streets, due south of *Victoria Park Primary School*. The Manual Training Centre continued to operate from this purpose built room until 1969.

School enrolments at *Victoria Park Primary School* reached their peak during the 1920s and then began to decrease. In 1923, the number of pupils enrolled was 692, but by 1948 the number had dropped to 589. The decreasing enrolment numbers meant that classrooms were no longer overcrowded and spare classrooms were often used for high school classes. In 1942, Kent Street High School conducted several post primary classes at *Victoria Park Primary School* while the High School was being completed¹⁰. In the same year, the top three classrooms (Rooms 13, 14 and 15) were used by girls from Perth Girl's Central School. In 1948, there was a shortage of space at Kent Street High School and two classrooms at *Victoria Park Primary School* were used by the high school children. In 1950, 210 pupils from Kent Street High School were using classrooms at *Victoria Park Primary School*. In that year, there were 402 primary school children enrolled at *Victoria Park Primary School*. In 1966, Kent Street High School was again short of space and used the top three classrooms at *Victoria Park Primary School*. In 1967, the Manual Training Centre was used by post-primary children from Lathlain Park, pending the construction of a new high school at Kewdale.¹¹

In 1969, there were 313 children enrolled at *Victoria Park Primary School* and in the following year (1970), Pavilion 3 became vacant and the Parents and Citizens Association used the building for their meetings. In 1980, the building was renovated and became the Pre-Primary Centre. It was re-located to its present position in 1982. (Building D)

The Manual Training Centre (Building E) was slightly damaged by fire in 1974. The damage was restricted to the lean-to on the north west corner of the building. Discussions in the Education Department's correspondence files show that the Hall continued to be used, particularly by community groups in the evenings.¹² The building was repaired and in 1984 re-located to its current position.

In 1985, the Boys toilet (Building F) was extended on the southern side for the use of the Pre-Primary children.

In 1991, a new Covered Assembly area was constructed. The building is used for School Assemblies, and various school activities. The position of this new building meant that the tower holding the school bell had to be demolished and rebuilt in its present location.

¹⁰ *ibid*, p.19.

¹¹ Education Department Correspondence file, F1496/52.

¹² Education Department Correspondence file, F0216/75.

Today, the place continues to be used as a primary school, with students from a broad mix of ethnic groups. (When the school was first established, the majority of the children were of Anglo-Celtic extraction.) The school is used by the community as a polling place during federal, state and local elections.

13.2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

Victoria Park Primary School is located within a commercial and residential precinct, at the northern end of the commercial zone along Albany Highway. It marks the northern boundary of the residential precinct found behind Albany Highway. There are nine buildings on the site which make up *Victoria Park Primary School*. They form a unified collection of buildings, constructed at different times, and display a range of building styles that were common, not only to education facilities developed in Western Australia in the early - mid twentieth century, but also to other public buildings. The school buildings are located on the northern and western perimeters of the site, with a large open playing area on the south western perimeter. The site also has a number a mature trees, peppermints, lombardy poplars and several species of gum trees.

Old School Building (Building A)

The Old School Building is comprised of clusters of rooms added over the period 1894 to 1913. It is a single storey brick building with a hip and gable roof covered with corrugated galvanised iron. The building has retained five chimney stacks which have rendered mouldings at the top and bottom of the stack. The building sits on a brick plinth at the northern end of the western elevation and on the northern elevation (1913 addition). The northern elevation has a formal brick porch with recessed brick quoins. The eaves are open slatted and are supported on the western side with heavy wooden brackets. The gable ends feature semi-circular timber, slatted ventilators. The western portion of the roof is carried down over the double hung sash windows to form a pair of awnings which are decorated with a saw-toothed valance.

The hopper windows on the gable end of the eastern wing are protected by an awning which is supported by turned timber brackets and decorated with a scalloped valance. The northern section of the eastern elevation is clad with zincalume sheeting. A weatherboard store-room is attached to the south side of Room 1. The external face of the north wall of Room 4 has been rendered.

The building has a 'L' shaped plan. The southern end has four rooms laid out around a central corridor, while the northern extension has rooms on one side of a corridor. The level of the building changes at the point where the corridor was extended to the north and access to the northern end of the corridor is via two steps. Encapsulated within the building is the earliest school room; however the exact location of this room is unclear.

Rooms 1 & 2 and 3 & 4 have had their common walls removed to create two large classrooms. The interior walls are all covered with plaster and painted white. The floors are covered with carpet, except room 7a which has exposed timber floor boards. The coved ceilings in rooms 1 and 2 and the southern section of the corridor are tongued and grooved boards.

The remaining rooms have fibrous plaster ceilings. Rooms 1, 2, 3 and 4 have metal tie-rods running across the centre of the room at top-plate height. Exterior windows are double-hung with the exception of hopper windows in Rooms 3 and 4. Rooms 1, 2, 3 and 4 have windows opening onto the corridor. These double windows pivot open from a central hinge. All the classrooms have fireplaces. None have mantle pieces and the fireboxes have been bricked up. The windows to Rooms 1, 2, 7 and 8 have had sun screens installed. In 1929, the shingle roof was replaced with corrugated galvanised iron. In 1993, the northern wall of Room 3 was re-built and rendered due to instability.

Infants School (Building B)

The Infants School is a single storey brick building with corrugated galvanised iron gable roof and a verandah on the western side. The verandah has been enclosed with fibrous cement sheeting. The verandah floor is timber boards. The interior has rendered walls, a vermiculite finish to the ceiling in what was formerly Room 5 and plaster ceiling to Room 6 (staff room), double-hung windows and a mixture of joinery styles for door architraves. Both fireplaces have been bricked in.

In 1919, the Senior School was added to the northern side of the Infants School. This section is discussed below. In the 1980s, Rooms 5 and 6 and the adjacent corridor ceased to be used as classrooms and became the administration centre of the school. The partition wall between Rooms 5a and 5b was removed together with the northern wall of Room 5 and new walls were inserted to create the Principal's Office, outer Office, Sick Room and photocopy area. Room 6 became the Staff Room.

Senior School (Building C)

The Senior School Building is a two storey brick addition with an entry porch to the Infants School. It is of a similar style to the earlier building. The first stage was constructed, in 1919, and consisted of Rooms 10 and 11. In 1924, Rooms 12, 15 and the stairwell were added, and in 1925, Rooms 13 and 14 were constructed. The gable roof is clad with corrugated galvanised iron and the eaves are open slatted. The lintels and string courses are cement render. Unlike the Old School building, the chimney stacks have no rendered mouldings; however, the plain brickwork is embellished with a brick string course and corbelling to the top of the stack. Classrooms on the ground and first floors open onto a verandah area. The floor of the verandah at ground level is cement, while that on the first floor is timber tongued and grooved boards. Hopper windows are used in the classrooms, while double-hung sash windows are used in the stairwell and in the first floor store room. There is a modern concrete fire escape stair on the western exterior side of the verandah. This was added to the building in 1966. The original internal stair access at the northern end of the building remains together with the original wooden staircase. The interior finish in all the classrooms is the same: rendered walls painted white. The ceilings are plaster sheets with cover battens. The floors are carpeted.

Pre-Primary Building (Building D)

The Pre-Primary Building is a timber framed building clad with weatherboard and fibrous cement sheets. The gable roof is clad with corrugated galvanised iron. The roof line extends down on the northern side to form the verandah roof. The eaves are open slated over the gable end. The interior walls are clad with fibrous plaster. The coved ceiling is clad with timber boards. The timber floor is partially covered with carpet and vinyl sheet. The building has been extended at the eastern end; construction of this section is the same as the rest of the building. The verandah roof has been extended on the western side to the roof line of Building H (toilet block). The pre-primary building and play area is surrounded by a cyclone fence.

The building was erected in 1917, and originally had sliding canvas shutters for windows. At some time the original shutters have been removed and the

roof-line extended to form a verandah. In 1982, the building was re-located to its present position. In 1993, the building was extended at the eastern end.

Manual Training Centre (Building E)

The Manual Training Centre is a timber framed building clad with weatherboards. The gable roof is clad with corrugated galvanised iron. The building was erected in 1935. On the north west corner is a lean-to section clad with fibrous cement sheeting. This section replaces the original weatherboard lean-to which was damaged by fire in 1974. The interior walls are clad with timber boards and the ceiling is gyprock plaster boards with a simple concave cornice. Struts descend through the ceiling to about one metre below the cornice. The windows are double-hung sash windows. The floor is timber boards. The building was moved to its current location in 1984.

Toilet Blocks (Buildings F, G and H)

The three toilet blocks are all of brick construction with corrugated galvanised roofs. The floors are concrete and the windows are louvred in a timber frame. The toilets were constructed in 1929, although Building F has been extended, on the southern side, to provide extra toilet facilities for the pre-primary children. The construction of the extension is the same as the earlier portion, the only difference being that the floor is tiled. The older section (which is not accessible to the pre-primaries) appears to be unused.

Store (Building I)

The Store is of brick construction with a clay tile roof (Marseilles pattern), concrete floor, double-hung sash windows and timber doors. The interior space has been divided into two rooms. The building was constructed in 1929.

Covered Assembly Area (Building J)

The Covered Assembly Area is of brick construction with a zincalume roof. The structure is open on two sides with a weatherboard toilet incorporated on one of the enclosed sides. The floor is concrete. The building was constructed in 1991.

13.3 REFERENCES

Education Department Correspondence Files: E1204/93, 2888/13, 5171/14, F0216/75 and F1496/52.

Parents and Citizens Association of Victoria Park Primary School, *75 Years, Victoria Park School 1894 - 1969*, (Victoria Park Primary School, 1969.)

Public Works Department, *Annual Report*, 1897.