HERITAGE COUNCIL OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

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*

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11. 2. HISTORIC VALUE

Halls Creek Trackers' Hut symbolises tracking skills and provides testimony to both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people of the value of the trackers' work. The place is a physical reminder of a period in which the specialised skills of Aboriginal trackers were crucial for successful policing during European expansion into remote areas of Australia. The provision of accommodation for the trackers is one line of evidence that the skills provided by the trackers were highly valued by the police. (Criterion 2.2)

11. 3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE

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11. 4. SOCIAL VALUE

Halls Creek Trackers' Hut is highly valued by the Aboriginal community of Halls Creek as physical evidence of the past importance of Aboriginal trackers. The retention of the building is supported by the Aboriginal Cultural Materials Committee and the Hon. Minister for Aboriginal Affairs. (Criterion 4.1)

12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE

12. 1. RARITY

Halls Creek Trackers' Hut is one of only two tracker's huts remaining in the State (the other is at Fitzroy Crossing) and demonstrates a way of life no longer practised. (Criteria 5.1 & 5.2)

12. 2 REPRESENTATIVENESS

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12. 3 CONDITION

In general, the exterior of the hut is in fair condition although there is some notable damage. The greatest damage is on the western wall which has a large gaping hole produced by the removal of an outside wood stove. This stove was accidentally removed by a bulldozer when the area was cleared during the recent relocation of the Police Station's Lock Up. A wooden beam which once supported a small lean to covering the oven remains. Smoke stains surround the area.

On the eastern wall the barge board above the wood oven flue is burnt which may have been the reason why the inside oven was removed. There is also evidence of termite activity on the barge board to the north of this burnt area.

The guttering is in poor condition.

There is graffiti on most flat surfaces, especially the metal of the wood stove surrounds. Most of the graffiti on the stove surrounds dates to the late 1970s and 1980s. The earliest readable graffiti on the building dates to 1973.

12. 4 INTEGRITY

Halls Creek Trackers' Hut has a high degree of integrity. Although the building was used for 'trustee prisoners' from about 1975 and is currently vacant, its original intention remains obvious and is well-known locally.

12. 5 AUTHENTICITY

Halls Creek Trackers' Hut has a high degree of authenticity. Although there have been minor alterations and changes, the original fabric of the building is largely intact.

13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

Attached are key sections of the supporting evidence prepared by Dr Sandy Toussaint and Dr Jane Balme of the Department of Anthropology, University of Western Australia: 'An Anthropological, Archaeological and Historical Assessment of the Significance of the Halls Creek Aboriginal Trackers' Hut' (prepared for Darryl Way & Associates Pty. Ltd. Architects, September 1996).

13. 1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

For a discussion of the documentary evidence refer to Dr Sandy Toussaint and Dr Jane Balme of the Department of Anthropology, University of Western Australia: 'An Anthropological, Archaeological and Historical Assessment of the Significance of the Halls Creek Aboriginal Trackers' Hut' (prepared for Darryl Way & Associates Pty. Ltd. Architects, September 1996).

13. 2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

For a discussion of the physical evidence refer to Dr Sandy Toussaint and Dr Jane Balme of the Department of Anthropology, University of Western Australia: 'An Anthropological, Archaeological and Historical Assessment of the Significance of the Halls Creek Aboriginal Trackers' Hut' (prepared for Darryl Way & Associates Pty. Ltd. Architects, September 1996).

13. 3 REFERENCES

Dr Sandy Toussaint and Dr Jane Balme of the Department of Anthropology, University of Western Australia: 'An Anthropological, Archaeological and Historical Assessment of the Significance of the Halls Creek Aboriginal Trackers' Hut' (prepared for Darryl Way & Associates Pty. Ltd. Architects, September 1996).

Note: An interview with Dr Jane Balme revealed that searches for source material for this assessment were conducted in the UWA Library and the Battye Library. The Police Librarian also undertook a search for relevant police files. Searches of PWD plans have been undertaken by BMA staff to establish whether other trackers' huts exist. Dr Cathie Clement, a member of the Police Historical Society and a recognised expert on Kimberley district history, has also been consulted. *Halls Creek Trackers' Hut* is known to have been purpose built. It has not been possible to establish whether this was the case with the example surviving at Fitzroy Crossing.