



## 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.

#### PRINCIPAL AUSTRALIAN HISTORIC THEME(S)

- 7.5.1 Developing local government authorities

#### HERITAGE COUNCIL OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA THEME(S)

- 401 Government and politics
- 408 Institutions

#### 11.1 AESTHETIC VALUE\*

*Katanning Town Hall Buildings* have aesthetic value as a rich overlay of building design through time. The Inter-War Chicagoesque style additions that completed the inter-war construction has a particularly strong visual presence, notwithstanding the loss of detail such as verandahs and original joinery. The interiors of the main auditorium, the elements of the Agricultural Hall (1897) and the Mechanics' Institute (1907) all contribute to the strong aesthetic values of the place. Both halls are particularly important for their strong aesthetic values. The work completed after World War II set up a new aesthetic and relationship with the street and the plain elements from the International style used in their design provide less visual interest than the Federation period and Inter-war buildings. (Criterion 1.1)

The spatial qualities and the finishes of the Agricultural Hall (1897) and its extensions and the Town Hall Auditorium, together with the first floor offices of the Town Hall have high aesthetic value and are fine examples of the work of Herbert J. Eales of Oldham and Eales Architects. (Criterion 1.1)

The collective achievement of the elements of *Katanning Town Hall Buildings* is that of a peculiar blend of stylistic elements and materials. The finest elements are those that were achieved prior to World War II. There is no evidence to suggest that the design work was of exceptional creative distinction, rather the evidence suggests a series of fine elements, melded into one another as the complex developed. (Criterion 1.2)

---

\* 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.

The centre of Katanning is characterised by many fine buildings. The core is centred about Clive Street and Austral Terrace, of which both streets present fine vistas and include important buildings from the Federation and Inter-war periods. *Katanning Town Hall Buildings* makes a significant contribution to the streetscape and the vistas in the town. Its imposing size and length make it one of the town's landmarks. (Criterion 1.3)

*Katanning Town Hall Buildings* is an integral part of the Austral Terrace and Clive Street streetscapes and make a very significant contribution to these streetscapes. (Criterion 1.4)

## 11. 2. HISTORIC VALUE

*Katanning Town Hall Buildings*, incorporating the Agricultural Hall, Mechanics' Institute, the Town Hall and the Shire Offices, are a significant historic marker that represents the stages of development of the Shire of Katanning, from its early dominant agricultural community through to the townspeople and also the local governing authority. (Criterion 2.1)

*Katanning Town Hall Buildings* demonstrate the importance of the agricultural, town, institutional (mechanics) and civic base of the region, and the tensions between these groups with the gradual changes made to the buildings to cope with the development of Katanning into a thriving town and the centre of the Great Southern Region. (Criterion 2.1)

The original Agricultural Hall, built in 1897, which became the Mechanics' Institute and now forms part of *Katanning Town Hall Buildings*, was one of the first public buildings to be built in Katanning. (Criterion 2.2)

*Katanning Town Hall Buildings* are associated with people of such standing within Katanning and the wider context of the State, such as Frederick and Charles Piesse, Herbert J. Eales of Oldham and Eales Architects, Alexander Thompson and George Thompson. (Criterion 2.3)

## 11. 3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE

-----

## 11. 4. SOCIAL VALUE

*Katanning Town Hall Buildings* have social value as the centre for many important institutions in Katanning, such as the Agricultural Hall Committee (representing the interests of the agricultural community), the Mechanics' Institute and the Shire of Katanning, as well as providing an important social and cultural venue for the general community. (Criterion 4.1)

*Katanning Town Hall Buildings* have social value for their role in contributing to the education of working people in Katanning, and later the wider community by fulfilling the role of the town's lending library. The complex continues to fulfil the latter role as the Shire's Library. (Criterion 4.1)

*Katanning Town Hall Buildings*, the first building constructed in 1896, contributes to the community's sense of place, having continuously been the cultural and civic centre of Katanning since 1896. (Criterion 4.2)

## **12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE**

### **12.1. RARITY**

*Katanning Town Hall Buildings* have rarity value for the completeness, authenticity and fitting out that remains from its earliest campaigns. (Criterion 5.1)

The Mechanics' Institute, which is part of the *Katanning Town Hall Buildings*, more than any other part of the complex, represents a way of life that is now comparatively rare, as mechanics' institutes have generally been replaced by the public library system, and their social function has all but disappeared along with the buildings. (Criterion 5.2)

### **12.2 REPRESENTATIVENESS**

*Katanning Town Hall Buildings* are representative of growing confidence in a substantial country town, the development of its institutions and of a line of continuous growth to the present day. It is also representative of the development of local government for a substantial regional town in Western Australia. Although reflecting growth and prosperity, it is also a demonstration of how places are retained and adapted throughout their long lives in rural Western Australia. (Criterion 6.2)

### **12.3 CONDITION**

The areas of the buildings that are most used are in the best condition. Areas such as the space between buildings have been neglected and accommodation that is not in use has not received basic maintenance in some time. There are a number of issues that are historic and relate to poor construction practices and others to do with poor cumulative maintenance. Examples of the latter include the accretion of levels and the rendering of friable brickwork. There are also instances of finishes being painted, where the original intent was the element to remain unfinished or clear finished. There is also a problem of pigeon infestation that is accelerating deterioration in some local instances. The Mechanics' Institute has the most serious defects, though many of these are now being included in a conservation program. Overall, the place is in fair to good condition.

### **12.4 INTEGRITY**

Most of the spaces at *Katanning Town Hall Buildings* are being used for near original purposes. The upper level of the Town Hall is still used for offices, though the Shire's administration and formal functions have been relocated away from the original chambers and offices. The library has changed and evolved since the Mechanics' Institute days and is about to be relocated to a new building. The Mechanics' Institute itself remains in use for its intended purpose. Overall, the place retains a moderate to high degree of integrity.

### **12.5 AUTHENTICITY**

By and large, the changes to *Katanning Town Hall Buildings* have been a cumulative addition process and minor subtractive processes. Some internal detail has been lost, such as the Austral Terrace rooms of the Mechanics' Institute rooms, and the auditorium enshrouded by later development. The external elevations have had sequential changes related to the various phases of development and growth and tell the story of the historic continuum. The

degree of authenticity of the exterior is high and that of the interior is moderate to low.

### **13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE**

Attached are key sections of the supporting evidence prepared by Considine and Griffiths Architects Pty Ltd, with Helen Burgess, Historian, 'Katanning Town Hall Buildings Conservation Plan' for the Shire of Katanning in November 1999.

#### **13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE**

For a discussion of the Documentary Evidence refer to Considine and Griffiths Architects Pty Ltd, with Helen Burgess, Historian, 'Katanning Town Hall Buildings Conservation Plan' for the Shire of Katanning in November 1999.

#### **13.2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE**

For a discussion of the Physical Evidence refer to Considine and Griffiths Architects Pty Ltd, with Helen Burgess, Historian, 'Katanning Town Hall Buildings Conservation Plan' for the Shire of Katanning in November 1999.

#### **13.3 COMPARATIVE INFORMATION**

For a Comparative Analysis refer to Considine and Griffiths Architects Pty Ltd, with Helen Burgess, Historian, 'Katanning Town Hall Buildings Conservation Plan' for the Shire of Katanning in November 1999.

#### **13.4 REFERENCES**

Considine and Griffiths Architects Pty Ltd, with Helen Burgess, Historian, 'Katanning Town Hall Buildings Conservation Plan' for the Shire of Katanning in November 1999.

#### **13.5 FURTHER RESEARCH**

-----