



**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)**

- 3.8.8 Getting fuel to engines
- 7.6.11 Conserving economically valuable resources
- 7.7 Defending Australia

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

- 108 Government Policy
- 310 Manufacturing and Processing
- 501 World Wars and other wars
- 505 Markets

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

*Albany Seaboard Bulk Fuel Oil Depot* demonstrates the role of Pool Petroleum Pty Ltd, a government-directed common brand that subsumed the individual oil companies as part of the government need for efficiency during World War II.

*Albany Seaboard Bulk Fuel Oil Depot* demonstrates the local, state and national reaction and debate to fuel rationing during the World War II and in the years after the global conflict ended.

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

*Albany Seaboard Bulk Fuel Oil Depot* is a rare demonstration of the scale and operation of rationing during World War II, and is exceptionally rare as a site that demonstrates fuel rationing during this time.

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

*Albany Seaboard Bulk Fuel Oil Depot* is in a partially ruinous state with no subsequent development at the site, and is considered to have a moderate archaeological potential to provide information on the construction and operation of oil depots from the mid twentieth century.

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

Although in a partially ruinous state, *Albany Seaboard Bulk Fuel Oil Depot* still demonstrates the broad characteristics of a bulk fuel oil depot site, and is still recognisable as such.

**11(f)<sup>1</sup> Its importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics valued by any group or community;**

*Albany Seaboard Bulk Fuel Oil Depot* is valued by the local community as a reminder of the regions' wartime history, and has in more recent times become valued as a site where modern artists have created extensive murals inside the tank walls.

**12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE**

**12.1 CONDITION**

*Albany Seaboard Bulk Fuel Oil Depot* is in poor condition, the site being abandoned for decades and currently in a partially ruinous state. Given the abandonment of this site, there is considered to be a moderate archaeological potential for surface or sub-surface material that may provide more information into how the site operated.

**12.2 INTEGRITY**

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

*Albany Seaboard Bulk Fuel Oil Depot*, although partially ruinous, still contains a significant proportion of its original fabric, although the tank roofs, some steel tank linings, portions of the tank walls, and sections of the original pipework have been lost. Overall, the site has moderate integrity.

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<sup>1</sup> 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.

### **12.3 AUTHENTICITY**

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

*Albany Seaboard Bulk Fuel Oil Depot* is still recognisable as a bulk liquid storage site, however the operation of the site is no longer evident due to the removal of original pipework. However, no new uses have overlain the remaining original features. Overall, the site has moderate authenticity.

### 13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

The documentation for this place is based on the heritage assessment completed by the Department, with the physical evidence provided by Archae-Aus, in April 2020, with amendments and/or additions by the Heritage Council and the Department.

#### 13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

*Albany Seaboard Bulk Fuel Oil Depot* (c.1942), is a former industrial site on the western slopes of Mount Melville, which includes the substantial remains of seven large reinforced concrete steel-lined Tank, fuel tank footings, Foam House and water reservoir.

The Albany region is the traditional land of the *Minang* people, part of the larger Noongar language group of the south-western portion of the State. The Minang consisted of small extended family groups who moved between Jarrah forests and the southern coast in response to seasonal resource change, activities which included the construction of substantial fish traps.<sup>2</sup> This way of life began to be disturbed after the arrival of various European exploration groups and the establishment of a British outpost at King George's Sound in 1826.

As the most significant early port servicing the settlements at King George's Sound and along the Swan River after 1829, the Albany region was of logistical importance. It continued to slowly grow over the remainder of the nineteenth century<sup>3</sup> and during this time the area around Mount Melville became a popular recreation area, along with limited logging occurring around the turn of the century, and quarrying in the early twentieth century.<sup>4</sup>

With the outbreak of World War II in 1939, Albany became a significant military centre. Albany had been identified as a defensive position since 1888, with a garrison and gun emplacement installed at Mount Adelaide, overlooking the harbour, by 1893.<sup>5</sup> During World War I, Albany was the departure point for troop ships carrying ANZAC soldiers to the war in Europe, with many of these soldiers diverted to Egypt and then Gallipoli.<sup>6</sup>

After World War I ended, the garrison at Albany was decommissioned, however it was reinstated in 1925. By the end of the 1930s, Albany was once more began preparing for conflict.<sup>7</sup>

On 1 September 1939, Germany invaded Poland, having completed secret negotiations with the Soviet Union to split the captured territory between them.

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<sup>2</sup> 'Wagyl Kaip and Southern Noongar', *Kaartdijin Noongar – Noongar Knowledge* website, accessed 22 June 2020; <https://www.noongarculture.org.au/wagyl-kaip-timeline/>; Pearce, R, 'Archaeological Sites in Jarrah Forest, Southwest Australia', *Australian Archaeology*, vol. 14, 1982, pp. 18-24

<sup>3</sup> Garden, D, *Albany: A Panorama of the Sound from 1827*, Thomas Nelson (Australia) Ltd, 1977, pp. 13-14, 45-47, 86-89, 116-120, 134-135, 181, 218-219, 231-237; 'History', *City of Albany* website, accessed 22 June 2020, <https://www.albany.wa.gov.au/facilities/about-albany/history.aspx>

<sup>4</sup> P15335 Mount Melville (LHS), Preliminary Review, 30 August 2002

<sup>5</sup> See assessment documentation, P26 *Albany Forts* (RHP)

<sup>6</sup> 'First convoy of Australian troops in World War I, *Anzac Portal* website, accessed 26 October 2020, <https://anzacportal.dva.gov.au/wars-and-missions/ww1/where-australians-served/first-convoy>

<sup>7</sup> See assessment documentation, P26 *Albany Forts* (RHP); 'Acting prime Minister: Visit to Albany', *The Albany Advertiser*, 1 July 1935, p. 6; 'Defending Australia', *Mount Barker and Denmark Record*, 15 June 1936, p. 2; 'Albany – Naval Base', *Mount Barker and Denmark Record*, 15 July 1937, p. 2; 'Defence Policy: Attention to Albany', *The Albany Advertiser*, 28 March 1938, p. 1

Poland was allied with Britain and France, who declared war against Germany two days later. Australia, as a member of the British Commonwealth, declared war on Germany the same day, Prime Minister Robert Menzies stating “No harder task can fall to the lot of a democratic leader than to make such an announcement.”<sup>8</sup>

The Australian Parliament acted immediately, and by the 9<sup>th</sup> of September had passed the *National Security Act 1939*, which granted the federal government and Governor-General the power “to make regulations for securing the public safety and the defence of the Commonwealth and Territories of the Commonwealth,” including “proscribing the conditions (including the times, places and prices) of the disposal or use of any property, goods, articles or things of any kind.”<sup>9</sup>

One of the immediate concerns for Australia’s new war footing was the supply of fuel oil. The question of fuel rationing was considered in September 1939 by the Minister for Supply and Development, Richard Casey, however the government hoped to avoid rationing, urging motorists to practice fuel economy and avoid needless consumption.<sup>10</sup> In Albany, local mills found themselves rushing to fill war-related government orders, as well as raising funds and soldiers for the war effort.<sup>11</sup> Local papers also urged being careful with fuel use or considering the use of a gas producer.<sup>12</sup>

By June 1940, Britain was experiencing air raids and France had surrendered to Germany, and the Australian government grew more concerned about maintaining fuel security.<sup>13</sup> At the end of this month, Federal Minister for supply, Sir Frederick Stewart, proposed pooling domestic petroleum products in the Commonwealth. Under the scheme, private companies would cease individual trading, pooling storage and distribution facilities under a common brand, which would avoid double handling in terms of labour and distribution.<sup>14</sup>

In the first week of July, the *National Security (Liquid Fuel) Regulations* were released, beginning government control and rationing of petroleum.<sup>15</sup> Applications forms for “motor spirit consumer’s licences” under Commonwealth petrol rationing were soon released, with a complete set of fuel rationing regulations available by the end of July. Rationing tickets were made available through Post Offices. Fuel hoarding was discouraged, with government officials now empowered to inspect

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- 8 'World War II 1939-1945', *Britannica* website, accessed 23 October 2020, <https://www.britannica.com/event/World-War-II>; 'Australia and the Second World War: Australia at War (3 September 1939)', *Anzac Portal* website, accessed 23 October 2020, <https://anzacportal.dva.gov.au/wars-and-missions/world-war-ii-1939-1945/australia-and-second-world-war>
- 9 *National Security Act 1939*, section 5; Australian Government Federal Register of Legislation, accessed 23 October 2020, <https://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/C1939A00015>
- 10 'Motor Industry will play big part in War', *Sunday Times*, 17 September 1939, p. 18
- 11 'War Makes Mills Busy', *The Daily News*, 5 October 1939, p. 5; 'Second AIF: Albany Contingent', *The Albany Advertiser*, 9 November 1939, p. 1; 'War Funds Group Formed', *Mount Barker and Denmark Record*, 14 September 1939, p. 3
- 12 'Motors Motorists', *The Albany Advertiser*, 21 September 1939, p. 4; 'Motoring On Coal Gas', *The Albany Advertiser*, 4 September 1939, p. 2
- 13 Froude, L, 'Petrol Rationing in Australia during the Second World War', *Journal of the Australian War Memorial*, issue 36, accessed 26 October 2020, <https://www.awm.gov.au/articles/journal/j36/petrol>
- 14 'Petroleum Products: Pooling Plan Announced', *Kalgoorlie Miner*, 29 June 1940, p. 4; 'Pool Petroleum Products: Agreement with Oil Companies', *Examiner*, 29 June 1940, p. 7
- 15 'Notification of the Making of Regulations', *Commonwealth of Australia Gazette*, Issue 127 6 July 1940, p. 1443

fuel storage and issue fines.<sup>16</sup> Advertisements selling “engine conditioner” that made engines more fuel efficient sprang up within the next few weeks.<sup>17</sup>

The government also held conferences with oil importers regarding fuel rationing, offering the individual companies the option to either form a cartel (where each company was given a designated trade area to avoid double handling) or sign up to the pooling scheme. The importers chose the cartel option.<sup>18</sup>

In Albany, the local council reacted to fuel rationing by banning sale of petrol from kerbside pumps, which was protested by local garages until the matter was quietly dropped.<sup>19</sup> Local newspapers also circulated advice on cutting down fuel consumption.<sup>20</sup>

There was soon a state backlash against fuel rationing, with Western Australians concerned that the Commonwealth Liquid Fuel Control Board (which would be organising the rationing) did not take into account the higher distances and fuel needs of the state’s primary industries. These protests were echoed by the State Premier and by the State Liquid Fuel Control Board.<sup>21</sup>

In November that year, an oil cartel was created in Victoria between the larger oil companies which, in exchange for agreeing to work with the government on effective use of storage and distribution, would receive a bonus payment for importing and storing enough fuel to last three months.<sup>22</sup>

By June 1941, it was clear that fuel rationing was not producing the desired cuts in fuel consumption or the improvement in national fuel stocks.<sup>23</sup> As petrol for private and business use became scarce and expensive, the petrol pooling scheme was once again raised as a solution to cut overheads through a bulk handling approach.<sup>24</sup> The oil cartel was under public fire at this point, with the private companies failing to bring in as much fuel as they had promised.<sup>25</sup> Exasperated, the Federal Cabinet reacted by issuing the *National Security (Liquid Fuel Bulk Supply) Regulations* in July 1941, supplanting the cartel, giving government the power over the import and storage quotas of the oil companies.<sup>26</sup>

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- 16 'Petrol Ration Cards Soon', *The Daily News*, 1 July 1940, p. 12; 'Petrol Rationing Procedure', *Fremantle Advocate*, 25 July 1940, p. 4
- 17 'Fuel Rationing and Producer Gas: A Few Tips', *The Daily News*, 13 July 1940, p. 3
- 18 'Liquid Fuel: Storage of Reserves', *The Age*, 5 July 1940, p. 8; 'Pooling of Petroleum Products', *morning Bulletin*, 4 July 1940, p. 5; 'Cheaper Petrol Through Pooling Plan: Minister's Hope', *The Telegraph* 29 June 1940, p. 4; 'Petrol Pool Not Welcome: Companies Propose Cartel', *Recorder*, 4 July 1940, p. 1
- 19 'Albany Municipal Council', *The Albany Advertiser*, 13 June 1940, p. 3; 'Albany Municipal Council', *The Albany Advertiser*, 11 July 1940, p. 4; 'Council Meeting', *The Albany Advertiser*, 12 December 1940, p. 5
- 20 'Petrol Savings: Hints for Drivers', *The Albany Advertiser*, 15 August 1940, p. 4
- 21 'No Proper Representation on Petrol Rationing Body', *Sunday Times*, 14 July 1940, p. 3; 'Petrol Rationing: This State's Special Case', *The West Australian*, p. 10; 'Petrol Rationing: Effect on Farmers. State Board Urges Review', *The West Australian*, p. 6
- 22 'Liquid Fuel Stocks: Cartel Set Up', *Tweed Daily*, 14 November 1940, p. 4;
- 23 Foude, *op cit*.
- 24 'Garage Men's Plight: Petrol Pool Advocated', *The West Australian*, 19 June 1941, p. 9
- 25 'Petrol Tanker Problem: Cartel Explains', *The Age*, 3 July 1941, p. 4;
- 26 'Control of Petrol: Government Supreme. Supplants Cartel', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 16 July 1941, p. 9; 'Fears Oil Cartel Will Persist', *The Daily Telegraph*, 20 August 1941, p. 5; 'Petrol Control: Replacing Oil Cartel', *The West Australian*, 1 August 1941, p. 6; 'Oil Cartel Not Functioning', *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miner's Advocate* 21 August 1941, p. 4; National Security (Liquid Fuel Bulk Supply) Regulations 1941, Federal Register of legislation website, accessed 22 October 2020, <https://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/C1941L00185>

Despite these measures, counterfeiting of fuel rationing tickets became rife, and by November 1941, the activity was made illegal under *National Security Act*.<sup>27</sup> In Albany, there was widespread public concern over the price of petrol, which was still rising rapidly due to the extra transport costs involved in shipping the fuel to the regional centre. Public calls were made for a standardisation of fuel prices to combat what was seen as an unfair advantage enjoyed by Perth and Fremantle.<sup>28</sup>

With the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour on 7 December 1941 and the fall of Singapore on 15 February 1942, the situation became even more dire. Fuel, crucial to the war effort of both the Americans and the Japanese, became a highly contested resource, which led to fewer oil tankers being available or capable of making the perilous voyage to Australia.<sup>29</sup> Two days after the fall of Singapore, Prime Minister John Curtin placed Australia on a Total War footing, suspending any enterprises that were not directly involved with the war effort.<sup>30</sup>

Within the next week, the Federal government issued new regulations giving the army direct control over all fuel sources in case of invasion, including the authority to create petrol pools.<sup>31</sup> In Albany the Local Liquid Fuel Control Board suggested all council vehicles should be fitted with gas producers, however the Council opted for a return to horse and cart as being more reliable and efficient.<sup>32</sup> The conversion of wheat alcohol into fuel for local consumption was also considered.<sup>33</sup>

New public calls were made for petrol pooling, and by March 1942 Canberra was once again in negotiation with oil importers on the subject.<sup>34</sup> In an attempt to allay the backlash over increased rationing, the State Liquid Fuel Control Board declared a 75% cut in fuel ration for essential services vehicles, insisting on the use of gas producers instead.<sup>35</sup> This was reflected at a national level, and by June more than 36,000 gas units had fitted across the country.<sup>36</sup>

After extended negotiations, in July the oil companies acceded to government demands, and the new brand Pool Petroleum Pty Ltd was announced “to comply with Government policy on the rationalisation of transport and economy of man-

27 'Illicit Petrol Tickets', *The West Australian*, 8 November 1940, p. 12

28 'Standard Price for Petrol', *Mount Barker and Denmark Record*, 3 November 1941, p. 2

29 'Remembering 1942: The Fall of Singapore', Australian War Memorial Website, accessed 23 October 2020, <https://www.awm.gov.au/articles/blog/1942-fall-of-singapore>; 'Oil Logistics in the Pacific War', *Air Force Journal of Logistics*, Vol 28, no 1, pp. 29-44, accessed 23 October 2020, <https://www.cc.gatech.edu/~tpilsch/INTA4803TP/Articles/Oil%20Logistics%20in%20the%20Pacific%20War=Donovan.pdf>

30 17 February 1942, *Diary of a Labor Man*, website accessed 23 October 2020, <http://john.curtin.edu.au/diary/primeminister/1942.html>; 'Mobilization of Services and Property', *Federal Parliament Hansard*, 'Cabinet Mobilises all Manpower and all Materials', *The Newcastle Sun*, 17 February 1942, p. 3

31 'Control over Petrol: Army to Have Power in Emergency', *Goulburn Evening Post*, 19 February 1942, p. 2; 'Air Raid; What to do in an', *Cobram Courier*, 4 March 1942, p. 1; National Security (Mobilization of Services and Property) Regulations, *Commonwealth of Australia Gazette*, Issue 55, 20 February, p. 471

32 'Back to the Horse', *The Albany Advertiser*, 12 February 1942, p. 1; 'Horse vs Motor: For Rubbish Removals', *The Albany Advertiser*, 18 May 1942, p. 3

33 'Wheat Restriction', *The Albany Advertiser*, 16 March 1942, p. 2

34 'Pooling of Petrol Urged', *The Telegraph*, 18 February 1942, p. 5; 'No Inconvenience from Pooled Petrol', *News*, 5 March 1942, p. 2; 'RAA News Bulletin', *The Narracoorte Herald*, 31 March 1942, p. 4

35 'Essential Vehicles: Big Cut in Petrol', *Geraldton Guardian and Express*, 9 May 1942, p. 3

36 'Producer Gas: 36,000 Units Fitted', *The West Australian*, 23 June 1942, p. 2



power.”<sup>37</sup> The company was officially formed in Melbourne on 1 August 1942, amalgamating the operations of eight national and international fuel companies, including Caltex, Shell, and the Commonwealth Oil Refineries Ltd, with the company beginning operations on 15<sup>th</sup> of August.<sup>38</sup> The company advertised its formation in state and national newspapers, declaring:

*Pool Petroleum Pty Ltd has been formed at the request of the Commonwealth Government and is governed by a Regulation under the National Security Act. Subscribers have entered into an agreement under which Pool Petroleum Pty Ltd is the sole distributing agents within the Commonwealth for: Motor Spirit, Lighting Kerosene, Power Kerosene, Diesel Oil, Fuel Oil, Distillate and Gas Oils. The Above products will be sold under Pool Brands. The purpose of this arrangement is to utilise all possible tankage space and to afford the greatest flexibility in achieving complete co-ordination of distribution services and the conservation of manpower.*<sup>39</sup>

In Western Australia, Pool Petroleum Pty Ltd appears in the state Post Office Directories under “Oil, Grease & Petrol Merchants & Importers” in 1942/43.<sup>40</sup> The Albany Council was informed of the new procedures in late 1942, but soon came into conflict with Pool Petroleum Pty Ltd, who would not make the long deliveries to Albany in shipments of less than 200 gallons.<sup>41</sup>

As a result of the War in the Pacific, the Government reaction to the scarcity of fuel with the failure of the oil cartels, and public ire in Albany over fuel rationing and transport costs, plans were drawn up for a new Pool Petroleum bulk fuel store at Albany at the end of 1942. The depot was to consist of seven fuel tanks, a pump house, foam house and water reservoir for fire-fighting. *Albany Seaboard Bulk Fuel Oil Depot* was officially opened for use in 1943, staffed by Shell Company Australia on behalf of Pool Petroleum Pty Ltd.<sup>42</sup>

In 1945, World War II finally came to an end, with Germany surrendering on 9 May and Japan surrendering on 14 August. With the end of hostilities in Europe, calls were made in Australia the same month for an end to fuel rationing, however global scarcity of fuel and disrupted distribution networks meant that fuel rationing remained.<sup>43</sup> Pool Petroleum Pty Ltd formally broke up at the end of March 1947, the oil companies once more trading under their own names.<sup>44</sup>

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- 37 'Pooling of Petrol: Victorian Scheme', *Kalgoorlie Miner*, 10 July 1942, p. 4; 'Unified Petrol Company', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 10 July 1942, p. 5
- 38 'Pool Petroleum Pty Ltd Formation of', National Archives of Australia, A1196-23/501/175, digital copy accessed 21 October 2020, <https://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/SearchNRetrieve/Interface/ViewImage.aspx?B=200092>
- 39 Advertisement, 'Pool Petroleum Pty Ltd', *The Bulletin*, vol 63 no 3261, 12 August 1942, p. 26
- 40 *The Western Australian Directory [Wise's]*, 1942/1943, p. 834
- 41 'Albany District Road Board', *The Albany Advertiser*, 10 September 1942, p. 4; 'Albany District Road Board', *The Albany Advertiser*, 15 October 1942, p. 6; 'Bulk Petrol: Restricted Deliveries Opposed', *The West Australian*, 21 October 1942, p. 4
- 42 Archae-Aus, *Non-Indigenous Heritage Assessment of the Infrastructure Located on Lots 76 & 877, Albany Ring Road Stages 2-4*, Main Roads Western Australia, 2020, pp. 14-20; 'Pool Petroleum Pty.', *Examiner*, 7 August 1942, p. 4; 'Oil Fuel. Facilities at Albany', *The Albany Advertiser*, 12 May 1949, p. 1
- 43 'Wartime Controls: 3000 to be Reviewed', *Kalgoorlie Miner*, 23 May 1945, p. 3; 'Petrol Rationing Must Continue', *Daily Examiner*, 11 January 1946, p. 1; 'Petrol Rationing: Likely to Continue', *The Irwin Index*, 4 May 1946, p. 3
- 44 'Pool Petroleum to go into Liquidation', *Leonora News*, 28 February 1947, p. 2; 'Distribution of Petrol', *The West Australian*, 8 May 1947, p. 14



In Western Australia, Pool Petroleum may have been operating for longer, as the state company was not formally wound up until 16 January 1948.<sup>45</sup> At Albany, questions were raised over fate of the *Albany Seaboard Bulk Fuel Oil Depot*, as local residents understood the presence of the bulk storage kept local fuel costs down. The decommissioning of the Royal Australian Navy (RAN) tanks near P26 *Albany Forts* (RHP) was also considered for future civilian use.<sup>46</sup>

The Commonwealth government, no longer having a use for *Albany Seaboard Bulk Fuel Oil Depot*, began plans to close the site, offering the place for private company purchase in May 1947. Albany residents and businesses readily supported the measure, hoping to keep fuel costs down.<sup>47</sup> As fuel supplies began to normalise across the country and a shipping route was re-established with Singapore, rumours circulated that fuel rationing would soon end.<sup>48</sup>

Despite this rosy outlook, in March 1948 the Federal government instead announced further cuts to rationed fuel supplies. The public backlash was immediate and black market fuel rationing tickets spiked, leading to politicians questioning whether rationing was achieving anything.<sup>49</sup> This situation dragged on into 1949, with global demand on fuel for rebuilding war-torn Europe reaching a point where the government declared fuel rationing “must continue indefinitely.”<sup>50</sup> At Albany, the former RAN tanks at the deepwater jetty became the focus of new infrastructure work, the tanks taken over by Shell in May 1949.<sup>51</sup> One newspaper report from this period suggests that Shell was also continuing to operate *Albany Seaboard Bulk Fuel Oil Depot*, however the site may have been abandoned in favour of the former RAN oil depot by this time.<sup>52</sup>

The public outcry against fuel rationing intensified as Britain and New Zealand ended their own fuel rationing arrangements, and in June 1949 the matter was referred to the High Court of Australia, which ruled against the government’s authority to unilaterally extend wartime emergency powers. With petrol rationing unexpectedly lifted, panic buying and fuel hoarding ensued. The situation exacerbated fuel scarcity and high prices to the point that rationing was reintroduced by Parliament in October that year.

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45 *Pool Petroleum Ltd*, State Records Office, AU WA S4153-cons1370 1942/004

46 ‘Albany Oil Storage’, *Mount Barker and Denmark Record*, 19 November 1945, p. 2; Ratepayer’s Annual Meeting’, *Mount Barker and Denmark Record*, 26 November 1945, p. 3; ‘Many Requests’, *The Albany Advertiser*, 13 May 1946, p. 5

47 ‘Chamber of Commerce’, *The Albany Advertiser*, 14 April 1947, p. 5; ‘ALP Matters’, *Mount Barker and Denmark Record*, 15 May 1947, p. 3; ‘Denmark Notes’, *The Alban Advertiser*, 26 June 1947, p. 7

48 ‘Petrol Rationing’, *The Eastern Recorder*, 24 January 1947, p. 14; ‘Fuel Oil’, *The Albany Advertiser*, 21 July 1947, p. 1

49 ‘Government Assailed on Fuel Rationing’, *The West Australian*, 12 March 1948, p. 12; ‘Petrol Rationing’, *South Western Times*, 2 September 1948, p.5; ‘Concern over Liquid Fuel Cuts’, *The West Australian*, 29 October 1948, p. 4

50 “Petrol Rationing to go on Indefinitely”, *The Eastern Recorder*, 3 March 1949, p. 6

51 ‘Albany Oil Tanks’, *The Albany Advertiser*, 17 March 1949, p. 5; ‘Oil Fuel. Facilities at Albany’, *The Albany Advertiser*, 12 May 1949, p. 1; ‘Petrol Rationing” Instructions to Consumers’, *Kalgoorlie Miner*, 8 October 1949, p. 1

52 ‘Blue Funnel Line’s ”Jason” Bunkers at Albany’, *The Albany Advertiser*, 14 September 1950, p. 6

The issue of fuel rationing became one of the platforms of the Federal election in December, with Robert Menzies returning to power on a promise of abolishing the practice.<sup>53</sup> Fuel rationing was finally abandoned on 8 February 1950.<sup>54</sup>

There is little information on the use of *Albany Seaboard Bulk Fuel Oil Depot* in the 1950s, and the place appears to have been abandoned at this time. Historic aerial imagery of the site in 1954 shows at least one of the tanks had been emptied and the roof partially collapsed. An image of the site from 1961 shows two of the roofs had been replaced (likely after the original roofs collapsed), however by 1977 all seven tanks were empty with all roofs removed or collapsed.<sup>55</sup>

In 2020, the site lies in a partially ruinous state. In one tank a number of murals have been painted across the inner surface by noted street artists including Kyle Hughes-Odgers and Joseph Boin.<sup>56</sup>

## 13.2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

*Albany Seaboard Bulk Fuel Oil Depot* (c.1942), is a former industrial site on the western slopes of Mount Melville, which includes the substantial remains of seven large reinforced concrete steel-lined Tank, fuel tank footings, Foam House and water reservoir.

The following physical evidence is quoted directly from the report *Non-Indigenous Assessment of the Infrastructure Located on Lots 76 & 877, Albany Ring Road Stages 2-4*, by Arche-Aus Pty Ltd, dated April 2020, pages 21-35, with the field survey carried out 12 March 2020. This text has remained unchanged, save the removal of references to maps, photos and figures in the original report.

The heritage site inspection of the fuel tanks and associated structures was undertaken on the 12th March 2020. The area surrounding the fuel tanks is filled with dense native vegetation, with the exception of some sandy tracks that intersect the area

The site inspection identified the remains of seven reinforced concrete fuel tanks, a set of fuel tank footings and a structure that was once used as a fire retardant Foam House and its associated Water Reservoir... A further structure known as the Booster Pump House appears on the historical plans, however it was not possible to locate this structure due to its likely demolition and the heavy vegetation obscuring any possible remains.

Whilst there was the occasional section of steel piping, bolts and fittings scattered across the site, no loose finds typically associated with historical sites, such as broken or whole glass bottles, fragments of glazed or printed ceramics and earthenware were identified during the site survey. It does appear that the site at one time was heavily salvaged and as a result a lot of the infrastructure once associated with the fuel tanks has been removed.

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<sup>53</sup> Froude, *op cit.*; 'Is fuel rationing necessary?', *The Daily News*, 10 November 1949, p. 4; 'Enough Petrol "If No Panic"', *The West Australian*, 12 July 1949, p. 2; 'Powers for Petrol Rationing', *The West Australian*, 29 September 1949, p. 4; 'Fuel Rationing on Former Scale', *The West Australian*, 7 October 1949, p. 3; 'Rationing Bill: All Stages Passed in Senate', *Kalgoorlie Miner*, 26 October 1949, p. 4

<sup>54</sup> Froude, *op cit.*; 'Fuel-Rationing End Probably Tonight', *The West Australian*, 8 February 1950, p. 1

<sup>55</sup> Landgate aerial imagery, 1954, 1961, 1977, accessed via InQuery online mapping system, 28 November 2020

<sup>56</sup> Arche-Aus, *op cit.*, pp. 18-19

The heavy vegetation that now covers the majority of the site also made it difficult to see anything other than the larger in situ structures...

#### *Tank 1*

Tank 1 is a large reinforced concrete tank that measures approximately 30 metres in diameter. Overall, the tank is in good condition, however a large hole has been punched into the tank wall along its north side. This hole is large enough for a vehicle to pass through.

It does appear that some demolition or deconstruction of the tank has been undertaken. The roof of the tank has been removed and the sheet steel lining, that is evident in some tanks, has also been taken down. There are no remnants of the roofing or the sheet steel lining remaining at the location.

The floor of the tank is also concrete and appears to be intact. There is some vegetation around the edges of the floor close to the interior wall.

The interior walls of Tank 1 are covered heavily with graffiti art, and to a lesser extent so are sections of the exterior wall.

The tank is for the most part surrounded by an earthen bund which is now heavily vegetated. The remaining in situ bund varies between 1 and 2 metres in height. The portion of the bund that would have stood near the current makeshift entrance has been removed. Some sections of heavy duty steel inlet/outlet pipe lay near the entrance to the tank.

#### *Tank 2*

Tank 2 is a large reinforced concrete tank that measures approximately 30 metres in diameter. Overall, the tank is in good condition.

It does appear that some demolition or deconstruction of the tank has been undertaken. The roof of the tank has been removed and the sheet steel lining, that is evident in some tanks, has also been taken down. There are no remnants of the roofing material remaining at the location.

The tank interior wall still has the majority of its sheet steel lining in place, which is rusting heavily. The floor of the tank is concrete and appears to be intact. There is some vegetation around the edges of the floor close to the interior wall. There are no remnants of the sheet steel lining remaining at the location.

The tank has graffiti art on both the interior and exterior walls of and appears to have been accessed via a large pipe inlet/outlet.

There is a 2 to 3 metre earthen bund surrounding the tank. The bund is now heavily vegetated but for the most part it is still fully intact.

Sections of the inlet/outlet pipe system are still in situ adjacent to the northern exterior of the tank.

#### *Tank 3*

Tank 3 is a large reinforced concrete tank that measures approximately 30 metres in diameter. Overall, the tank is in good condition, however a large hole has been cut into the tank wall along its north side.

The tank's interior wall still has its sheet steel lining in place which is rusting heavily. It was possible to measure the thickness of the steel plating at this tank and it was found to be 50mm thick.

The floor of the tank is concrete and appears to be intact however the majority of the floor was covered in soil and decomposed vegetation. The tank has graffiti art on both the interior and exterior walls.

There is some evidence of an earthen bund around the outside of Tank 3, however it appears that most of the bund has been removed.

Sections of the inlet/outlet pipe system are still in situ adjacent to the western exterior of the tank.

#### *Tank 4*

Tank 4 is a large reinforced concrete tank that measures approximately 30 metres in diameter. Overall, the tank is in good condition.

It does appear that some demolition or deconstruction of the tank has been undertaken. The roof of the tank has been removed and the sheet steel wall lining, that is evident in some tanks, is no longer present. There are no remnants of the roofing or the sheet steel lining remaining at the location.

The floor surface of the tank could not be viewed due to the heavy vegetation that covers its interior, this is mostly reeds and grasses.

The exterior wall of Tank 4 has quite a bit of graffiti art on it with less on the interior wall. Whilst the wall of the tank is fully intact, access to the interior can be obtained through a steel pipe opening.

There is a high earthen bund measuring between 2 to 3 metres high that surrounds the entirety of the tank. It is heavily vegetated with native bush.

A portion of heavy duty steel inlet/outlet pipe is still in situ adjacent to the northern edge of the tank's exterior.

#### *Tank 5*

Tank 5 is a large reinforced concrete tank that measures approximately 30 metres in diameter. Overall, the tank is in good condition, however a large hole has been punched into the tank wall along its south west side. This hole is large enough for a vehicle to pass through.

It does appear that some demolition or deconstruction of the tank has been undertaken. The roof of the tank has been removed and the majority of the sheet steel lining that once lined the wall of the tank has been removed. One section of steel lining remains and is peeling off of the wall. Further to this there are sections of steel wall sheeting laying across the floor of the tank.

The section of the tank wall removed to create an entrance is stacked against the eastern exterior wall of the tank. Just beyond that are a series of thinner concrete slabs that are broken into sections. It is not possible at this time to identify the exact use of the thinner concrete sheets, however they do resemble the sheets used to construct the pipe housings seen at Tanks 6 and 7.

The floor of the tank is also concrete and appears to be intact. There is some vegetation and soil around the edges of the floor close to the interior wall as well as a small area near the centre of the tank. It appears that the tank has been used as a race track for bikes.

The interior walls of Tank 1 are covered heavily with graffiti art, and to a lesser extent so are sections of the exterior wall.

The tank is encircled by an earthen bund, although some sections such as near the entrance and along the eastern edge have been removed. The remaining bund is heavily vegetated and varies between 1 and 2 metres in height.

#### *Tank 6*

Tank 6 is a large reinforced concrete tank that measures approximately 30 metres in diameter. Overall, the tank is in good condition.

It does appear that some demolition or deconstruction of the tank has been undertaken. The roof of the tank has been removed however some of the sheet steel wall lining is still present. Due to the difficulty of seeing into the tank it was hard to ascertain how much still remains.

The floor surface of the tank could not be viewed due to the heavy vegetation that covers its interior, this is mostly reeds, grasses and leaf litter.

The exterior wall of Tank 6 has quite a bit of graffiti art on it, although no graffiti was observed on the interior wall.

There is a concrete housing on the southern exterior portion of the tank wall. This housing covers a series of steel inlet/outlet pipes. The housing is intact and in good condition.

Slightly east of the housing there is another steel pipe, this one is high on the outside tank wall and leads part way towards the ground. The function of this pipe is unknown at this time and was not seen on any other tanks.

There is no evidence of an earthen bund around Tank 6.

#### *Tank 7*

Tank 7 is a large reinforced concrete tank that measures approximately 30 metres in diameter. Overall, the tank is in good condition,

It does appear that some demolition or deconstruction of the tank has been undertaken. The roof of the tank is no longer in position; however, the sheet steel wall lining is still present. Viewing the interior of the tank via a drone showed what appears to be sheets of collapsed concrete sheeting laying across portions of the tank's interior. It is possible that these are sections of the original roof that have collapsed inwards.

The floor surface of the tank could not be viewed due to the concrete sheeting and vegetation that covers its interior, this is mostly reeds, grasses and leaf litter.

The exterior wall of Tank 7 has some graffiti art on it, as does the interior wall.

There is a concrete housing on the western exterior portion of the tank wall. This housing covers a series of steel inlet/outlet pipes. The housing is intact and in good condition.

On the eastern wall of the tank there is a large steel pipe inlet/outlet along with some discarded steel piping.

No remnants of an earthen bund could be seen surrounding Tank 7, if a bund existed then it has since been removed.

#### *Fuel Tank Footings*

In the south west section of the survey area there is a series of 4 concrete footings. They are aligned parallel to each other and are footings for smaller fuel tanks. An aerial photograph taken in 1954 shows the fuel tanks in situ. There is room for two fuel tanks to be positioned atop the concrete footings. The tanks would have been placed onto the footings...

Each of the footings stand approximately 1.25 metres high, are 10.25 metres in length and 0.31metres thick. There are the remnants of a metal pipe railing fixture at the north eastern end of the structure.

#### *Foam House and Water Reservoir*

In the eastern section of the survey area are two concrete structures; a building known as the Foam House, and an adjacent Water Reservoir. The Foam House was used for fire extinguishing at the facility if required. Foam would have been fed into the building via pipes and mixed with water from the reservoir. The location of the Foam House and Water Reservoir in relation to the fuel tanks can be seen in the 1954 aerial photo... A series of pipes once ran from the Foam House to each of the fuel tanks... no evidence of the piping system could be found during the survey.

Whilst there was the occasional section of steel piping, bolts and fittings scattered across the site, no loose finds typically associated with historical sites, such as broken or whole glass bottles, fragments of glazed or printed ceramics and earthenware were identified during the site survey. It does appear that the site at one time was heavily salvaged and as a result a lot of the infrastructure once associated with the fuel tanks has been removed. The heavy vegetation that now covers the majority of the site also made it difficult to see anything other than the larger in situ structures. As such, the Booster Pump House identified on the historic plans could not be relocated.

### **13.3 COMPARATIVE INFORMATION**

#### *Fuel Tanks*

The physical evidence indicates that *Albany Seaboard Bulk Fuel Oil Depot* demonstrates the characteristics of a mid-twentieth century bulk fuel tank. A search of the Historic Heritage database for places with the keywords “fuel tank” or “fuel depot” returns 48 places, of which eight are listed on the State Register of Heritage places (RHP). The places that are comparable to *Albany Seaboard Bulk Fuel Oil Depot* as intact or partially intact sites include:

- P4787 No 25 Inland Aviation Fuel Depot (Local Heritage Survey, or LHS): established in 1942 in the Shire of Narrogin, consists of an underground concrete and steel fuel store, constructed by the Allied Works Council.

- P10914 Fuel Storage Depot (LHS): established in the Shire of Northam c.1942, this fuel store was associated with government plans to use Northam as a fall-back position in the case of a Japanese attack. Three brick storage tanks are still present at the site.
- P13513 Fuel Tanks, rear of BP Service Station (LHS): established at the Shire of Merredin in 1942, these structures were strategic supply points to be used if Perth had to be abandoned.

#### *Responses to World War II*

*Albany Seaboard Bulk Fuel Oil Depot* was created as a response to World War II. The only category in the Historic Heritage database for places associated with the war is the use “Military”. This returns 185 relevant entries, 30 of which are entered in the State Register of Heritage Places. However, most of these places demonstrate military action in the form of fortifications/defensive structures, barracks, signal stations, batteries, workshops, campsites and prisons, whereas *Albany Seaboard Bulk Fuel Oil Depot* is related to life on the home front.

The sub-theme of “Home Front” is not immediately apparent in the Historic Heritage database, as war-time activities at non-military sites can be associated with numerous places across the state. However, places comparable to *Albany Seaboard Bulk Fuel Oil Depot* as government-organised home front activities include the Australian Women’s Land Army, who are associated with the following places:

- P1762 *Fairbridge Farm School (fmr)* (RHP): established in the 1920s at Pinjarra, this educational building operated as the Australian Women’s Land Army training centre from 1943 to 1945.
- P2031 King Street Precinct (Assessment Program): the Australian Women’s Land Army had their headquarters at three different buildings along this street from 1942-1945.
- P4998 Brook Lodge (Assessment Program): established at Donnybrook in 1943, this complex was operated as a flax production facility by the Australian Women’s Land Army.
- P5000 Dehydration and Canning Factory (LHS): operated by the Australian Women’s Land Army from 1943 to 1945.
- P16791 Boyup Brook Flax Mill (Below Threshold): operated by the Australian Women’s Land Army from 1941 to 1943.

Another similar group was the Allied Works Council, who are associated with the following places:

- P16785 *RAAF Headquarters Bunker (fmr), Belmont* (RHP): the partially-underground bunker is considered a good example of the Allied Works group.
- P15267 Army No 5 Base Ordnance Depot Precinct, Nungarrin (RHP), which includes P3482 *Army Vehicle Workshop (fmr)* (RHP): employed “civil aliens” through the Allied Works Council to work at the site.
- P4787 No 25 Inland Aviation Fuel Depot (Local Heritage Survey, or LHS): discussed above.
- P13540 Narrogin East Airfield (site): constructed by the Allied Works Council at Narrogin in 1942.
- P16887 Geraldton Airport (RHP): constructed by the Allied Works Council at Geraldton in 1942.



### *Home Front - Rationing*

A search of the Historic Heritage database for places associated with the keyword “rationing” returns 24 places, 6 of which are entered in the State Register of Heritage Places. The only one of these places where rationing did impact the operation of the place during World War II is:

- P4575 *Commonwealth Bank (fmr), Bunbury* (RHP): during World War II, this place served as a supply post for distributing rations.

### *Home Front - Pool Petroleum Pty Ltd*

A search was performed at a national level, investigating the National Heritage List and other State Heritage Lists, for any reference to the Pool Petroleum Pty Ltd, and returned the following places:

- *BP Administration Building (former), The Esplanade, Crib Point, VIC, Australia* (National Heritage List): an exemplar mid-1960s office building in the International Style, designed by architect Don Hendry Fulton. Significant for its architectural qualities. This place was an administration building for the Commonwealth Oil Refineries Ltd, which in World War II operated under the Pool Petroleum Pty Ltd brand. Also listed at a state level as VHR1016 *Former BP Refinery Administration Building* (Victorian State Heritage List).
- 1960391 Glen Davis town and oil-works (New South Wales State Heritage List): a historic township and oil-shale works established in New South Wales in 1937, which during World War II was a significant energy production site. The oil extracted from this site was distributed by Pool Petroleum Pty Ltd during World War II.

### *Industrial/Manufacturing*

While *Albany Seaboard Bulk Fuel Oil Depot* is primarily associated with the key thematic sub-theme of the home front government responses to the war, its existence as a combined government/private enterprise servicing the domestic market during World War II, makes it part of the historic theme of industrial expansion during World War II. This specific sub-theme is not readily apparent in the Historic Heritage database, however a search of the database for places with the use “Industrial/Manufacturing” that were constructed, established or redeveloped during the period 1939-1945 returns a total of 60 places, of which 15 are listed on the RHP. By examining the larger list, the following places have some comparative value to *Albany Seaboard Bulk Fuel Oil Depot* as places demonstrating the expansion of manufacturing and industry as a result of World War II:

- P23525 Town of Wundowie (Assessment Program): established in 1944 at Wundowie, this townsite complex has its origins in the 1941 government decision to create an iron and steel manufacturing industry in Western Australia, due to the state’s relative supply chain isolation during World War II.
- P5000 Dehydration and Canning Factory (LHS): established in 1943 at Donnybrook, this timber-framed weatherboard factory building was created as a wartime industry in the town.
- P16791 Boyup Brook Flax Mill (Below Threshold): established from 1941-1943 at Boyup Brook, this complex of industrial buildings was created by

the Commonwealth government to supply flax to manufacture military equipment in both Australia and the UK.

- P25941 Welshpool Munitions Factory (LHS): established in 1942 at Canning, this factory building was originally Small Arms Ammunition Factory No. 6, created by the Commonwealth government as one of six small arms munitions factories across the country.

### **Conclusions**

The comparative information indicates that *Albany Seaboard Bulk Fuel Oil Depot* rare as a place demonstrating the Australia government's home front response to World War II, as well as the development and impact of rationing during World War II, which was a key aspect of life on the home front during the war. At a state and national level, the place is exceptionally rare as a place that demonstrates the specific story of fuel rationing and the developments that occurred as a result of the public debate over it.

## **13. 4 KEY REFERENCES**

Archae-Aus, *Non-Indigenous Heritage Assessment of the Infrastructure Located on Lots 76 & 877, Albany Ring Road Stages 2-4*, Main Roads Western Australia, 2020

## **13. 5 FURTHER RESEARCH**

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