



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)

- 3.18.2 Banking & lending

HERITAGE COUNCIL OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA THEME(S)

- 107 Settlements
- 308 Commercial & service industries

11.1 AESTHETIC VALUE*

WA Bank (fmr), Bunbury is a good example of a substantial two-storey bank building designed in the Federation Academic Classical style. (Criteria 1.1 & 1.2)

As a well designed and constructed building, *WA Bank (fmr), Bunbury* contributes to the aesthetic value of Victoria and Wellington Streets. The siting of *WA Bank (fmr), Bunbury* at a prominent intersection within the commercial centre of Bunbury also gives it landmark value. (Criterion 1.3)

WA Bank (fmr), Bunbury is one of a number of substantial buildings, most of which date from the late nineteenth and early twentieth century period, that collectively form the significant streetscape that defines the commercial and administrative centre of Bunbury in the vicinity of the intersection of Victoria and Wellington Streets. (Criterion 1.4)

11.2. HISTORIC VALUE

WA Bank (fmr), Bunbury is associated with development of Bunbury and the Wellington district at the end of the nineteenth century, which came largely as a result of availability of funds and the increase in population associated with goldrushes in the 1880s and 1890s, and resulted in the consolidation of Bunbury as the principal port and the minor capital of the southwest region. (Criterion 2.1)

WA Bank (fmr), Bunbury is representative of the provision of banking facilities in the growing town of Bunbury in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. The place was purpose built in 1896 to accommodate the Bunbury Branch of the Western Australian Bank, which had been established in the

* 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.

town in 1878. From 1927/1928 to 1962, after the amalgamation of the two banks, the Bank of New South Wales occupied the building. (Criterion 2.2)

From 1989 up to 2001, *WA Bank (fmr), Bunbury* has accommodated various charitable organisations and community groups including the Bunbury Community Group, the Association for the Blind and the South West Volunteer Centre. (Criteria 2.2 & 2.3)

WA Bank (fmr), Bunbury has associations with eminent Western Australia soldier and architect Major General Sir John Talbot Hobbs, who was responsible for the design of various public and private buildings throughout the state including other Western Australian Banks such as Perth, Southern Cross, York, Beverley and Midland Junction. (Criterion 2.3)

WA Bank (fmr), Bunbury has associations with the managers and staff who worked at the place, as well as their clients, during its use as a banking institution from 1896 up to 1962. (Criterion 2.3)

11. 3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE

11. 4. SOCIAL VALUE

WA Bank (fmr), Bunbury is valued by the local community for its associations with the various charitable organisations and community groups who have occupied the building from 1989 up to the present day (August 2001). (Criterion 4.1)

WA Bank (fmr), Bunbury is valued by the local and wider community for its contribution to the built environment of Bunbury, and as a result contributes to this community's sense of place. This is evidenced by its inclusion of the City of Bunbury Municipal Heritage Inventory, its classification by the National Trust of Australia (WA), and its entry in the Register of the National Estate. The preservation of the building c. 1979/1980 and its retention in public ownership is also an indication of the social value of the place. (Criterion 4.1 & 4.2)

12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE

12. 1. RARITY

12. 2 REPRESENTATIVENESS

WA Bank (fmr), Bunbury is a representative example of well designed substantial bank building displaying the principal characteristics of other two storey Western Australian Bank buildings that were designed by well known architect J. Talbot Hobbs in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. (Criterion 6.1)

WA Bank (fmr), Bunbury is representative of other bank buildings constructed in the in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, which incorporated living accommodation for the bank manager and his family. (Criterion 6.2)

12.3 CONDITION

WA Bank (fmr), Bunbury appears to be in good condition. The building has recently undergone a major refurbishment program and it appears to be regularly maintained.

12.4 INTEGRITY

WA Bank (fmr), Bunbury is of moderate integrity. The building no longer serves as bank and, as a result, some fairly major changes have been made to the interior, particularly in the area of the former banking chamber.

Various community groups, most of which typically occupy just one room, now use the building. Apart from the former banking chamber, most of the original rooms continue to serve their original purpose by having a clerical / administrative use.

The subdivision of the former banking chamber has been carried out using lightweight partitioning. Reinstatement would, therefore, be reasonably easy to achieve.

12.5 AUTHENTICITY

WA Bank (fmr), Bunbury is of moderate authenticity. The original external form of the building remains largely intact, apart from the rear extension at the rear of the first floor.

The decorative finishes have reduced the authenticity of the exterior of the facades, particularly by the painting of the original tuck pointed brickwork.

The subdivision of the front part of the building at ground and first floor levels has reduced the authenticity of the interior.

13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

The documentary evidence has been compiled by Kristy Bizzaca, Historian. The physical evidence has been compiled by Alan Kelsall, Kelsall Binet Architects.

13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

WA Bank (fmr), Bunbury is a two storey brick building with hipped roof in the Federation Academic Classical style. It is situated at the north-west corner of the intersection of Victoria and Wellington Streets in Bunbury.

Despite having been proclaimed a townsite in 1841, as well as being the principal port of the southwest and the capital of the Wellington district, the population of the Bunbury area was still low in the 1870s. At this time, only 300 people lived in the town and approximately 2,000 in the district itself.¹ The Bunbury area had this modest growth primarily because of the low levels of agricultural and mineral production in the hinterland, inadequate transport and communication lines, and the lack of development of the port facilities.² With the availability of public monies and the increased population as a result of the goldrushes in the 1880s and 1890s, funds were provided for the construction of the Perth to Bunbury railway line, which opened in 1893, and

¹ Barker, A.J. & Laurie, M., *Excellent Connections: A History of Bunbury 1836 – 1990*, City of Bunbury, 1992, p. 104.

² *Ibid*, pp. 121, 132 - 133, 135.

works to the Bunbury harbour. The larger population and therefore market base also ensured the opening up of the district's agricultural areas.³ These factors contributed to the development of the town itself as the minor capital for the region and subsequently the provision of further public and commercial services.⁴

The Western Australian Bank was formed by a committee which consisted of William Tanner, Richard Hinds, J.S. Roe, E. Hamersley, S. Moore, T.R.C. Walters, W.J. Lawrence and G.F. Stone as Secretary. The bank was opened on 23 June 1841 in St Georges Terrace, on the corner of Pier Street.⁵ In April 1878, head accountant A. J. Hillman was instructed by the Board of the Western Australian Bank to travel to Bunbury to select a premises from which a branch of the Bank could operate.⁶ On his return, Hillman informed the Board that the only place suitable for the branch was a former store owned by William Spencer and located on the main street.⁷ Spencer agreed to make the necessary alterations to the building on the condition that the Bank lease the property for a period of three years at a cost of £50 per annum.⁸

The first branch of the Western Australian Bank was opened in Bunbury on 25 May 1878. The first manager was Mr. R. W. Lowe who was trained for the position by Hillman himself.⁹

Spencer later offered to sell the Bank the former store building; however, this was declined.¹⁰ In 1882, the Western Australian Bank purchased the land at the corner of Victoria and Wellington Streets, on which *WA Bank (fmr), Bunbury* is located, from Mr. Bibra at a cost of £1,200.¹¹ There appears to have been a building already located on the site and the branch operated here from 1882 up to the construction of the new bank building in 1895.¹²

On 11 May 1895, architect J. Talbot Hobbs called for tenders on behalf of the Western Australian Bank for the erection of a new permanent building in Bunbury.¹³ The contract was awarded to J. G. Baldock & Co. in June 1895 at an approximate cost of £1,804.¹⁴ Building began on 11 June and was to end on 20 December 1895.¹⁵ During this period, J. Talbot Hobbs traveled to Bunbury

3 Ibid, pp. 135, 140 – 144, Ch. 5.

4 Ibid, Ch. 4.

5 Charlesworth, C. H., 'The Origins of Banking in England and Australia', RWAHS, 'Journals and Proceedings', Vol. 8, Pt. 4, Perth, 1980, pp. 125-126.

6 *South Western Times*, 22/5/1958.

7 *South Western Times*, 22/5/1958.

8 Ibid.

9 *South Western Times*, 22/5/1958.

10 *South Western Times*, 22/5/1958.

11 Ibid; *South Western Times*, 13/12/1962.

12 *South Western Times*, 22/5/1958.

13 *The Bunbury Herald*, 11/5/1895. Well known architect John Talbot Hobbs was responsible for the design of a number of public and private buildings throughout the state. Other Western Australian Banks designed by him included: Perth; Southern Cross, Coolgardie; Northam; York; Narrogin; Bridgetown; Beverley; Kookynine; and, Midland Junction. (John Talbot Hobbs, Ledgers, MN 1460, 2780B/1, 2 & 3.)

14 *The Bunbury Herald*, 1/6/1895; see also John Talbot Hobbs, Ledgers, MN 1460, 2780B/2, p. 148.

15 John Talbot Hobbs, Ledgers, MN 1460, 2780B/2, p. 148.

to inspect the progress of the work eight times.¹⁶ *WA Bank (fmr), Bunbury* appears to have been completed by 30 November of that year.¹⁷

As with other two storey bank buildings constructed at this time, including those constructed by other institutions such as the Union Bank and the Commercial Bank, the plan incorporated banking facilities at a ground floor level and accommodation for the manager and his family at the first floor. In 1895/1896, when the building was completed, F. E. Stafford was manager of the Bunbury Bank.¹⁸

In January 1897, J. Talbot Hobbs supervised alterations and repairs to *WA Bank (fmr), Bunbury*.¹⁹ (The detail of this work is not known.)

Local history has it that the late Governor of Western Australia, Sir James Mitchell, was a former staff member of the Western Australian Bank in Bunbury; however, no research has been done to confirm this information.²⁰

The post World War One era signaled a shift in the development of the banking industry Australia wide. Western Australia was especially affected, partly a result of the impact of the war, the end of the gold rush period, and the consolidation of the pastoral industry.²¹ During the inter-war period, amalgamation became the primary means of competition between the banks.²²

In 1927/1928, the Western Australian Bank merged with the Bank of New South Wales.²³ On 23 April 1928, the ownership of *WA Bank (fmr), Bunbury* was transferred to the Bank of New South Wales.²⁴ After the amalgamation of the two institutions, A. Norton, formerly the manager of the Western Australian Bank in Bunbury, became the manager of the Bank of New South Wales. The Bank of New South Wales was relocated to *WA Bank (fmr), Bunbury* from this time up to the early 1960s.²⁵

By the early 1960s, it had been decided to construct a new and modern banking facility for the Bank of New South Wales in Bunbury.²⁶ Also located in the Victoria Street commercial strip, the new bank building was designed by architectural firm Forbes & Fitzhardinge and was opened in late 1962.²⁷

On 5 September 1962, the Commonwealth of Australia became the proprietors of *WA Bank (fmr), Bunbury*.²⁸ From this time up to c. 1989, the building was used to house the Bunbury District Employment Office.²⁹

16 John Talbot Hobbs, Ledgers, MN 1460, 2780B/3, p. 4.

17 *The Bunbury Herald*, 30/11/1895.

18 *Wise's Post Office Directories*, 1896/1896 & 1897.

19 John Talbot Hobbs, Ledgers, MN 1460, 2780B/3, pp. 4 & 277.

20 *South Western Times*, 13/12/1962.

21 Julia Ball, David Kelsall, & John Pidgeon, 'Statewide Survey of banks 1829-1939, Southern Region, Western Australia', Vol. 1, November 1997, pp. 22-23; Butlin, S. J., *Australia and New Zealand Bank*, Longmans, 1961, pp. 376-377.

22 Ibid (both).

23 *South Western Times*, 13/12/1962.

24 Certificate of Title, Vol. 1000, Fol. 53.

25 *Wise's Post Office Directories*, 1927 - 1828.

26 *South Western Times*, 13/12/1962.

27 Ibid; *West Australian*, 12/5/1962.

28 Certificate of Title, Vol. 1000, Fol. 53.

The Lotteries Commission was registered as the owners of *WA Bank (fmr), Bunbury* on 10 November 1989.³⁰ At this time, the place became known as Lotteries House and was used accommodate the main offices of various charitable organisations and community groups.³¹ Some of these groups that have occupied the building are: the Bunbury Christian Education Council; the Bunbury Community Legal Centre; the Bunbury Youth Accommodation Service and Pregnancy Help. The groups shared, and continue to share, tea and bathroom facilities as well as counseling rooms/spaces.³²

In mid 1992 extensive renovations were carried out to *WA Bank (fmr), Bunbury*.³³

The ownership of *WA Bank (fmr), Bunbury* was transferred to the Bunbury Community Group on 11 January 1994.³⁴ At the time, the group was one of the occupants of the former bank building. Since this time, *WA Bank (fmr), Bunbury* has continued to accommodate various charitable organisations.³⁵

A number of works have been completed to *WA Bank (fmr), Bunbury* during the various changes in ownership and use. These have included the addition of first floor area at the rear of the building, the installation of the two kitchens, and the recent construction of the single storey toilet block.³⁶ (The exact date and nature of these additions is not known. This is an area of further research.)

In August 2001, various community groups occupy *WA Bank (fmr), Bunbury* including the South West Environment Centre, the Men's Development Centre, the Association for the Blind, South West Volunteer Centre, and the Migrant Resource Group.

13.2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

WA Bank (fmr), Bunbury is a freestanding two storey former bank building of brick and iron construction located at the north-west corner of the intersection of Victoria and Wellington Streets. Victoria Street is one of the main streets within the retail and commercial centre of Bunbury. Two storey shops, banks and hotels dating from between c. 1900 and c. 1950 line the street.

The *Rose Hotel* is situated at the same intersection. Diagonally opposite the *WA Bank (fmr), Bunbury* is *Cronshaw's* department store which is directly opposite at the south-west corner of the intersection. The building to the north of *WA Bank (fmr), Bunbury* at 99 Victoria Street is another substantial two-storey building built in a similar style.

WA Bank (fmr), Bunbury is the only building on the site. The east and north faces of the building edge the footpaths of Victoria and Wellington Streets. A single storey toilet block that appears to be of recent construction extends from the north east corner of the building. The remainder of the site is a bitumenised carpark.

29 Information from HCWA File: P0371.

30 Certificate of Title, Vol. 1000, Fol. 53.

31 Information from HCWA File: P0371.

32 Information from HCWA File: P0371.

33 Letter dated 6/1/1993, in HCWA File: P0371. The detail of this work is not known.

34 Certificate of Title, Vol. 1000, Fol. 53.

35 Ibid; Information from HCWA File: P0371.

36 Physical evidence.

WA Bank (fmr), Bunbury is a two storey brick building with hipped roof covered with Colorbond finished corrugated steel sheeting. The building is designed in the Federation Academic Classical style c. 1890 – 1915.³⁷

The front (east) façade of the building is a symmetrical tripartite composition with a slightly projecting central bay with a flanking bay on either side of the central bay. The central bay has full height rendered rustication capped with a rendered pediment.

The main entrance is within the central bay housed between layered piers with impost mouldings. The circular arch that contains the glazed fanlight above the door springs from these layered piers. The main entrance has a panelled, three-quarter glazed, double door. The glazed panel of each leaf has four panes.

The window at the first floor level of the bay is enclosed within a flat-headed opening and is surrounded by a moulded render architrave with keystone. The window is a timber framed double hung sash. The upper sash is multi-paned and the lower is a single pane.

The flanking bays of the front façade are constructed of tuck pointed brickwork with rendered embellishments. The whole façade has been painted. Each bay is composed of a more solid base upon which sits the upper floor, giving it a lighter, more recessive appearance. The ground floor window is contained between layered pilasters that step back to make a recessed panel below the sill. Set within this panel is a raised panel. The impost moulding of the round arched window opening continues across the facade to line through with the transome of the windows and the main door to form a type of stringcourse.

The upper panel of the bay is composed with ionic pilasters set at both of its edges to frame a recessed panel into which is set a single window. The pilasters support an entablature that has a balustraded parapet.

The lower windows within these flanking bays consist of four casements set within a timber frame. A substantial moulded timber transome and a turned timber mullion divide the frame into its four parts. The upper windows are set within flat-headed openings with rendered architraves and windows that match the upper window of the central bay.

The wall of the south façade of the building is predominantly of tuck pointed brickwork. However the brickwork of the upper rear section, which appears to be a later addition, has cut and struck pointing. The decoration is restricted to the rendered plinth that has a moulded top and a plain rendered stringcourse at first floor level. The parapet of the front façade is buttressed by a return that is about two metres long on the east face of the building, curving down from parapet level to wall plate level.

The south façade is simply composed with windows set in walls and their spacing determined by the layout of the rooms behind. The windows on the upper floor are directly above the door and windows on the ground floor. The only exception is at the upper level towards the east end of the wall where there is evidence that the upper level window has been bricked-in. An entrance doorway is located towards the back half of the facade. The opening has a circular arched head. The timber door is three panelled with a glazed upper panel and two lower solid panels. The door is flanked by half glazed sidelights and is topped by a glazed fan light that has been divided into three.

³⁷ Apperly, et. al., op. cit.

The windows at ground floor level are set within circular-arched openings whereas the first floor openings are segmental arched. All have rendered keystones. All windows are timber framed double hung sash type.

The rear (west) façade is of the same construction as the south face of the building. A lean-to verandah runs for the length of the façade. The verandah joins the single storey toilet block at the north end and terminates as an arched opening at the south end. The verandah is supported on timber posts with fretwork brackets.

The three upper level windows of the rear match those on the east face. The doors and windows at ground floor level are within segmental arched openings.

The north face of the building is about one metre from the south wall of 99 Victoria Street. The façade matches the south except that there are no door or window openings within it.

The front door is located centrally in the Victoria Street façade and leads into the original banking chamber. This large rectangular room is now subdivided into four rooms, which includes a dogleg corridor that leads through the space to the entrance hall that comes off Wellington Street. The two rooms on the south side of the corridor are used by the South West Environment Centre and the Men's Development Centre. A large conference room is entered off the north side of the corridor.

The Wellington Street entrance hall is located directly behind the former banking chamber. This hall contains the timber staircase that leads to the upper floor. A small kitchen is located under the half landing of the staircase.

A corridor leads from an arched opening in the wall on the west side of the hall through to the rear door of the building. The room on the south side of the corridor is used by The Association for the Blind. The room on the other side is used for counselling.

The staircase arrives at first floor level at a stair landing with an almost square plan. It appears that the west wall of this room was originally the back wall of the building. The doorway in this wall leads to a further lobby off which are entered three rooms. These are used as the South West Volunteer Centre, a counselling room and the Migrant Resource Group.

A kitchen is entered off the south end of the stair landing. An arched opening in the wall on the east side of the stair landing leads to the corridor that serves rooms at the front of the building above the former banking chamber. The Community Legal Centre uses three of the four rooms while The Rural Health and Community Development Office use the fourth room.

Ground floor

The South West Environment Centre, the Men's Development Centre, the corridor and conference rooms are all similarly finished. The original walls are plastered with 300 high moulded skirtings and cast plaster cornices. The plaster ceiling appears to be original. The new walls are constructed of plasterboard lined studwork and have 150 mm high skirting boards but no cornices. The partitioning has high level fixed glazing. The floors are carpeted. The windows have vertical blinds. Doors are of recent manufacture, four panel, probably press moulded type.

The conference room has a folding screen for dividing the room. The head track of the screen is set within a transome that has fixed glazing above it.

The stair hall on the south side of the building appears to be largely intact. It has plastered walls, 300 high moulded skirtings and cast plaster cornices. The plaster ceiling appears to be original. The timber stair is dogleg shaped in plan. The soffits of the flight are lined with plaster. The balustrading and newel posts are of elaborately turned timber. The stair treads are carpeted.

The kitchen has a concrete floor that is covered by vinyl sheeting and a plasterboard ceiling. The built-in kitchen cupboards were installed recently.

The rooms at the rear part of the building are finished in the same manner with plastered brickwork walls, carpeted concrete floors and battened plaster of fibro ceilings.

First floor

The landing at the top of the stairs is finished in a similar manner as the entrance hall below.

The kitchen has a timber floor that is covered by vinyl sheeting and a plasterboard ceiling. The built-in kitchen cupboards were installed recently.

The rooms to the front part of the building are finished in a similar manner to the stair landing. There is evidence that the current layout of the rooms in this area is the result of the division of the larger rooms by studwork and plasterboard partitions.

The east face of the wall separating the stair landing from the rear part of the building is of painted face brickwork. At the opening there is a step down of 120 mm from front to back.

The rooms at the rear of the building are formed with plasterboard lined studwork partitioning. They have plasterboard ceilings with coved cornices. Skirtings are moulded and are 120 mm high.

The first floor area at the rear of the building appears to be a later addition.

The former banking chamber has been divided into smaller offices using studwork partitioning.

The office area at the front of the first floor has been further subdivided.

The two kitchens are recent additions.

WA Bank (fmr), Bunbury appears to be in good condition. The building has recently undergone a major refurbishment program. It appears to be regularly maintained.

13.3 COMPARATIVE INFORMATION

13.4 KEY REFERENCES

No key references.

13.5 FURTHER RESEARCH

The exact nature of works and their date of construction are not known, including the addition of first floor area at the rear of the building, the installation of the two kitchens, the construction of the single storey toilet block, and the 1992 renovation. This is an area of further research.

Local history has it that the late Governor of Western Australia, Sir James Mitchell, was a former staff member of the Western Australian Bank in

Bunbury; however, no research has been done to confirm this information. This is an area of further research.