



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

East Perth Primary School (fmr) is significant for the aesthetic characteristics of the architectural design, particularly to the principle south elevation which incorporates high pitched gabled roofs, round headed windows, brick walls above a limestone base, in a picturesque treatment in an institutional building located in a residential district. (Criteria 1.1, 1.2, 1.4)

11.2 HISTORIC VALUE

East Perth Primary School (fmr) was designed, documented, built and altered by the State Government as evidenced by drawings held in BMA archives. As such, the place survives as the former educational institution provided by Government for the residential district of East Perth. It is for this reason an historic place dating from the last decade of the nineteenth century and a tangible element surviving from the former residential district which it served. (Criterion 2.2)

The buildings are significant examples of school buildings designed by the Government Architect around the turn of the century, and in particular of the work of Hillson Beasley, then Assistant Government Architect as the school was established, and later as Chief Architect for the Public Works Department as the school developed. The buildings reflect the architectural style of Beasley's design and relevant drawings are signed by him. (Criteria 2.3, 2.4)

11.3 SCIENTIFIC VALUE

11.4 SOCIAL VALUE

East Perth Primary School (fmr) is significant as the school built for the education of children from the East Perth residential district. The buildings form part of the surviving tangible evidence of a residential district supplanted by commerce and industry, but currently being re-developed as

a residential quarter of the City of Perth. The changes made progressively to the fabric of the building reflect changes in teaching practice and social attitudes to the status of children. (Criterion 4.1)

Survival of *East Perth Primary School (fmr)* within the redeveloping community of East Perth contributes to that community's sense of place. (Criterion 4.2)

12 DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE

12.1 RARITY

Although an important historic element and culturally significant in the urban fabric of East Perth, *East Perth Primary School (fmr)* is not rare since other examples of Beasley's work survive including schools built in a similar mode and architectural expression. (Criterion 5.2)

12.2 REPRESENTATIVENESS

East Perth Primary School (fmr) is significant as a representative example of State Government Schools designed by the Government Architect around the turn of the Century, and in particular demonstrates the consistency of design of the work of Hillson Beasley, Government Architect. (Criteria 6.1, 6.2)

12.3 CONDITION

East Perth Primary School (fmr) is in sound condition notwithstanding alterations and additions carried out since development began. The interior of the Main School Building is dilapidated following vacation by the Children's Court.

The exterior of the Main School Building was extensively restored by the East Perth Redevelopment Authority in 1993-1994.

12.4 INTEGRITY

The integrity of *East Perth Primary School (fmr)* has been eroded externally through inappropriate adaptation for the most recent use as a Children's Court. *East Perth Primary School* has a low degree of integrity.

12.5 AUTHENTICITY

East Perth Primary School (fmr) has a low degree of authenticity internally resulting from modifications carried out to adapt the buildings for new uses. The sub-division of internal spaces with modern partitioning, the introduction of air-conditioning and other services, the loss of original elements such as floor platforms and window forms, fireplaces, chimneys and changes to roof covering materials. The changes are reversible.

13 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

In 1838, Perth Townsite was surveyed by Assistant Surveyor A. Hillman and the plan of the Townsite was published in London by J. Arrowsmith, cartographer. This plan records a number of large land holdings on the bank of the Swan River adjacent to Claise Brook, as well as the lake later to be known as Tea Tree Lagoon, and the Burial Ground later designated as the East Perth Cemeteries. Between 1833 and 1845, plans of the Townsite record developing subdivision in East Perth into streets and residential lots.

Circa 1890, East Perth had land allotted to Public Recreation, Botanic Gardens, Public Gardens and the Mulberry Plantation, with the railway traversing the north west corner and the subdivision into small residential lots complete except for larger holdings on the river and the land immediately north of Claise Brook. The site for *East Perth Primary School*, bounded by Wittenoom, Bennett and Royal Streets was designated after 1890.

Private land use in East Perth, at the time *East Perth Primary School* was established, is recorded in Council Rate Books, dating from around the turn of the century, as being predominantly residential coupled with nineteenth century cottage industries such as stables, saddleries and small workshops being carried out on residential lots. Dairy paddocks, native camps and open drains were also part of the local character. Market gardening was carried out in the rich soil on the river flats. Industry in the form of an abattoir, Cook's mill, a foundry, timber yards and brick yards had existed in the vicinity of Claise Brook since the early 1850s.

As the residential population increased with land subdivision, so the buildings to service that community listed in Perth City Council records show - schools, shops, churches, wine saloons, hotels, Chinese laundries, tobacconists, brothels, bake houses, butchers and rubbish tips. Other development included major intervention in the form of sewerage treatment works, brickyards, flour milling, factories, tanneries, workshops, confectionery factories, wood yards, bottling works, small breweries, and a skating rink.

The expansion of the Railway and construction of the first Bunbury Railway Bridge which preceded the close of the nineteenth century accompanied a major demographic change; land development soared together with speculation in real estate.

Western Australia in the 1890s, with gold discoveries in the State, saw a number of changes occurring in the community. One such change was the presence of an increasing number of new arrivals, whether immigrants or 't'othersiders. With the rise of immigrants, which raised the population from 48,502 in 1890 to 100,515 in 1895, the number of elementary schools and their enrolments rose sharply.¹ The result was an increase in the number of new

¹ Mossenson, D. *State Education in Western Australia 1829 - 1960*, (UWA Press, Nedlands, 1972) p. 72.

schools. Most of the new government schools were small dispersed institutions, some being as far apart as Shark Bay and Esperance. Others, like Wagin and Katanning, were in the slowly developing agricultural districts. Several of them, for example, Victoria Park, Bayswater, Leederville, East and West Perth, and Highgate, were located on the outskirts of the capital which was growing under the impetus of improved conditions.²

Plans for *East Perth Primary School* were drafted, in 1894, by the Public Works Department (PWD) under the direction of George Temple Poole. Development carried out in the two decades from 1890 to 1910 in the area of public works far exceeded the volume of work that had been undertaken by the Public Service since 1870. In 1874, the Governor proposed the setting up of a department of works; a "Government Engineer" was appointed in 1876, as Director of Public Works and Engineer of Railways. George Temple Poole who in 1885 had succeeded R. R. Jewell as Superintendent of Public Works, was appointed "Colonial Architect" in 1888. In this capacity, he was responsible for the design and overseeing of public works. J. H. Grainger succeeded Poole, in 1897, as principal architect to be followed by Hillson Beasley from 1905, until 1916. It was customary at this period for the Public Works Department to carry out major public works and buildings. Responsible government in WA in 1891 together with the increase in population following the discovery of gold, saw the proliferation of public and private works, including schools. Poole, Grainger and Beasley are noted for the particularity and the consistency of their design as recorded in the documents which survive in government archives.

Construction of *East Perth Primary School* began in 1895, and the first section was completed that year by Templar Brothers for £781 17s 4d.³ The building was 53 feet, 6 inches by 22 feet, had ten windows on the north with a verandah shading them.

The building is mentioned in the Annual Report of the Education Department for the year 1895 as a newly completed school building.⁴

In 1896, the school was described in the Annual Report of the Public Works Department as follows:

Schools, East Perth - This building is constructed of brick, and, together with an additional room afterwards added, affords accommodation for 100 children. The work is completed. A temporary classroom has since been erected; but as even as this accommodation is not sufficient to meet the requirements of the Education Department, a large addition is being made to the building, which will increase the total accommodation to about 300. There are also the necessary cloak rooms, lavatories, teachers' rooms and outbuildings provided. The contract has been let for this addition for £1,926.8s., to be completed 28th November, 1896.⁵

² *ibid.*

³ Oldham, R & J. *George Temple-Poole; Architect of the Golden Years, 1885-1897.* (UWA Press, Nedlands, 1980) p.189; *Government Gazette* 1895, p. 467 (Tender notice).

⁴ *Votes & Proceedings* 1896, Vol 1. Annual Report of the Education Department for the Year 1895.

⁵ *Votes & Proceedings* 1896, Vol. 2. Annual report of the Public Works Department for the Year 1895-96.

The first stage of *East Perth Primary School* was built to satisfy the need for the education of local children. As the residential population increased, so the school was extended and altered to accommodate more children and for specialised tuition in such areas as Domestic Science.

Additions carried out, in 1897, on the south side, closely resemble those at Highgate carried out the previous year, with a somewhat over-elaborated arrangement of the extensive glazed areas. The contract for these additions was let to J.A. Robinson for the sum of £1,926 8s 0d, and included the addition on the west side of an assembly room, two classrooms, two cloakrooms, a verandah and two shelter sheds.⁶ Later additions, in 1902 and 1903, obscured the original concept and added several free-standing structures on the site.⁷

In the 1890s, the gas works were developed and the barrel drain carried Claise Brook underground. The Tea Tree Lagoon and Claise Brook were reduced and largely transformed - eventually to become an unsavoury industrial drain into the river. The Perth City Council developed a Nursery in Victoria Park in the late 1890s. The East Perth Power Station on the river foreshore was commissioned, in 1916, and the adjacent large PWD Depot was set up, around 1928, and expanded until its closure in the early 1990's.

With the substantial growth in industry came a degradation of the environment. The housing stock deteriorated, only the working class remained, in pockets; commerce and industry expanded into the residential core.

When the population declined well into the twentieth century, the buildings became redundant for use as a Government School. After the School closed, the vacant buildings were adapted for alternative use.

The East Perth Project, in the 1980s, put a stop to the exploitation of the area by commerce and industry. Establishment of the East Perth Redevelopment Authority with statutory planning control over the area, was the beginning of a new era of control and appropriate redevelopment which promoted a deliberate reversal of the degradation of original natural resources such as Claise Brook and the Lagoon, and the Swan River foreshore; removal of heavy industry and the cleansing of industrial sites for new uses; the planning for a new residential community in a prime location immediately adjacent to the City of Perth; and witnessed the process of regeneration for former major industrial sites which had become redundant - the Gas Works, the East Perth Power Station, the sewage treatment works, brickyards, the PWD Depots and Stores and an abundance of industrial sites acquired by Government for new road works which were subsequently shelved.

Files of the East Perth Redevelopment Authority and the heritage consultant to that Authority, Duncan Stephen & Mercer, record restoration and clearance work to *East Perth Primary School* carried out by the Authority on the Main

⁶ PWD plan set 4597, drawn by Edwin Lodge.

⁷ Oldham, p. 189; Kevin Palassis Architects: 'Conservation and Management Plan - East Perth Primary School' July 1996, p.11.

School Building in 1992 and 1993. A photographic record also exists for this work in the files of Duncan Stephen & Mercer.

An extensive collection of Public Works Department drawings are held in the BMA Plan Room, and Government files exist as well recording the development of the buildings from inception prior to 1899 until the most recent adaptation for use as a Children's Court in the 1970s.

Research of Government drawings indicates that *East Perth Primary School* developed in the following stages to accommodate a growth in population, changes in education methodology and adaptation for new uses:

Pre 1899 Two Classrooms, Teachers Room, Cloak Room and Verandah - now surviving as the eastern section of the main building. The addition on the west side of an Assembly room, two Classrooms, two Cloakrooms, a Verandah and two Verandahs (Shelters).

1899 The addition on the west side of three Classrooms, conversion of the Assembly Room to two Classrooms, conversion of two Classrooms in the previous addition to Teachers Room and Boys Lavatory with an internal central corridor.

Pre 1902 Erection of the Teacher's House in the north east corner of the site.

Pre 1902 Erection of the first stage of the separate Infants School Building (fmr), comprising one Classroom, Hall, Teachers Room, Hat Room and Verandah.

Early 1902 The addition of a Boys Hat Lobby (Cloak Room), internal alterations to convert earlier additions to a Hall, and other minor alterations.

March 1903 The addition of two Classrooms and a Verandah (Shelter Shed) on the north side and other minor alterations.

1905 The addition of one Classroom to the Infants School Building (fmr).

1912 The addition of one Classroom, Corridor and Verandah (Shelter) to the Infants School Building (fmr).

1914 The addition of one Classroom and a Cloak Room, (Lavatory, Hat Room)

After 1914 Alterations to the small windows in the south elevation of the Main School Building.

1927 Minor alterations to the Infants School Building (fmr) to incorporate Household Management.

After 1927 Minor alterations to all buildings and modern additions to the House.

Circa 1975 The introduction of internal partitioning, alterations to various openings and later and the addition of a transportable extension on the north side - for conversion of the building for use as a Children's Court.

13.2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

The former *East Perth Primary School* comprises two buildings - the Main School building and a separate Infants School Building (fmr) nearby. Both buildings are constructed in single storeyed brickwork with pitched roofs; the main building has a dado of limestone to the main south face and a terra cotta tiled roof covering; the Infants School Building (fmr) is all brick with a corrugated iron roof covering. The main building consists of a series of classrooms loosely grouped around a central hall; the arrangement has been subjected to major change as the school developed from the original two classrooms to the present ten classrooms. The Infants School Building (fmr) consists of three classrooms, a central hall and secondary service rooms. Much of the present partitioning of former classrooms in the main building into small rooms dates from adaptation of the building for use as a Children's Court circa 1975.

In conformity with the disposition of state schools dating from the end of the nineteenth century, the two buildings are sited away from street boundaries of the lot and are surrounded by playgrounds and ancillary buildings. The site is located in the approximate centre of the former East Perth locality within a street pattern determined by the original nineteenth century residential sub-division.

The external architectural form of the main building - the stone plinth, round-headed windows, small paned sashes, decorative gables and high-pitched tiled roofs with projecting eaves - is arranged in an architectural style used by Hillson Beasley and his contemporaries as Principal Architect for the PWD in the design of schools and other public buildings at the turn of the century. The classicism of earlier decades is here replaced with a picturesque discipline expressed through a strong and sincere treatment of materials.

The Infants School Building (fmr) is expressed externally in a simple, unadorned form. Both buildings demonstrate a unity of scale and materials throughout their development.

The original small windows in the south face of the pre-1900 classrooms were altered to larger windows and the sills lowered to the large, arched windows, when the layout of the rooms changed and stepped platforms in the floor to accommodate changes in teaching methods were removed. These changes compromise the original design of the building.

An examination of the fabric of both buildings validates the documented sequential and major development to which the school has been subjected since construction began.

Former East Perth School

Record of Development Refer also to the plan attached

	Area Number Refer to Plan
Stage 1 : Pre 1899 - Main School	
2 classrooms	5.6
Teachers Room	4
Cloak Room	3
Verandah	1
Stage 2 : Pre 1899 - Main School	
Assembly Room	7A + 7B
2 classrooms	8B 8C
2 Cloak Rooms - Girls & Boys	8A 9
Verandah	10C
2 Verandahs (Shelters)	2 10A
Window inserted 6/7A	
Window inserted 3/4	
Doors inserted 5/8A and 6/8A	
Stepped Gallery removed from 5, relocated in 6 and extended	
Stage 3 : 1899 - Main School	
Shelter demolished	10A
Cloak Room demolished and corridor formed	9
3 Classrooms	10A/10B, 1.12
Conversion of Assembly Room to 2 Classrooms; fireplace converted to two fireplaces 7A 7B	
Conversion of 2 Classrooms to Teachers Room & Boys Lavatory with internal corridor; doors formed & altered	8B 8C 8D
Porch	9A
Stage 4 : Pre 1902 - Infants School Building (fmr)	
First stage of separate Infants School Building (fmr)	
. One Classroom	
. Hall	
. Teachers Room	
. Verandah	
Stage 5 : Early 1902 - Main School	
Boys Hat Lobby (Cloak Room)	13
Conversion of earlier additions to a Hall, with new chimney stack over	8A 8B 8C
8D	

- Minor alterations -
- . door formed 5/3
- . window converted to opening 4/3
- . archway converted to doorway 8D/9
- . screen wall refixed from 8B to 5

Stage 6 : Late 1902 - Main School

- 2 classrooms 14.15
- Verandah (Shelter Shed) 16
- Minor Alterations
- . external door converted to window in 4
- . doors amended to hall 8
- . windows added to Classrooms 11 (east) 12 (west)

Stage 7 : 1905 - Infants School Building (fmr)

One classroom

Stage 8 : 1912 - Infants School Building (fmr)

One Classroom
Corridor
Verandah (Shelter)

Stage 9 : 1913-1914 - Main School

- Window converted to doors in east wall Classroom 15
- Electric light installed
- Porch 9A demolished
- One classroom 17
- Corridor 19
- Cloak Room (Lavatory Hat Room) 18
- Porch 20

Later Additions

- After 1914 Alterations to windows to the South wall of the Main School
Windows added to north wall Classroom 15
Opening between Classrooms 7A/7B bricked up
- 1927 Minor alterations to the Infants School Building (fmr) to incorporate Household Management.
- After 1927 Minor alterations - fireplaces bricked up, north verandah removed (?)
- circa 1975 Partitions, alterations to openings, introduction of holding cells and toilets
- & later and transportable addition - to convert Main School building for use as a Children's Court.

In 1992-1993, record restoration and clearance work to *East Perth Primary School* was carried out under the supervision of Duncan Stephen & Mercer. Restoration to the exterior of the Main School building was also undertaken.

The school grounds, as a setting for the significant buildings, would be enhanced by the upgrading of deteriorated landscaping and paving, and by improvement of fencing. The open space which survives around the buildings is significant, not because it is the original playground of the School, but also because it provides a transition between the original residential district and its street pattern and the open space of the park in Wellington Square. This external setting has already been compromised by the development of adjacent large-scale buildings.

13.3 REFERENCES

Record sets of drawings held in the Plan Room at the Building Management Authority in West Perth for the East Perth School.

Files held in Government archives, relating to the East Perth School.

R. Bodycoat, Duncan Stephen & Mercer, 'East Perth - Triangle Sector Heritage Significance Study' (prepared for the East Perth Redevelopment Authority. September 1992)

R. Bodycoat, Duncan Stephen & Mercer, East Perth Redevelopment Authority - 'Heritage Significance Study' (1992).

Duncan Stephen & Mercer - correspondence files and photographic records East Perth School (1991 to 1994).

Kevin Palassis Architects: 'Conservation and Management Plan - East Perth Primary School' (prepared for the East Perth Redevelopment Authority, July 1996)