



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

The post office demonstrates Temple-Poole's effort to architecturally express civic and domestic functions in a modest sized suburban building. (Criterion 1.2)

11.2. HISTORIC VALUE

The building demonstrates the provision of government services to an expanding suburban community, the result of the gold boom experienced in Western Australia in the late 1890s. (Criterion 2.2)

The building is of historic value as one of a small number of surviving inner city postal buildings designed by Temple-Poole in the last year of his employment as Government Architect. (Criterion 2.3)

11.3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE

11.4. SOCIAL VALUE

The building has social value as a demonstration of an earlier way of life in a rapidly changing neighbourhood. (Criterion 4.2)

12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE

12.1. RARITY

In his 1992 survey of post offices in Western Australia Brian Pope remarked that the interior of the *Brisbane Street Post Office (fmr)* 'is the most unaltered example I have come across'.¹

Of the four post offices built north of the city in 1896-97 the *Brisbane Street Post Office (fmr)* is closest to its original design. The other offices have

¹ Pope, B., 'Post Office Survey', (for the National Trust of Australia (WA), 1992).

either been demolished, altered internally, or painted externally.
(Criterion 5.2)

12.2 REPRESENTATIVENESS

The *Brisbane Street Post Office (fmr)* is the most complete example of a late 1890s suburban post office in Perth. (Criterion 6.1)

The building clearly demonstrates the operation of a suburban postal office and the living conditions of a postal officer in Perth. (Criterion 6.2)

12.3 CONDITION

The exterior of the building is intact and internal spaces have had minor alterations.

All elements of the building are in sound condition.

12.4 INTEGRITY

The re-development of *Brisbane Street Post Office (fmr)* for use as rental office accommodation will allow the original form and function of the building to remain evident and therefore the place retains a high degree of integrity.

12.5 AUTHENTICITY

Apart from the fibro-cement sheet cladding at the rear of the building, (to be removed when re-developed) the *Brisbane Street Post Office (fmr)* retains a high degree of authenticity.

13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

The former *Brisbane Street Post Office* is one of three post offices built in the late 1890s to serve Perth's rapidly expanding residential areas north of the railway line. The need for postal services in North Perth was raised in parliament on 24 September 1895, when Mr Wood requested, 'the Government to give postal accommodation to the residents of North Perth, either by the establishment of a post office, or by placing a pillar-box at the corner of Palmerston and Brisbane-streets, and also one at the corner of Lincoln and Burt-streets.'² The Premier replied that although the Postal Department had been trying to provide facilities for North Perth they had been unable to secure a suitable building. In the meantime, he reported, until an office was built a pillar-box would be provided.³

Tenders were called for the North Perth (Brisbane Street) Post Office in April 1896.⁴ The tender was let on 27 May 1896, to J. Finlay at £1,111 and the building was completed on 28 September 1896.⁵ In April 1898, as the

² *Western Australian Parliamentary Debates*, 1895.

³ *Western Australian Parliamentary Debates*, 1895, p. 1096.

⁴ *Government Gazette*, April 24 1896, p. 673.

⁵ Pope, B., 'Post Office Survey', (for the National Trust of Australia (WA), 1992).

city continued to expand north, with the formation of the suburb of North Perth, it was necessary to re-name the post office the Brisbane Street Post Office. The second post office, 'Perth: North-West', located at the corner of Aberdeen and Parker Streets, Northbridge, was constructed in 1897, to plans drawn up by W.A. Blackett in 1896.

In recent years this post office has been known as the Northbridge Post Office. (Following the closure of the Aberdeen and Brisbane Street post offices in late 1993, a new postal agency will be known as the Northbridge Post Office.) The third post office (now demolished) was located on Newcastle Street. Tenders for this office were called in late 1896 and accepted in March 1897. H. Parker obtained the contract for £1,972.⁶ All three postal offices were similar in design, style and materials, but with variations in their details. A fourth post office, built at the same time and to a similar design, is located at the corner of Vincent and Oxford Streets, Leederville.

George Temple-Poole was the Government Architect at the time, responsible for the design and construction of the post offices. Temple-Poole held the title of 'Colonial Architect' from 1891 until he retired at the end of 1896. These postal buildings were amongst the last government buildings he designed.

Australia Post sold the post office by auction in December 1993. The new owner has approval to adapt the post office for office accommodation and construct five terrace houses across the back of the site.

13.2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

The former *Brisbane Street Post Office* consists of Postal Office and Quarters under the one roof. The lavatory block, built along the rear boundary, has been demolished and toilet facilities are now included at the rear under the main roof. The grass and gravel surrounding the post office has been replaced by bitumen carpark to all sides except Brisbane Street.

The building is constructed with: limestone footings; 270 cavity brickwork, unpainted face brick to the exterior and plastered internally; and a timber framed custom orb clad roof unpainted. Features of particular interest include: the semi-circular arches to the public porch; a side verandah with white painted turned wooden posts for the residential quarters; and double hung sash windows, with Temple-Poole's characteristic quarter paned top half.

The Brisbane Street office was the least expensive of this group of post offices and is less decoratively detailed. Most notably it does not have ionic capitals on its arcading. The lower cost and less detail may have been a reflection on the lower socio-economic standing of the neighbourhood.⁷

⁶ Oldham, R & J., *George Temple-Poole: Architect of the Golden Years 1885-1897*, (UWA Press, Nedlands, 1980), p. 192.

⁷ The Perth: North-West Office on Aberdeen Street, the more elaborately detailed post office serviced a Commissioner for Railways and a Cabinet Minister, who lived opposite Russell Square.

Minor alterations to the former *Brisbane Street Post Office*, as part of the office accommodation re-development, have been approved by Perth City Council and HCWA. These include: demolition of fibro wall additions at rear of existing building; making good damaged windows; installation of new WC; general upgrading of painting and replacement of timber floor skirtings and architraves where white ant attack has occurred.

The construction of five two-storey townhouses with carports, on the remaining land to the rear of the existing building, is in progress.

13.3 REFERENCES

Pope, B., 'Post Office Survey', (for the National Trust (WA), 1992).

National Trust Assessment Exposition.