



# 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

*Tarantella Night Club* (fmr), with its strong vertical form, deep recesses, rich masonry textures, and medieval motifs, is a fine, idiosyncratic, example of the Federation Romanesque style. (Criterion 1.1)

The highly individualistic design and details of *Tarantella Night Club* (fmr) and the dominant verticality of the building contribute to its role as a local landmark in the predominantly horizontal streetscape of Fremantle's West End.

(Criterion 1.3)

Mouat Street, between Phillimore and High Streets, is an uninterrupted streetscape of commercial buildings constructed at the turn of the century. *Tarantella Night Club* (fmr) is an important component of this historically significant streetscape. (Criterion 1.4)

### 11.2. HISTORIC VALUE

*Tarantella Night Club* (fmr) is an example of buildings constructed during the gold boom around the turn of the century, which significantly changed the face of Fremantle. This period is noted for its ornate, ebullient buildings, signifying the prosperity and confidence of the time.

*Tarantella Night Club* (fmr) demonstrates the evolution of the commercial centre of Fremantle. The original purpose of the building, a combination of mercantile offices, residence, and warehouse, reflected the activities of the flourishing port. Its conversion into a night club in the 1970s, and adaptation back to commercial/residential uses in the 1990s reflect the changing functions of the inner city area of Fremantle. (Criterion 2.1)

The place demonstrates the development of Fremantle as the gateway port for goods into Western Australia at the time of the state's rapid growth in early 1900s, following the construction of the Inner Harbour. (Criterion 2.2)

The place is closely associated with the Imperial German Consul prior to World War One, with fables of his activities being part of the city's folklore. (Criterion 2.3)

### **11. 3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE**

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#### **11. 4. SOCIAL VALUE**

For 70 years the place was associated with Fremantle's shipping and transport activities, and for a further 20 years, as *Tarantella Night Club* (fmr), the place was associated with Fremantle's night life and entertainment. The place contributes to the identity of Fremantle. (Criterion 4.2)

## **12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE**

### **12. 1. RARITY**

*Tarantella Night Club* (fmr) exhibits a very unusual idiosyncratic use of stone Federation Romanesque architecture, particularly in Fremantle where the stucco ornamentation of the Free Classical style predominates. (Criterion 5.1)

### **12. 2 REPRESENTATIVENESS**

*Tarantella Night Club* (fmr) is representative of the confidence and exuberance displayed in commercial buildings in Fremantle at the turn of the century, associated with the development of Fremantle's West End during the gold boom in Western Australia. (Criterion 6.2)

### **12. 3 CONDITION**

Following recent redevelopment *Tarantella Night Club* (fmr) is in sound condition, although the recent flooding and rising damp in the front section of the basement remains a concern.

### **12. 4 INTEGRITY**

No evidence remains of the use of the place as a night club. The recent reinstatement of dividing walls in the original positions has done much to restore the internal form and intent of the office and warehouse functions of the place prior to conversion to *Tarantella Night Club* (fmr). Contemporary residential and commercial uses are compatible with design of the place. The place retains a high degree of integrity.

### **12. 5 AUTHENTICITY**

Previous alterations to the function of the building necessitated the removal of substantial amounts of the internal fabric, including some interesting finishes and details. However, the original external form and fabric remains largely unaltered, and, overall, the place retains a reasonable degree of authenticity.

### 13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

The documentary evidence has been compiled by Irene Ham-Sauman.  
The physical evidence has been compiled by Katrina Chisholm.

#### 13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

*Tarantella Night Club* (fmr) is a three story commercial building constructed in the Federation Romanesque style in 1903.<sup>1</sup> At the time of construction Western Australia was experiencing the prosperity and security of a long running gold boom.

Most of the buildings in the new town centres were offices and warehouses...and architects exerted themselves for their clients, and no doubt for their own satisfaction, in efforts to produce individually different buildings.<sup>2</sup>

Confidence in the future of the State heralded a baroque quality associated in architecture.<sup>3</sup> According to Margaret Pitt Morison and John White in *Western Towns and Buildings*, during the gold rush period

the business potential of both Perth and Fremantle expanded, with the result that the central parts of the old towns were practically rebuilt...with a complete change of style.<sup>4</sup>

At the time this area of Fremantle, now known as the West End, was the focus of mercantile activity, following the construction of the Inner Harbour.<sup>5</sup>

The building, which consisted of offices, residence and warehouse units was designed by E. H. Dean Smith, and built for William deLacey Bacon, a local investor, on land he had acquired the previous year.<sup>6</sup>

Ian Molyneux, in *Looking Around Perth*, describes the building as 'a highly individualistic and rugged building; quite brutalistic'.<sup>7</sup> A contemporary report on building progress states that 'the extensive additions at the rear of the handsome premises of the Norddeutscher-Lloyd being now about ready for the roof', which suggests the building was constructed in two stages, with the offices and residence already occupied before the warehouse units at the rear were added.<sup>8</sup>

Norddeutscher-Lloyd Imperial German Mail Steamers were represented in Fremantle by L. Rattazzi & Co., wine, spirit and general merchants, the first tenants of the building. Laurman Rattazzi was also the Imperial German

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<sup>1</sup> Apperly, R. Irving, R. & Reynolds, P. *A Pictorial Guide to Identifying Australian Architecture: Styles and Terms from 1788 to the Present*. (Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1989). pp. 116-119.

<sup>2</sup> Morison, M. P. & White, J. (Eds) *Western Towns and Buildings*. (Nedlands, UWA Press, 1979), p. 117.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid*, p. 211.

<sup>4</sup> *ibid*, p. 54.

<sup>5</sup> *ibid*, p. 12 (Map of Fremantle, 1833) & p. 64; *Draft Conservation Policy for the Fremantle West End Conservation Plan*, (City of Fremantle, June 1989), p. 15.

<sup>6</sup> DOLA Certificate of Title, Vol. 240 Fol. 3.

<sup>7</sup> Molyneux, Ian. *Looking Around Perth: A guide to the architecture of Perth and surrounding towns* (compiled for the Royal Australian Institute of Architecture - WA Chapter). (Perth, Wescolour Press, 1981), p. 36.

<sup>8</sup> *The Western Australian Mining, Building and Engineering Journal*, 13 June, 1903, p. 18.

Consul and, later, Consul for Italy as well.<sup>9</sup> Local tradition has it that Rattazzi used the attic of the building to spy on shipping movements in and out of Fremantle Harbour.<sup>10</sup> Following the outbreak of World War One Rattazzi was interned as an alien, and the company's commercial activities suspended.

After WWI the premises were occupied by various tenants, generally businesses associated with shipping.<sup>11</sup> In 1952, the building was purchased and occupied by Dickenson's Transport Agency.<sup>12</sup>

In 1971, the building was purchased by L. H. & A. E. Webb, who leased it to Jose (Joe) Faria, who operated a night club on the premises.<sup>13</sup>

It may have been in this period (1970s) that openings were made in the ground floor internal walls, which originally separated the warehouse units, creating the large open space occupied by the night club's dance floor and bar.<sup>14</sup>

In 1986, Joe Faria and his partner, Lanham Holdings Pty Ltd, purchased the building and later, in 1990, offered the freehold for sale at \$695,000 on a lease back basis.<sup>15</sup>

But the night club was generating complaints from local businesses and residents about patrons causing damage to property and creating a nuisance late at night.<sup>16</sup> In order to make the property more attractive to a new purchaser the owners employed architect Michael Patroni, who designed a two-stage redevelopment of the premises.

The first stage necessitated rebuilding internal walls and adaptation of the front building into four strata-title commercial units; commercial use being a planning requirement of Fremantle City Council.<sup>17</sup>

The second-stage involved conversion of the three warehouse units, at the rear of the site, for residential use; this work to be undertaken by the purchasers to their own detail.

In 1992, the building was purchased by Fabray Pty Ltd, a division of Fini Homes and, in February 1993, the *Tarantella Night Club* finally closed, after operating in the building for twenty one years.<sup>18</sup> Later that year the three units designated for residential use were sold at an average price of \$260 000.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> *Wise's Post Office Directories*, 1903 and 1910.

<sup>10</sup> Fremantle City Council Planning File, 5 Mouat Street.

<sup>11</sup> *Wise's Post Office Directories*, 1918 - 1949.

<sup>12</sup> DOLA Certificate of Title, Vol. 256, Fol. 122; *Daily News*, 19 Feb. 1969.

<sup>13</sup> DOLA Certificate of Title, Vol. 1268, Fol. 511.

<sup>14</sup> Plans held by architect, Michael Patroni.

<sup>15</sup> DOLA Certificate of Title, Vol. 1747 Fol. 602; 'Tarantella for sale', *The West Australian*, 27 June 1990.

<sup>16</sup> 'Niteclub raises hackles', *Fremantle Herald*, 9 December 1991; 'Getting Tough', *Fremantle Gazette*, 7 January 1992; 'West End Blues', *Fremantle Herald*, 25 May 1992; 'Club Hearing Adjourned' *Fremantle Gazette*, 2 June 1992.

<sup>17</sup> Fremantle City Council Planning File, 5 Mouat Street.

<sup>18</sup> 'Nightmare on Mouat St Over', *Fremantle Gazette*, 13 July 1992; 'Tarantella Closes', *Fremantle Herald*, 15 February 1993.

<sup>19</sup> *The West Australian Real Estate Weekly*, 27 November 1993, p. 1.

## 13. 2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

No. 5 Mouat Street is a three storey commercial and residential building constructed in 1903. The building covers the entire lot area and stands alone, separated from adjacent buildings by Rights of Way.

The building displays a similar scale to other buildings in the street, however the idiosyncratic form and rugged Federation Romanesque details<sup>20</sup> gives the building a highly individualistic character, quite unlike the predominantly Italianate style of neighbouring buildings.

The street elevation has a strong vertical emphasis; the result of the relatively narrow frontage. exaggerated height of the ground level arcade, and steep pitched gable, which is further accentuated by a castellated tower crowned with a tiled, pyramidal roof and spire.<sup>21</sup> The verticality of the *Tarantella Night Club* (fmr) is in strong contrast to the streetscape of the West End of Fremantle which has a predominantly horizontal emphasis.

The facade is divided into three bays and is strongly modelled employing semi-circular arches at the ground floor arcade and above the window openings of the upper floors.

Rugged, rock faced limestone and strongly modelled stone details dominate the front facade. Contrasting stones and textures have been used; bluestone column plinths and central columns at ground level, freestone brackets supporting the ornamental string course at first floor level. Rock faced stone detailing at the corners of the building, contrast with smooth stone detailing in the central bay. Ornamental features include the string courses defining the floor levels; the column capitals which are composed of non-classical, inverted scrolls; and, a raking arch motif embellishing the gable.

The front entrance to the ground floor is emphasised by a flight of stone stairs in the central bay. A spiked, wrought iron balustrade either side of the main entrance guards the void to the basement level. A narrow flight of stairs, in the recess of the right hand bay, provides access from the street level to the basement.

The building consists of basement, ground and first floors with a loft area and tower at the front unit only. Behind the front facade the original construction is conventional employing solid brick walls and timber flooring with herringbone strutting. The external brick walls, side and rear, are constructed in English bond, with arched brickwork to the openings of upper floor windows in the front section. Fire-separating walls, which penetrate the metal deck roof, vertically divide the building into four units. The three rear units are accessible from the northern Right of Way.

A number of changes have been made to the building fabric in order to accommodate new functions. When the building operated as a nightclub openings were made in the vertical dividing walls to provide access from front to back at each level; window and door openings of all but the front

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<sup>20</sup> 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), pp. 116-119.

<sup>21</sup> Three sides of the pyramid are tiled. The rear side, not visible from the street, has the same metal deck roofing as the rest of the building.

facade were altered; stairwells were remodelled; and toilet facilities introduced to conform with the greater public use of the building.

The two stage adaptation to commercial and residential purposes in 1993, involved the reinstatement of the previously demolished fire walls; the reinstatement of original window and door openings on the side elevations; and the creation of three new steel door entries to the residential units at the rear of the building.<sup>22</sup>

The internal spaces created by this adaptation have restored much of the early intent of the building. The floor and roof substructure are exposed in the rear units, and the location of the original, narrow stairs is apparent in the floor framing. Access between floors is currently provided by spiral, steel staircases. Original timber gentries and metal fixings on the north elevation provide evidence of a former use of the building as a warehouse.

Some of the elaborately crafted timber joinery is still evident in the skirting and staircase detailing of the front hall of the commercial unit, although other internal finishes of this unit are primarily new.

Rising damp is evident in the basement areas, particularly in the front unit. This area was recently flooded. The cause is believed to have been either a leaking water pipe or a rapidly rising water table. A pump operating full-time is now in use, and appears to be holding the problem at bay.<sup>23</sup>

### 13.3 REFERENCES

National Trust Assessment Exposition

Australian Heritage Commission Data Sheet

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<sup>22</sup> Fremantle City Council Planning File, 5 Mouat Street.

<sup>23</sup> Site visit by Katrina Chisholm with Michael Patroni, Architect. (Memo, HCWA file 0958, 3 November 1995.)