



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

Central Government Offices and Town Hall Precinct has aesthetic value for the character created by the individual buildings which collectively form a significant cultural environment associated with the nineteenth century administration of local and state government in the Western Australian colony. (Criterion 1.4)

The Town Hall and the Central Government Offices are regarded as excellent examples of the colonial civic architecture of their respective periods. (Criterion 1.2)

11.2. HISTORIC VALUE

Central Government Offices and Town Hall Precinct has historic value for the importance of the density of cultural features illustrating the evolution of colonial administration in Perth. (Criterion 2.1)

The site of the R&I Bank Building in Barrack Street is closely associated with the symbolic felling of a tree in June 1829 to mark the foundation of the Swan River Colony. The Town Hall is closely associated with the period of convicts in the mid nineteenth century, and the Central Government Offices are closely associated with the move towards self government and the gold boom at the end of the nineteenth century. (Criterion 2.2)

The buildings within the precinct are associated with numerous historic people associated with the development of Perth and Western Australia.

11.3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE

11.4. SOCIAL VALUE

Acknowledged by local and state government, and all heritage groups, the *Central Government Offices and Town Hall Precinct* is highly valued by the community for its social, cultural, and aesthetic associations. (Criterion 4.1)

Central Government Offices and Town Hall Precinct, traditionally regarded as the administrative and symbolic centre of Perth, contributes to the community's sense of place. (Criterion 4.2)

12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE

12.1. RARITY

Central Government Offices and Town Hall Precinct demonstrates the distinctive nineteenth century colonial custom of the central location of the local and state administration. (Criterion 5.2)

12.2 REPRESENTATIVENESS

12.3 CONDITION

The buildings within the precinct require some maintenance and restoration work, but remain in a generally sound condition.

12.4 INTEGRITY

Some twentieth century building within the precinct has diminished the heritage value of the precinct. However, the integrity of place can be restored, and its long term viability is strong.

12.5 AUTHENTICITY

Two significant nineteenth century buildings were demolished to make way for twentieth century buildings within the precinct, however the two principal building remain largely in their original state. The precinct retains a high degree of authenticity.

13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

A plaque in Barrack Street, outside the R&I Bank Building, marks the spot traditionally associated with the felling of a tree in June 1829 to mark the foundation of the Swan River Colony. From 1829 onwards the area within the precinct has been associated with the administration of Western Australia. Initially the area was used as the barracks parade ground, and subsequently colonial government administrative offices were built on the site.

In the late 1860s the Perth Town Hall was built in the Victorian Free Gothic, to a design by Richard Jewell. The building, to house the city administration demonstrated the growth of the colonial city in conjunction with the period of penal transportation.

In the late 1870s the colonial government began construction of an office building, which over the next twenty five years would be expanded by successive governments to form what is now known as the Central Government Offices.

The Police Courts (later the State Electoral Office) in Barrack Street and the Legislative Council Building in Hay Street were also constructed within the precinct in this period. The former was demolished in 1958 to make way for

the R&I Bank Building and the latter was demolished in 1968 to make way for an extension to the R&I Bank Building, in Hay Street.

The administrative importance of the Town Hall, and later the Central Government Offices, declined after the 1960s as Perth City Council and then the Premier and Treasury vacated the buildings in the precinct in preference for office accommodation elsewhere in the city. However, the civic nature of the buildings and their prominent central location has maintained the social importance of the precinct.

The area of the *Central Government Offices and Town Hall Precinct* is incorporated within a broader Central Government Precinct, which was classified by the National Trust of Australia (WA) in 1978.

The area of the *Central Government Offices and Town Hall Precinct* is incorporated within a broader Central Government Precinct which was entered into the Register of the National Estate by the Australian Heritage Commission in 1978.

The area of the *Central Government Offices and Town Hall Precinct* is incorporated in a broader Central Government Precinct, which was entered into the Perth City Planning Scheme and is afforded protection under the scheme.

13.2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

Central Government Offices and Town Hall Precinct demonstrates the character created by the individual buildings which collectively form a significant cultural environment associated with the nineteenth century colonial administration of local and state government in the Western Australian. The unity of this precinct of nineteenth century public offices was disrupted by the demolition of the Electoral Offices in Barrack Street and the Legislative Council in Hay Street, in the 50s and 60s respectively.

The Town Hall (1867) is designed in the Victorian Free Gothic style.

The Central Government Offices is a more diverse group of buildings, including the Treasury Building in the style of Victorian Second Empire pavilions and the Titles Office in the Federation Free Classical style.

The two Modernist buildings have a strong vertical emphasis in their form and do not pay due attention to their immediate older neighbours. When the precinct is viewed from either Barrack or Hay Streets the intrusion of the 1960s buildings into the contiguous streetscape is quite obvious.

13.3 REFERENCES

National Trust Assessment Exposition

Australian Heritage Commission Data Sheet

Campbell, R.McK., *Perth Town Hall, Conservation Plan*, (for Perth City Council, 1987).

BMA, *Central Government Offices Conservation Plan*, (for Government Property Office, 1994).