

Australian Capital Territory

Heritage (Decision about Provisional Registration of the former Bus Depot, Kingston) Notice 2009 (No 1)

Notifiable Instrument NI2009—306

made under the

Heritage Act 2004 s34 Notice of decision about Provisional Registration

1. Name of instrument

This instrument is the Heritage (*Decision about Provisional Registration of the former Bus Depot, Kingston*) Notice 2009 (No 1).

2. Commencement

This instrument commences on the day after notification.

3. Notice of Decision

Pursuant to Section 34 of the *Heritage Act 2004* the ACT Heritage Council has decided not to provisionally register the *former Bus Depot, Kingston*.

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Mr Gerhard Zatschler
Secretary
ACT Heritage Council
GPO Box 158, Canberra ACT 2602

26 June 2009



ACT Heritage Council

STATEMENT OF REASONS

DECISION REGARDING THE INCLUSION OF FORMER BUS DEPOT KINGSTON, (BLOCK 16, SECTION 8, KINGSTON) IN THE ACT HERITAGE REGISTER

Chapter 1 Background

The former bus depot occupying Block 16 Section 16, Kingston was nominated to the interim ACT Heritage Places Register in February 2001 by Mrs J Carnall.

The Heritage Unit commissioned an independent consultant to assess the Bus Depot and a final report was received in early April 2001. Council reviewed the nomination and report at its meeting of 28 July 2001 and assessed the Kingston Bus Depot as having a range of low-level heritage values including:

- Architectural values in the 1940-45 office wing addition;
- Minor historical association with history of public transport in the ACT;
- Minor technical values in the welded fabrication of the portal frames;
- Minor social values with previous employees and their families including a specific interest group – Retired ACT Transport Employees Association Incorporated.

Council at its meeting of 6 December 2001 (HCM#72) considered that Bus Depot's heritage value was not sufficient to warrant Heritage Registration and suggested that the extant values be managed in the following manner:

- ***Record the fabric before demolition*** (this is already substantially completed)
- ***Retain architectural references to the Interwar Functionalist Style*** – permit demolition of the bus depot on the proviso that the new residential development on the site of the bus depot retain or reflect architectural details from this style, OR alternatively the new market building within the Cultural and Arts Precinct could reflect architectural styles or details from the depot including a similar clock tower at a prominent location (or even incorporation of the existing clock tower).
- ***Retain at least one representative portal frame*** (not necessarily in its original location) – it could, for example, be used externally as

an entry feature or a sculptural element within the Cultural and Arts Precinct.

- ***Commemorate and interpret the rich industrial history of the Kingston Foreshore area*** – subsequently endorsed within KFDA’s Cultural and Heritage Management Strategy, and to include specific projects such as recording the oral history of bus depot staff, conserving important collections of photographs, records and memorabilia (currently the subject of a heritage grant) and retaining the Bus Depot’s WW2 Honour Roll within a public or community facility within the Kingston foreshore area.

The Statement of Reasons developed by the Heritage Council in 2001 does not appear to have been released, and it is not clear that the process followed was administratively sound.

On reconsidering the claimed values in the original nomination, the Register Taskforce (in 2009) recommends confirmation of the 2001 Statement of Reasons and release of this to the nominator.

The possibility of a new value, related to the use of the place as the Bus Depot Markets since 1998, has been considered by the Council, but it is deemed that this is an amenity value for the community, rather than a social significance in relation to the heritage significance criteria.

Detailed reasoning of why the Former Bus Depot does not meet the threshold for listing under the heritage criteria at Section 10 of the *Heritage Act 2004* is included under ‘Assessment’.

Assessment

The Council’s assessment against the criteria specified in s.10 of the *Heritage Act 2004* is as follows.

In assessing the nomination for the former Bus Depot Kingston the Council considered:

- The original nomination form provided by the nominator.
- An independent report by a heritage consultant.
- Background material held on Heritage Unit files 01/1903 and 05/8444 including documents relating to the development, history and function of the place.
- The physical evidence and surrounding context as ascertained from an onsite assessments.

In relation to the place:

Assessment

The Council’s assessment against the criteria specified in s.10 of the *Heritage Act 2004* is as follows.

Criterion (a) *it demonstrates a high degree of technical or creative achievement (or both), by showing qualities of innovation, discovery, invention or an exceptionally fine level of application of existing techniques or approaches*

The nominator made a claim of high against this criterion.

The use of *fully-welded construction* for the portal frames that support the roof to the main workshop areas is a notable early use of this *fabrication* method within Canberra if not Australia.

Heritage Council assessment:

The technical nature of the innovation (welded fabrication) was employed by the Government architects for the practical reasons associated with large span construction and transportation. The widespread use of riveted portal framing beforehand and extensive use of welded portal frames since minimises the potential for the innovation of welded fabrication to be interpreted by a lay-person or to be of other educational value.

While the technical interest in the portal frame is acknowledged it is not considered of sufficient significance to require its conservation as a structural system in situ.

Criterion (b) *it exhibits outstanding design or aesthetic qualities valued by the community or a cultural group*

The nominator made a claim of high against this criterion:

The Single storey office wing demonstrates the Interwar Functionalist Style (1915-1940) of architecture through the adoption and adaptation of typical details associated with the style including - asymmetrical massing, rounded corners, parapet roof, use of simple geometric shapes, prominent horizontal bands of render or brickwork, the brick chimney with associated vertical stylized low-relief brickwork, and metal framed windows.

Heritage Council assessment:

The influence of industrial functionalist architecture developed in Europe was adopted in Australia in the 1930s. This office addition and Wentworth Avenue frontage to the existing Bus Depot Transport building is a rather late commercial example of the style in Canberra. It demonstrates characteristic details of the style in architectural elements such as the clock tower. Although the office wing comprises the most prominent façade, the street address to Wentworth Avenue, it is an addition and its relationship to the Bus Depot as a whole has diminished integrity. As such it does not demonstrate design and aesthetic qualities to an outstanding degree.

Criterion (c) it is important as evidence of a distinctive way of life, taste, tradition, religion, land use, custom, process, design or function that is no longer practised, is in danger of being lost or is of exceptional interest

The nominator made no claim against this criterion.

Criterion (d) it is highly valued by the community or a cultural group for reasons of strong or special religious, spiritual, cultural, educational or social associations

The nominator has made a claim of medium against this criterion:

The Retired ACT Transport Employees Association Incorporated, together with the families of staff who worked at the depot prior to its closure, value the place for its work and social associations. The Association has retained the WW2 Honour Roll and various heritage items related to the history of the transport depot for exhibition in a potential future transport museum; and continues to hold monthly meetings within the premises.

Heritage Council assessment:

Since 1998 the bus depot has achieved some prominence as a contemporary social focus for the broader ACT community as the site of the Old Bus Depot Markets each Sunday. Its proximity to the Powerhouse, now redeveloped as The Glassworks Museum, enhances the value of the site to the wider community and its potential for redevelopment. The Council considers that the importance of the site to the wider community outweighs the moderate significance of its social associations with the families of former staff who worked at the facility.

Criterion (e) it is significant to the ACT because of its importance as part of local Aboriginal tradition

The nominator made no claim against this criterion.

Criterion (f) it is a rare or unique example of its kind, or is rare or unique in its comparative intactness

The nominator made no claim against this criterion.

Criterion (g) it is a notable example of a kind of place or object and demonstrates the main characteristics of that kind

The nominator made no claim against this criterion.

Criterion (h) *it has strong or special associations with a person, group, event, development or cultural phase in local or national history*

The nominator made a claim of high against this criterion:

The transport depot forms a complex of structures and is important for its long and special association with the development of the public transport system in Canberra. It reflects the decisions made throughout this time to provide Canberra's residents with a public transport system based around the bus. Canberra depended upon this public transport system to provide for the increasing number of Government staff and the increasing general population. The depot also housed cars that were used exclusively for the Commonwealth to transport Prime Ministers and other politicians and high-level public servants. Some of these drivers have their own significant oral history.

Heritage Council assessment:

As a matter of historical record, the bus depot has a long association with the provision of public transport within Canberra. However this value is not considered to be of significant magnitude due to:

- The value is primarily 'associational' as the building fabric and contents are no longer able to 'physically demonstrate' to an appropriately significant degree the operation and maintenance of public transport vehicles;
- The historical function of the depot in sustaining the omnibus service is continuing at alternate premises, and the phase of Canberra being provided with an omnibus service similarly continues;
- The historical social interaction of people with the place occurs in a comparatively limited manner - through employees and their families – as opposed to the widespread public interaction that occurs with a transport terminal;
- The associational value can be demonstrated in ways other than by conservation of the whole building fabric.

Criterion (i) *it is significant for understanding the evolution of natural landscapes, including significant geological features, landforms, biota or natural processes*

The nominator made no claim against this criterion.

Criterion (j) *it has provided, or is likely to provide, information that will contribute significantly to a wider understanding of the natural or cultural history of the ACT because of its use or potential use as a research site or object, teaching site or object, type locality or benchmark site*

The nominator made a claim of high against this criterion.

Through its structural design and architectural style this building is a valuable educational resource for designers. The innovative design of the fully welded steel portal frame is an exceptional example of early structural steel design in Australia.

What remains of the original entry façade is an example of a simple but pleasant brick industrial structure, one of Canberra's earliest, that draws on elements from the Inter-War Georgian Revival Style (1915-40). The external architecture of the single storey brick extension facing onto Wentworth Avenue is a Canberra's best example of the Inter-War Functionalist Style, 1915-1940. The architecture can be contrasted with the organic modern architecture of the City of Canberra Garbage Incinerator, by E M Nicholls, 1938-41.

The industrial site played an important role in the development of the public transport system in Canberra. The identifiable sequence of development at the depot mirrors the expansion of both the settlement of the City and the growth of the public transport system that served it.

Heritage Council assessment:

The values listed under this Criterion, (j), have already been listed and assessed against all of the above criteria. This criterion is dependent upon the use of the building as a 'research site or object, teaching site or object, type locality or benchmark site'. The history of transportation in Canberra, it is argued, could more readily be more broadly interpreted on another site, increasing its scope beyond, although including, bus and other motor transport. The Council believes that including the story of bus and motor transport in the total picture of the history of transportation in Canberra will add to the appreciation of its significance.

Criterion (k) for a place—it exhibits unusual richness, diversity or significant transitions of flora, fauna or natural landscapes and their elements

The nominator made no claim against this criterion.

Criterion (l) for a place—it is a significant ecological community, habitat or locality for any of the following:

- (i) the life cycle of native species;**
- (ii) rare, threatened or uncommon species;**
- (iii) species at the limits of their natural range;**
- (iv) distinct occurrences of species**

The nominator made no claim against this criterion.

Conclusion

The ACT Heritage Council finds that former Bus Depot Kingston is of insufficient heritage value to warrant provisional registration in the ACT Heritage Register.

Dr Michael Pearson (Chair)
ACT Heritage Council

25 June 2009