

Heritage (Decision about Provisional Registration for Fisher Housing Precinct, Fisher) Notice 2011

Notifiable Instrument NI 2011 - 490

made under the

***Heritage Act 2004* section 34 Notice of Decision about Provisional Registration**

1. Name of instrument

This instrument is the Heritage (Decision about Provisional Registration for Fisher Housing Precinct, Fisher) Notice 2011 -

2. Registration details of the place

Registration details of the place are at Attachment A: Provisional Register entry for the Fisher Housing Precinct, Fisher.

3. Reason for decision

The ACT Heritage Council has decided that the Fisher Housing Precinct, Fisher meets one or more of the heritage significance criteria at s 10 of the *Heritage Act 2004*. The provisional register entry is at Attachment A.

4. Date of Provisional Registration

25 August 2011

5. Indication of council's intention


The Council intends to decide whether to register the entry under Division 6.2.

6. Public consultation period

The Council invites public comment by Wednesday 28 September 2011 on the provisional registration of the Fisher Housing Precinct, Fisher to:

The Secretary
ACT Heritage Council
GPO Box 158
CANBERRA ACT 2601

Jennifer O'connell
Acting Secretary
ACT Heritage Council
25 August 2011

 ACT Heritage Council	AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY HERITAGE REGISTER (Provisional Registration Details) Place No:
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The following is mandatory:

For the purposes of s. 33 of the *Heritage Act 2004*, an entry to the heritage register has been prepared by the ACT Heritage Council for the following place:

Fisher Housing Precinct, 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14 and 16 Pilbara Place, 14 Ballarat Street, 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12, 14, 16 Rosebery Street, Fisher ACT

Blocks 1-17 Section 44, Blocks 12-18 Section 45, (Part) Block 13 Section 46 Fisher District of Weston Creek

Adjacent road verges as indicated within the registered boundary

DATE OF PROVISIONAL REGISTRATION

Notified: 25 August 2011 Notifiable Instrument: 2011-490

PERIOD OF EFFECT OF PROVISIONAL REGISTRATION

Start Date 25 August 2011 End Date 25 January 2012

Extended Period (if applicable) **Start Date** _____ **End Date** _____

Copies of the Register Entry are available for inspection at the ACT Heritage Unit. For further information please contact:

The Secretary
ACT Heritage Council
GPO Box 158, Canberra, ACT 2601

Telephone: 13 22 81 Facsimile: (02) 6207 2229

IDENTIFICATION OF THE PLACE

Fisher Housing Precinct, 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14 and 16 Pilbara Place, 14 Ballarat Street, 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12, 14, 16 Rosebery Street, Fisher ACT

Blocks 1-17 Section 44, Blocks 12-18 Section 45, (Part) Block 13 Section 46 Fisher District of Weston Creek

Adjacent road verges as indicated within the registered boundary

STATEMENT OF HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

This statement refers to the Heritage Significance of the place as required in s12(d) of the *Heritage Act 2004*.

The Fisher Housing Precinct is of heritage significance as important evidence of a distinctive design of exceptional interest, for special association with a development and cultural phase in local ACT history, and as a notable example of a kind of place and demonstrating the main characteristics of that kind.

Different rows of housing in the precinct demonstrate different aspects of this significance.

- Row A includes 1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 11 and 13 Pilbara Place.
- Row B includes 4, 6, 8, 10, 12, 14 and 16 Pilbara Place.
- Row C includes 14 Ballarat Street and 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12, 14 and 16 Rosebery Street.

Rows A, B and C are a notable example of the experimental planning of the National Capital Development Committee (NCDC) in the 1970s, while Rows A and C specifically demonstrate characteristics of Radburn design philosophy through the segregation of pedestrian and vehicular movement and the incorporation of communal spaces and parkland areas.

Rows A, B and C of the precinct have a special association with the development and cultural phase of the planning for Canberra's quintessential and iconic nature as the bush capital, and the NCDCs experimental planning phase of the early 1970s. The Fisher Housing Precinct demonstrates the government's commitment in the 1970s towards experimental planning, and planning philosophy in a manner consistent and compatible with the original city planning of the early twentieth century in the ACT.

Rows A, B and C of the precinct demonstrate outstanding design qualities in their amalgamation of medium-density development and bush capital aesthetics.

Rows A and C of the Fisher Housing Precinct are important evidence of the distinctive design of an amalgamation of Radburn planning principles and bush capital planning.

Rows A and C are the first demonstration in the ACT of housing with two frontages based on the Radburn principles—one to the street and one to pedestrian pathways and parkland.

Rows A, B and C are an intact example demonstrating the NCDCs experimental planning of the 1970s, with uniformity of a modest style and design, providing a significant streetscape character in a parkland setting.

Rows A and C further demonstrate aspects of Radburn development with segregation of pedestrian and vehicular movement. The individual houses of Rows A and C are well designed and planned to relate to adjoining parkland and service areas.

The precinct (Rows A, B and C) is of significance for its design principles, and for the pleasant aesthetics which it provides within the context of Canberra as a planned environment.

FEATURES INTRINSIC TO THE HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PLACE

The attributes listed below are assessed as features intrinsic to the heritage significance of the place:

Row A:

- The orientation of freestanding houses with double frontages to the street and pathways/parkland;
- A variety of individual house types with some degree of flexibility and freedom of choice, though overall consistency in design;
- Generous landscaped front door approaches with a wide set back from the street;
- The 'Radburn' planning layout of the housing scheme including the pathway and parkland areas;
- The scheme as designed to provide a high degree of individual privacy, safety and convenience;
- The enhancement of visual amenity by underground electrical services; and
- The landscaped pedestrian spine and relationship of houses to this area.

Row B:

- The complimentary streetscape setting to Row A
- A variety of individual house types with some degree of flexibility and freedom of choice, though overall consistency in design;
- Generous landscaped front door approaches with a wide set back from the street; and
- The enhancement of visual amenity by underground electrical services.

Row C:

- The orientation of freestanding houses with double frontages to the street and pathways/parkland;
 - A variety of individual house types with some degree of flexibility and freedom of choice, though overall consistency in design;
 - Generous landscaped front door approaches with a wide set back from the street;
 - The 'Radburn' planning layout of the housing scheme including the pathway and parkland areas;
 - The scheme as designed to provide a high degree of individual privacy, safety and convenience;
 - The enhancement of visual amenity by underground electrical services; and
 - The landscaped pedestrian spine and relationship of houses to this area.
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APPLICABLE HERITAGE GUIDELINES

The guiding conservation objective is that the Fisher Housing Precinct shall be conserved and appropriately managed in a manner respecting its heritage significance and the features intrinsic to that heritage significance, and consistent with a sympathetic and viable use or uses.

Any works that have a potential impact on significant fabric (and / or other heritage values) shall be guided by a professionally documented assessment and conservation policy relevant to that area or component (i.e. a Statement of Heritage Effects – SHE).

The 'Heritage Guidelines – Fisher Housing Precinct' prepared by the ACT Heritage Council provide detailed guidance on conservation measures for proposed works and development in the Fisher Housing Precinct and should be referred to for specific conservation advice.

REASON FOR PROVISIONAL REGISTRATION

The Fisher Housing Precinct has been assessed against the heritage significance criteria and been found to have heritage significance when assessed against three criteria under the ACT Heritage Act:

- (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;
- (g) it is a notable example of a kind of place or object and demonstrates the main characteristics of that kind
- (h) it has strong or special associations with a person, group, event, development or cultural phase in local or national history

ASSESSMENT AGAINST THE HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA

Pursuant to s.10 of the *Heritage Act 2004*, a place or object has heritage significance if it satisfies one or more of the following criteria. Significance has been determined by research as accessed in the references below. Future research may alter the findings of this assessment.

- (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 place does not meet this criterion.

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

The place does not meet this 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 Fisher Housing Precinct is important as evidence of a distinctive design of exceptional interest.

The distinctive planning design evident at the Fisher Housing Precinct (Rows A and C) is of exceptional interest as an amalgamation of Radburn planning principles and bush capital planning.

Rows A and C of the Fisher Housing Precinct are important as evidence of the Radburn planning philosophy, as they were developed on a small scale as an experiment by the NCDC to trial its success for the later development of Charnwood in Belconnen. It was also the first Radburn planned area in the ACT to have two frontages—one to the street, and one to the pedestrian pathway behind.

Radburn planning principles include areas of internal open space connected by walkways, the separation of motor vehicles and pedestrian access, and houses facing rear open spaces as well as the street frontage.

When compared with other Radburn designed areas in the ACT, the Fisher Housing Precinct (Rows A and C) provides a pleasant streetscape setting with a uniformity and consistency in housing style and vegetation. Row B of the precinct complements the streetscape setting and aesthetics.

This design (Rows A, B and C) is of exceptional interest as it has adopted and incorporated the original garden city planning of the early twentieth century and modified it to suit the needs of the late twentieth century, including medium density living.

Specifically, it is evidence of an innovative approach to low cost medium-density detached housing in the 1970s and achieves an outstanding result which maintains the original principles of the bush capital applied in the early twentieth century, despite the relatively small blocks.

The Fisher Housing Precinct demonstrates a continuation of the government's commitment to planning philosophies in the nation's capital in the late twentieth century, building on and extending the notions of the garden city philosophy of the early twentieth century through street planting, open parks and spaces, a carefully considered street layout, and beautification of city environments.

The quintessential element of Canberra as the bush capital is an iconic feature characterising the nation's capital.

The Fisher Housing Precinct meets this 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;

There is insufficient information to assess this criterion.

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

Not applicable

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

The place does not meet this criterion.

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

The Fisher Housing Precinct (Rows A and C) is a notable example of the Radburn housing principles and demonstrates the main characteristics of this kind, evident in the separation of motor vehicles and pedestrian access, large areas of internal open space connected by walkways, and houses facing open space and the street.

Consistency and visual links are provided in Rows A and C of the precinct through the use of similar materials, orientation and siting, as well as an integrated approach to landscaping. Housing and vegetation in Row B complements these links.

When compared with other Radburn designed areas within the ACT including Curtin and Charnwood, the Fisher Housing Precinct is a notable example of the Radburn planning principles, with an intact and uniform streetscape and pleasant aesthetics.

The Fisher Housing Precinct meets this criterion.

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

The Fisher Housing Precinct (Rows A, B and C) has a special association with the development and cultural phase of Canberra as a planned city and bush capital.

Its association with this history is special, as an experiment undertaken by the NCDC in the 1970s, in their attempts to amalgamate bush capital planning with Radburn planning philosophy and a move to medium density housing.

The Fisher Housing Precinct meets this criterion.

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

Not applicable.

- (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 place does not meet this criterion.

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

Not applicable

- (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.**

Not applicable

SUMMARY OF THE PLACE HISTORY AND PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

HISTORY

Experimentation by the NCDC

The 1970s saw much experimentation in the field of suburban planning in Canberra, under the auspices of the NCDC (Tanner 1976). Questions were being raised about the very wasteful land consumption of the individual house and acceptable alternatives were being sought to the three bedroom/two bathroom/double garage/plus garden house, which had become the norm in Canberra (Tanner 1976).

The growth of Canberra in the latter half of the 20th century resulted in the development of the “Y Plan” by the NCDC. The new suburbs designed by the NCDC were often based on ‘Radburn’ planning, with the segregation of traffic and pedestrians; with parkland or nature reserves linking the residential blocks with shops and schools, often passing under or bridging the roads. In the 1960s and 1970s suburbs including Curtin, Hughes and Charnwood were based on Radburn principles.

The Radburn philosophy was the concept of Stein, Wright and Ascher in the United States in the 1920s. It grew out of the work of Ebenezer Howard and the garden city movement. ‘The Radburn concept was an

attempt to solve the difficulties associated with the motor car by a radical revision of the relationship of houses, roads, paths, gardens, parks, blocks and local neighbourhoods' (NCDC, 1971: 1).

The principles of the Radburn housing include separation of motor vehicles and pedestrian access, large areas of internal open space connected by walkways, and houses facing open space with back doors facing the street. The Radburn area in New Jersey comprises 469 single family homes, 48 townhouses, 32 family houses and a 93-unit apartment complex over an area of 149 acres. Of this, 23 acres are parks, there are four tennis courts, three hardball fields, two softball fields, two swimming pools and an archery plaza. Young children and their parents can make use of two toddler playgroup areas, two playgrounds and a toddler bathing pool ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Radburn, New Jersey](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Radburn,_New_Jersey), accessed 20 September 2010).

'The primary innovation of Radburn was the separation of pedestrian and vehicular traffic. This was accomplished by doing away with the traditional grid-iron street pattern and replacing it with an innovation called the 'superblock'. The superblock is a large block of land surrounded by main roads. The houses are grouped around small cul-de-sacs, each of which has an access road coming from the main roads. The remaining land inside the superblock is park area, the backbone of the neighbourhood. The living and sleeping sections of the houses face toward the garden and park areas, while the service rooms face the access road. ... The system was so devised that a pedestrian could start at any given point and proceed on foot to school, stores or church without crossing a street used by automobiles'. Radburn is unique because it was envisioned as a town for better living, and it was the first example of city planning which recognized the importance of the automobile in modern life without permitting it to dominate the environment (<http://www.radburn.org/geninfo/history.html>, accessed 20 September 2010).

In Australia, Radburn principles were used in the Melbourne suburb of Doncaster East in an area known as the Milgate Park Estate in the 1970s, and in New South Wales and Tasmania around the same time. It was also used in areas in England ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Radburn, New Jersey](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Radburn,_New_Jersey), accessed 20 September 2010).

Fisher Housing Precinct

In the early 1970s a design for 24 government houses in the Weston Creek suburb of Fisher was commissioned by the NCDC as a study to test design and construction aspects for the suburb of Charnwood which was being planned for the new town of Belconnen, north-west of Canberra's City Centre.

Prior to this, areas of Curtin and Hughes had already been developed in the late 1960s, based on Radburn planning philosophies. At Curtin houses were designed and constructed with a single frontage – facing to the pathway and parkland areas, and away from the street. In addition, fencing and hedging to the street frontage, as well as garages, together limit the street presence.

The Hughes Radburn precinct was developed as a precinct of two storey duplexes, with services including electricity at the street frontage. Hedging and tall fences front the street. Although Radburn principles are used here, in the segregation of pedestrian and vehicular movement, with pathways and parklands to the rear of the homes, it demonstrates a different approach to medium density housing than the freestanding individual residences at Curtin, Fisher and Charnwood.

At Fisher, the NCDC sought to implement a different approach to Radburn planning than previously implemented at either Curtin or Hughes.

The Fisher housing project was constructed within a tight budget by the NCDC, based on the development of individual houses with dual frontage, one orientated to the street with a vehicular access movement system (the address) and the other orientated to an open space parkland strip and the pedestrian movement system (the children and neighbours approach) (Architecture Australia 1972).

The Fisher housing project won the C S Daley Medal of 1971 awarded by the ACT Chapter of the Royal Australian Institute of Architects (RAIA).

Architects for the Fisher housing project were Cameron Chisholm and Nicol, Engineers were Scott and Furphy and the Builder was JJ Marr Homes Pty Ltd.

Cameron Chisholm & Nicol are a prominent Perth practice which had continued from Powell Cameron & Chisholm. The practice was established in Perth in 1884 and has expanded over the years to other Australian cities, Canberra 1969, Sydney 1982 and Brisbane 1987. In 1983 Gilbert Ridgway Nicol and Ross Kingsley Chisholm received the RAIA Gold Medal.

Following the success of the Fisher housing project, Charnwood was designed and constructed in the mid 1970s, modeled on the precinct at Fisher. Charnwood is the largest of the Radburn areas in Canberra.

In Charnwood, houses are oriented in a variety of ways, whereas in Fisher, they are predominantly oriented sideways on their blocks. Houses in Charnwood primarily have a limited set back from the street as opposed to the wide setbacks in Fisher. Vegetation and street frontages vary considerably at Charnwood. In comparison, street frontages in the Fisher Housing precinct are predominantly mulched and planted garden with no lawn.

Within Canberra, some areas developed under the Radburn principles had success, while others were more limited. Curtin is considered to have worked well, while Charnwood had some initial success but later failure. Charnwood's failure is due in part to the design inclusion of a fully irrigated public area landscaping. Once government turned off the irrigation and ceased maintenance, the community ceased to use the public spaces, and residents have attempted to focus away from the degraded public spaces (<http://www.climatechange.gov.au/what-you-need-to-know/buildings/publications/~media/publications/energy-efficiency/buildings/yourdevelopment.ashx>, accessed 20 September 2010).

In addition, Taylor (2006: 106) also ascribes Charnwood's lack of success to factors including two public entrances and a resulting lack of privacy with no well defined private garden space. To rectify some of these problems ACT Housing 'undertook revitalisation work in the 1990s with streetscape and architectural changes re-orienting houses to face streets and enclose rear garden areas that were previously open space' (Taylor, 2006: 106).

DESCRIPTION

The Fisher Housing Precinct is comprised of three distinct rows of housing which all contribute to aspects of its significance.

Row A is at the centre of the precinct and demonstrates all aspects of significance. It is bordered by Row B to the east and Row C to the west. Both Rows B and C contribute to and complement the significance of Row A, and provide it with the necessary context and setting with which to understand and appreciate its planning and design.

Row A includes 1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 11 and 13 Pilbara Place.

Row B includes 4, 6, 8, 10, 12, 14 and 16 Pilbara Place.

Row C includes 14 Ballarat Street and 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12, 14 and 16 Rosebery Street.

Rows A and C of the Fisher Housing Precinct provides a cohesion of house orientation and siting, dual frontages, and integrated landscaping in the context of the ACT. It is also a good example of the Radburn principles on a small scale and in a compact area.

Row B complements this in terms of house orientation and siting, materials and integrated landscaping.

Row C complements this in terms of Radburn principles of dual frontages, and the address and inclusion of a shared pathway and pedestrian spine, as well as house orientation and siting, materials and integrated landscaping.

The Fisher Government Housing Group consisted of a design for 24 government houses commissioned by the NCDC to test design and construction aspects for the suburb of Charnwood in Belconnen. This citation includes 23 of those houses. One (in Row B) has since been modified to an extent that it no longer provides harmony and unity with other houses in the precinct and does not complement Row A in the same way as other housing of Row B.

The scheme of Rows A and C is based on the Radburn principles, with a vehicular access to houses and a separate pedestrian access through community parkland. The parkland provides a consistency of landscape throughout the neighbourhood, and planting provides privacy.

Rows A, B and C are designed on small blocks, making maximum use of the available space, with double carports located to the front of the building line and service yards grouped in pairs on the street face, concealed by higher walls and carport roofs. A broad area between the paved carport and service yard elements allows a pleasant landscaped approach to the front door of the house facing to the street.

All the houses, carports and fences of Rows A, B and C are constructed of similar materials, colour, form and detail to create consistency and encourage a visual link between houses of different design to produce a single architectural statement.

There are eight different three bedroom house types, and one four bedroom house across Rows A, B and C. The majority of houses have a north-east orientation, and have been planned around the family room, located in association with the kitchen and facing the parkland to facilitate the supervision of children.

Construction is of brick veneer, timber floors, timber joinery and timber roof trusses covered with concrete tiles. All external brickwork was proposed to be painted white, all timber work was to be stained dark brown and roofing charcoal grey tiles.

The streetscape of the Fisher Housing Precinct (Rows A, B and C) provides a relatively intact uniform group, with a consistent architectural style, achieved through the government's limited housing designs for the area.

REFERENCES

Architecture in Australia, June 1972

RAIA, *Architects of Australia*, Images Australia, Melbourne 1988

RAIA, The Fisher Government Housing Group, Royal Australian Institute of Architects Register of Significant Buildings of the 20th Century, Number R041.

Tanner, H, 1976, *Australian Housing in the Seventies*, Ure Smith, Sydney.

Taylor, K., 2006, *Canberra: City in the Landscape*, National Capital Authority, Canberra.

Wright, Bruce 2000 *Cornerstone of the Capital – A History of Public Housing in Canberra*, ACT Housing, Canberra.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Radburn,_New_Jersey, accessed 20 September 2010

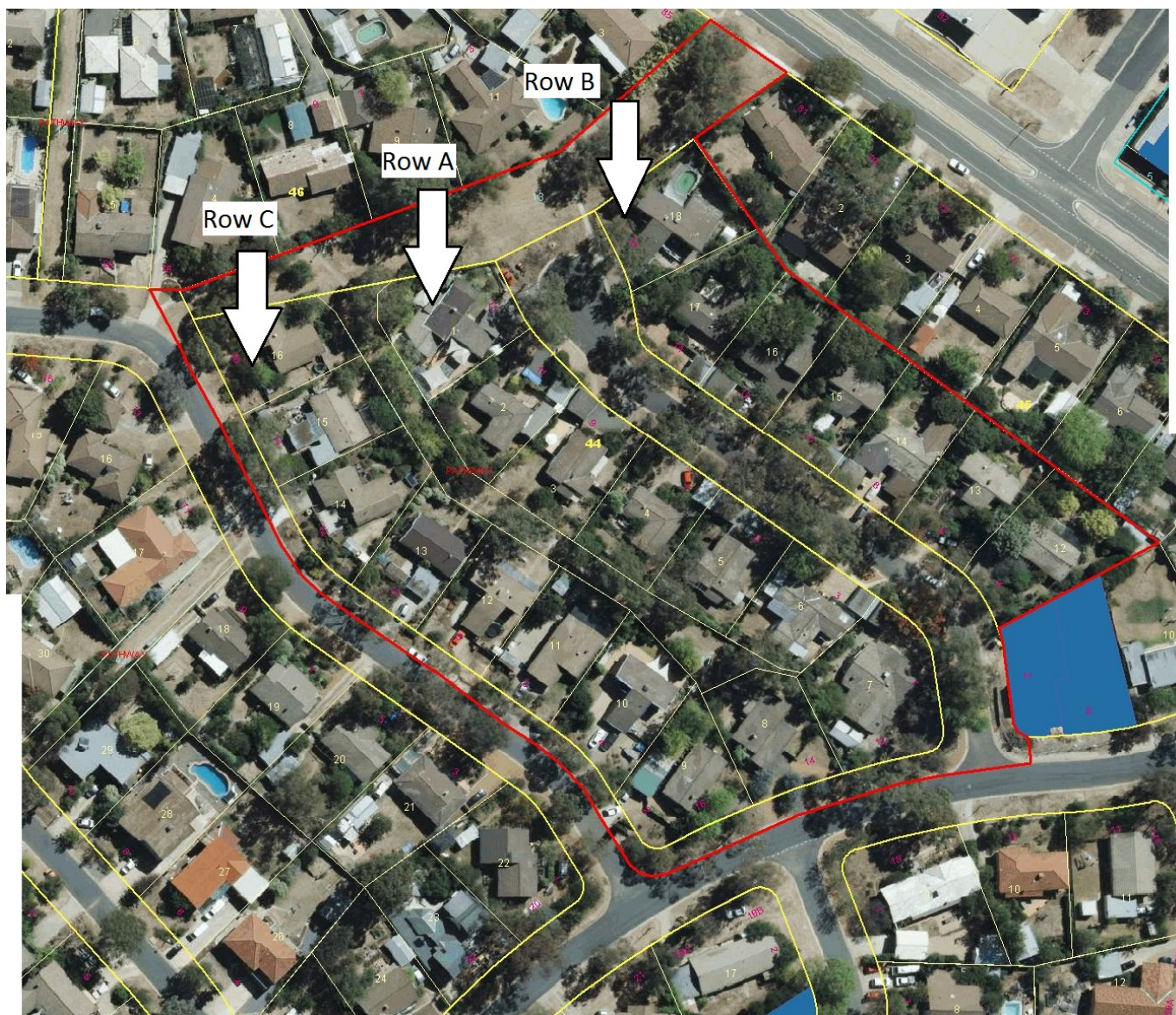
<http://www.radburn.org/geninfo/history.html>. Ronald F. Gatti, Manager, 1969 – 1989, 'The Radburn Association', accessed 20 September 2010

<http://www.climatechange.gov.au/what-you-need-to-know/buildings/publications/~media/publications/energy-efficiency/buildings/yourdevelopment.ashx>, accessed 20 September 2010, Technical resource on sustainable mixed-use development, Department of the Environment and Heritage – Australian Greenhouse Office.

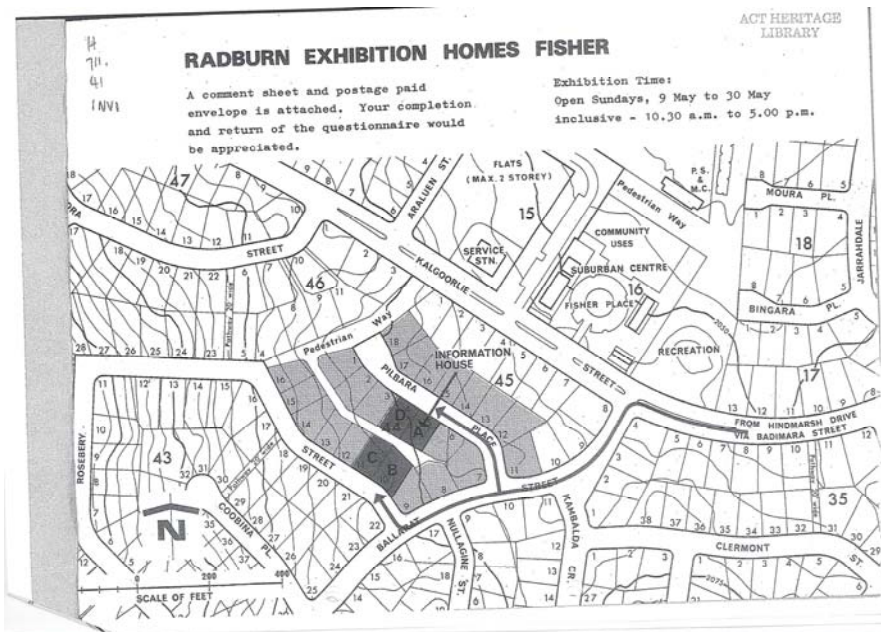
SITE PLAN AND MAP



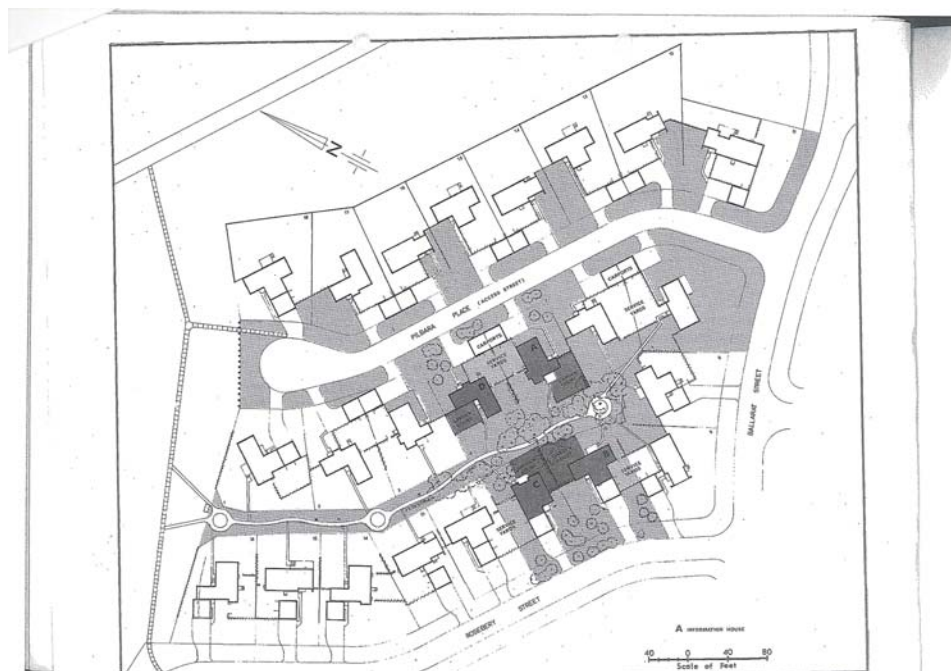
Fisher Housing Precinct boundaries indicated by solid red line



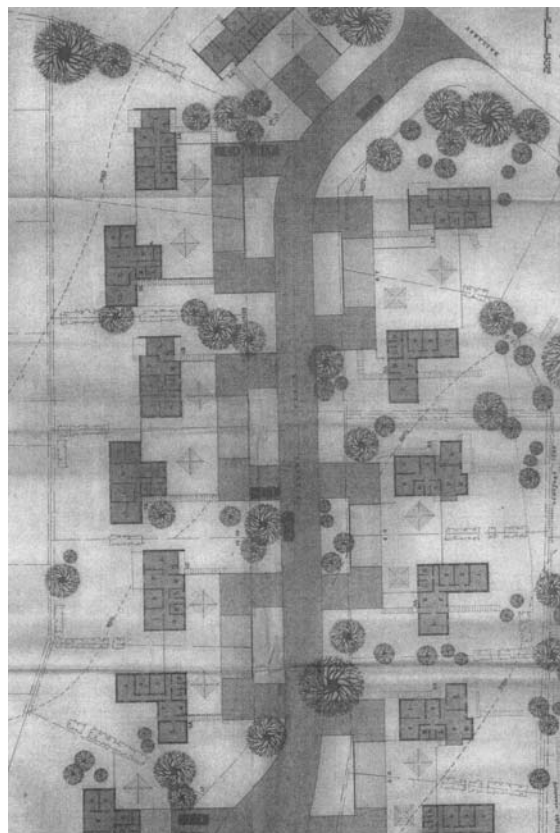
n.b Row C includes 14 Ballarat Street.



NCDC, 1971 *An Invitation to view and comment on the Radburn Exhibition Homes, Fisher ACT.*



NCDC, 1971 *An Invitation to view and comment on the Radburn Exhibition Homes, Fisher ACT.*



Fisher Government Housing Group
RAIA file, citation R041 Fisher Government Housing)



Images taken 23 September 2010