

# Heritage (Decision about Registration of the Northbourne Housing Precinct, Dickson and Lyneham) Notice 2015

Notifiable Instrument NI2015—67

made under the

**Heritage Act 2004, s42 Notice of decision about registration**

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## **1 Revocation**

This instrument replaces NI2014—458.

## **2 Name of instrument**

This instrument is the *Heritage (Decision about Registration of the Northbourne Housing Precinct, Dickson and Lyneham) Notice 2015*.

## **3 Registration details of the place**

Registration details of the place are at Attachment A: Register entry for the Northbourne Housing Precinct, Dickson and Lyneham.

## **4 Reason for decision**

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

## **5 Date of registration**

12 February 2015

Anna Gurnhill  
A/g Secretary (as delegate for)  
ACT Heritage Council  
12 February 2015



ACT Heritage Council

AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

HERITAGE REGISTER

(Registration)

For the purposes of s. 40 of the *Heritage Act 2004*, an entry to the heritage register has been prepared by the ACT Heritage Council for the following place:

**Northbourne Housing Precinct**

(part) Block 41 Section 6, (part) Block 1 Section 12, and (part) Block 4 Section 1, Dickson; (part) Block 8 Section 51, Lyneham

**DATE OF REGISTRATION**

12 February 2015 Notifiable Instrument: 2015–67

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

The Secretary  
ACT Heritage Council  
GPO Box 158, Canberra, ACT 2601  
Telephone: 13 22 81

## IDENTIFICATION OF THE PLACE

Northbourne Housing Precinct, (part) Block 41 Section 6, (part) Block 1 Section 12, and (part) Block 4 Section 1, Dickson; (part) Block 8 Section 51, Lyneham

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

## STATEMENT OF HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

The Northbourne Housing Precinct (the Precinct), designed and constructed between 1959 and 1962, is of considerable significance for its creative achievement including its architectural style, as a distinctive design of exceptional interest, as a rare and notable example of types of public housing, and for strong associations with important figures, the National Capital Development Commission (NCDC), and the post-war period in Canberra.

The Precinct is significant as an exemplar of Post-War International Style (1940-1960) architecture demonstrating key attributes of the style including cubiform overall shape, expression of structural frames and large sheets of glass. *[criteria (a), (c) and (g)]*

The Precinct is important as evidence of a distinctive post war government policy for the provision of subsidised housing in Canberra and makes an important contribution to the understanding of this development phase through its distinctive and innovative planning layout, design and siting. *[criterion (c), (g), and (h)]*

The Precinct is rare in the public housing flat development projects of post-war Canberra for its highly resolved and consistent application of Post-War International Modernism in its site planning and architectural resolution. The project was the only project of this era to utilise a combination of five building and accommodation types, ranging from single storey garden flats, two storey paired houses, three storey Maisonettes, three storey blocks of flats to four storey bachelor flats. *[criterion (f)]*

The innovative planning layout and design demonstrates a significant shift in the approach to providing public housing for the influx of public servants to the capital. The NCDC recognised a need to provide a range of accommodation types to meet a range of lifestyle and accommodation needs, as compared with what had previously been provided in the blocks of flats of the early 1950s. The Precinct created an innovative and strongly rectilinear composition of buildings and spaces that had not previously been attempted in the capital. The Precinct's combination of five distinctly different building types and siting arrangements, 'internal' service roads, networks of pergolas and pathways and the resultant variety of common open spaces, the majority of which directly addressed Northbourne Avenue, represented an innovative step forward for medium density public housing in the ACT. *[criterion (a)]*

The NCDC acknowledged the significance of the Precinct's location on a main approach route into the capital and therefore designed the Precinct to present as a 'gateway' into the capital as evidenced in the placement of the four storey bachelor flats or 'Point Blocks' at the northern end of the Precinct, and in the Precinct's distinctive Post-War International style architecture. *[criteria (a)]*

The Precinct has strong associations with Sydney Ancher (architect) and Sir John Overall (client), both of whom through their respective organisations, created a major public housing project that played a significant part in the development of Canberra in the early 1960s. The combination of Sydney Ancher (Senior Partner in Ancher Mortlock & Murray), a leading exponent of the Post-War International Modernist style in his domestic architecture since 1945, and John Overall, Commissioner of the newly created National Capital Development Commission (NCDC) and other senior staff, achieved a project with a high level of civic design and architectural expression. *[criterion (a) and (h)]*

## 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 and warrant conservation:

- The following buildings comprising a sample of the original combination of five building types:
  - 1) The two northern-most Bachelor (Bedsitter) Flats (four storeys);
  - 2) All Pair Houses (two storeys) fronting Northbourne Avenue and the northern-most grouping;
  - 3) The two northern-most Maisonettes (three storeys);
  - 4) The four northern-most Garden Flats (Courtyard Houses) (single storey); and
  - 5) The northern-most Three Storey Flat (Owen Flat) (three storeys).

and their arrangement in groups and inter-relationships within sub-precincts;

- The application of Post-War International style architecture across the five building types comprising the sample of the original combination of buildings;
- The existing rectilinear planning layout and building siting arrangements including networks of pathways and a variety of common open spaces addressing Northbourne Avenue, across the five building types comprising a sample of the original layout and siting;
- The separation of vehicle and pedestrian movement and the restriction of vehicle access to secondary roads within the five building types comprising a sample of the original layout;
- The early pattern of mature landscaping along Northbourne Avenue frontages and in the common courtyards, rear streets and cul-de-sacs, as contained within the sample of the original layout.

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## CONSERVATION OBJECTIVE

The guiding conservation objective is that the Northbourne Housing Precinct shall be conserved and appropriately managed in a manner respecting its heritage significance and the features intrinsic to that heritage significance.

The ACT Heritage Council may adopt heritage guidelines applicable to the place under s25 of the *Heritage Act 2004*.

For further information on guidelines applicable to the place, or for advice on proposed works or development, please contact ACT Heritage on 13 22 81.

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## REASON FOR REGISTRATION

The Northbourne Housing Precinct has been assessed against the heritage significance criteria and been found to have heritage significance when assessed against criteria [(a), (c), (f), (g), and (h)] under the *Heritage Act 2004*.

## 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 Northbourne Housing Precinct meets this criterion.

The Precinct demonstrates a high degree of creative achievement by showing qualities of innovation in its planning layouts and architectural expression. In both its architectural expression and site planning, the Precinct demonstrates the pinnacle of the Post-War International style as it was applied to medium density housing developments in mid 20th century Canberra.

The planning layout and design of the Precinct from 1959 to 1962 was innovative for its time. It demonstrates a significant shift in the approach to providing public housing for the influx of public servants to the capital in the post-war period. The NCDC acknowledged a need to provide a range of accommodation types to house a range of lifestyle and accommodation needs, in comparison with the blocks of flats constructed by the Commonwealth Department of Works 1948-58 under the advice of the National Capital Planning and Development Commission 1948-58. The Precinct created an innovative and strongly rectilinear composition of buildings and spaces that had not previously been attempted in the capital. The majority of flat developments in the post-war decades had been arranged around the edges of rectangular sites, fronting surrounding streets which created enclosed areas of shared open space. The Precinct's combination of five distinctly different building types and siting arrangements, 'internal' service roads, networks of pergolas and pathways and the resultant variety of common open spaces, the majority of which directly addressed Northbourne Avenue, represents an innovative step forward for medium density public housing in the ACT. Furthermore, the NCDC considered the civic design of the site to be critical, given the importance of the site on the main approach route into the capital and was therefore designed to present as a 'gateway' into the capital, as evidenced in the placement of the bachelor flats or 'Point Blocks' and its distinct Post-War International style architecture. The planning layout also demonstrates influences of Radburn planning principles, evidenced through the separation of pedestrian and vehicular movement.

The adoption of the Post-War International Modernist cubiform architectural imagery and planning arrangements by Sydney Ancher demonstrated his abilities to transpose leading European architectural and mass housing trends in the inter-war decades into the Australian post-war context. Most notable of these examples were Le Corbusier and Max Dubois and their Dom-ino housing ideas, particularly as built in Pessac, near Bordeaux in France (1923), and the German mass housing estates (Siedlungen) erected in the late 1920s and early 1930s in cities such as Stuttgart, Frankfurt and Berlin, with their Bauhaus, Existenzminimum and New Objectivity inspirations.

Its separation of pedestrian and vehicle movement, using a combination of service roads and drive courts, reflects the Radburn planning philosophies of pre and post-war housing estates in the United Kingdom and United States.

The key attributes of Post-War International Style (1940-60) the Precinct demonstrates include:

- Cubiform overall shape;
- Expression of structural frame; and
- Large sheets of glass.

Other indicators of the style represented within the precinct include:

- Plain, smooth wall surfaces (all housing types);
- Contrasting non-rectangular shape (Bachelor flats);
- Overhang for shade (Owen Flats); and
- Cantilever elements (Maisonettes).

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

The Northbourne Housing Precinct does not meet this criterion.

As a combined entity of five different building types stretching for some 500 metres along this primary entry highway, the Precinct demonstrates notable design and aesthetic qualities that are valued by the architectural and heritage communities in the ACT and elsewhere.

The consistent architectural expression and arrangement of various building groups created a variety of addresses to Northbourne Avenue that combined to achieve a high standard of urban planning and architectural outcomes. The aesthetic qualities of the overall composition were complemented by the use of a carefully considered landscaping approach using carefully selected species of mature trees and large areas of grass in the various courtyards.

A significant aspect of the overall planning layout of the housing group was the spaces created between the buildings and fronting Northbourne Avenue. The spaces created a distinct setting for the housing blocks, articulating a spatial pattern that is part of the essential character of the layout. They gave a human scale, and offered opportunity for larger scale tree planting in grassed areas.

The result created a sense of unity, yet variety, and harmony. Without the well-thought use of space between the buildings the scheme would not, from an overall planning perspective, have achieved its distinctive sense of place.

The Precinct is included on the Australian Institute of Architects' Register of Significant Twentieth Century Architecture and has been classified by the National Trust. It was included on the Register of the National Estate.

However limited evidence available suggests that this design quality is not valued by the community or a cultural group.

While valued by the Australian Institute of Architects (the Institute), the Council's *Heritage Assessment Policy* interprets a cultural group as a 'group of people within a society with a shared ethnic or cultural background' or 'a group of people connected through the same way of living, which has been transmitted from one generation to another'. The Council therefore does not consider the Institute to be a cultural group for the purposes of the criterion.

In addition, there is insufficient evidence before the Council to demonstrate that the Precinct exhibits other outstanding design or aesthetic quality(ies) which are valued by the ACT community or a cultural group.

- (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 Northbourne Housing Precinct meets this criterion.

The Precinct provides evidence of a distinctive post-war government policy for the provision of subsidised housing in Canberra that is no longer practised.

The provision of public housing is an important and distinct historical theme within the context of the ACT. Within the wide variety of residential buildings erected in Canberra by the Commonwealth Government in the inter-war and post-war decades, the Precinct makes an important contribution to an understanding of the Government's development and provision of public housing in response to the need to accommodate the expanding public sector workforce in the 1950s and 1960s. In particular it signifies the early and very direct intervention of the newly formed National Capital Development Commission (NCDC) in a massive and urgent campaign to provide accommodation for a huge influx of public servants.

With the decision to complete the transfer of Government departments from Melbourne to Canberra, at the end of the Second World War, government housing provision in Canberra entered a new phase of medium density development. At the time the National Capital Planning and Development Committee (NCPDC) made a clear distinction between Commonwealth provision of public housing elsewhere in Australia as part of the post-war reconstruction program, and the provision of housing that would meet both the standards of planning and design in the National Capital and the needs of public servants. (41<sup>st</sup> meeting 6-7 October 1944).

When the NCDC was established in 1957 to take charge of and complete the development of Canberra as the seat of national government, it continued this distinction. Housing for the public sector workforce was developed as part of the national capital building program rather than under Commonwealth-State Housing agreements until the 1970s. At this time, as a result of NCDC policies, private housing began to exceed public housing and provision of public housing in Canberra gradually became more aligned with the Commonwealth-State Housing Agreements concerning low-income social housing. (Hutchison, 2005:p.50)

When it came into operation in 1958, the NCDC streamlined the relationship between government bodies concerned with housing construction and allocation and sought to address issues of cost and delay in construction. The Precinct was one of the earliest large scale housing projects (originally conceived as 150 dwellings) adopted by the NCDC to encourage the establishment in Canberra of large scale building contractors who could then deliver the urgently needed housing. The Precinct was also developed in the context of tight planning and construction budgets and time frames designed to meet the prevailing policy of basing rental charges on construction costs. The quality of its internal planning layouts and provision of facilities reflected not only standard government and NCDC policy, but the NCDC's response to the National Council of Women's advice on the standards for many housing projects in Canberra.

The Precinct is also important as evidence of a distinctive design, Post War International Style (1940-1960) that is of exceptional interest. The Precinct strongly demonstrates several key attributes and indicators of the style, as identified under Criterion (a) and is of exceptional interest as it is applied to medium density public housing.

- (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 Northbourne Housing Precinct does not meet this criterion.

The Council recognises that the Precinct currently provides public housing for some members of the ACT Community, and therefore may be valued by its current tenants as a place which represents home. The Council also acknowledges that the Institute places value on the Precinct for reasons of educational associations for its ability to demonstrate the Post-War International Style (1940-1960) as demonstrated through its listing on the Register of Significant Twentieth Century Architecture (RSTCA).

The Council's *Heritage Assessment Policy* interprets a cultural group as a 'group of people within a society with a shared ethnic or cultural background' or 'a group of people connected through the same way of living, which has been transmitted from one generation to another'. The Council therefore does not consider the Precinct's current tenants or the Institute to be a cultural group for the purposes of the criterion.

Limited evidence available suggests that the Precinct is not highly valued by the broader ACT Community for reasons of strong or special religious, spiritual, cultural, education or social associations.

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

This criterion does not apply to the Northbourne Housing Precinct.

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

The Northbourne Housing Precinct meets this criterion.

In the broader context of medium-density public housing constructed in the post-war period, the Precinct is not unique. Other comparable examples exist such as the Griffith Flats (1948), Braddon and Reid Flats (1951), Ainslie Flats (1952), Allawah and Bega Courts (1956/57), Northbourne Flats (1959), Stuart Flats (1959), Red Hill Housing Precinct (1961) and Kanangra Court (1965). There are also other examples demonstrating influences of the Post-War International Style (1940-60) including the earlier Allawah and Bega Courts (1956/7), and the later Northbourne Flats (1959). It is noted that some of these examples are proposed for demolition.

However, the Precinct is rare in the public housing development projects of post-war Canberra for its highly resolved and consistent application of Post-War International Modernism in its site planning and architectural resolution. It was the only large scale medium density housing project designed by Sydney Ancher, although his firm, with the 1964 inclusion of Ken Woolley, went on to be a major innovator in such housing in Canberra and New South Wales.

In accordance with the design brief and the configuration of the site, the project was the only project of this era to utilise a combination of five building and accommodation types, ranging from single storey garden flats, two storey paired houses, three storey Maisonettes, three storey blocks of flats and four storey bachelor flats. Its arrangement of each accommodation form into a distinctive architectural and planning layout achieved an outcome that had not been



attempted previously for the provision of medium density accommodation in the national capital.

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

The Northbourne Housing Precinct meets this criterion.

The Precinct is an important example of Post War International Style (1940-1960) and strongly demonstrates several key attributes of the style, as identified under Criterion (a), it is an important example of medium density housing constructed in the post-war environment, and is the only example of such work by important Modernist architect Sydney Ancher.

The Precinct is an example of medium-density public housing constructed to house the post-war influx of public servants in the 1950s. Public housing has a strong representation in Canberra's history because unlike other cities, in Canberra, a large program of public housing established from 1927 provided housing for all classes of society. Many other comparable examples exist such as the Griffith Flats (1948), Braddon and Reid Flats (1951), Ainslie Flats (1952), Allawah and Bega Courts (1956/57), Northbourne Flats (1959), Stuart Flats (1959), Red Hill Housing Precinct (1961) and Kanangra Court (1965).

The Precinct is a notable example because of the range of five distinctive housing types provided, a very unusual quality in medium-density public housing developments.

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

The Northbourne Housing Precinct meets this criterion.

The Precinct has strong associations with Sydney Ancher (architect) and Sir John Overall (client), both of whom through their respective organisations, created a major public housing project that played a significant part in the development of Canberra in the early 1960s. The combination of Sydney Ancher (Senior Partner in Ancher Mortlock & Murray), a leading exponent of the Post-War International Modernist style in his domestic architecture since 1945, and John Overall, Commissioner of the newly created National Capital Development Commission (NCDC) and other senior staff, achieved a project with a high level of civic design and architectural expression.

The Australian Institute of Architects considers that Sydney Ancher was one of the most important Australian architects of the mid-century and a pioneer of the Modern Movement. It is considered that his work 'forged a link between Australian tradition and twentieth century architecture', especially evidenced by the influence his work had in Sydney from 1945-1956. Robin Boyd referred to Sydney Ancher's houses as 'in the best Australian tradition of horizontally bleached colours and decorative shadows... a line of development, unaffected, uncomplicated, and an undeviating search for simplicity' (*Architecture Australia*, 1980). It is these characteristics of Sydney Ancher's house designs that are evident in the design concept for this precinct.

Ancher's reputation as a Post-War International Modernist architect was based on his ability to transpose the essential tenets of major European architects such as Mies van der Rohe and Le Corbusier into an Australian context. His individual houses undertaken prior to this project had demonstrated the possibilities of developing a new architecture specifically suited to Australia. The particular demands of a large scale medium-density housing project meant that the lightly expressed, Mies van der Rohe inspired architectural language of his individual houses was not appropriate. Ancher looked back further to his knowledge of Le Corbusier and the German large

scale housing projects of the inter-war decades. He produced a unique planning layout containing a unified collection of diverse building types with a strong, cubiform composition, large expanses of flat external walls finished exclusively with pre-coloured textured Tyrolean render, and consistent architectural detailing.

Ancher's output was not extensive and the Precinct is his only large medium density housing design and also the largest project in extent and cost he completed. Furthermore, it is one of only two of his projects to be built in Canberra (the other being the original ANU Students Union Building, now the Pauline Griffin Building).

The Precinct was among the first medium density public housing schemes undertaken by the NCDC, as it commenced several decades as the major driving force in the development of Canberra and its consolidation as the National Capital. It provided an opportunity for John Overall and senior Commission staff throughout the design and construction to provide strong guidance on the desired direction and outcomes for the project. The original design brief specifically stipulated a mix of dwelling sizes and called for a high level of civic design.

As the Commissioner, John Overall maintained a close watch on the development of the master plan and subsequent sketch designs, often requiring meetings with Sydney Ancher to resolve issues or request additional resolution of design matters. Overall had also been steeped in International Modernist architecture and planning through his pre-war membership of the Modern Architecture Research Society, and post-war involvement with William Holford and other leading planners in the United Kingdom.

Other senior NCDC staff who contributed to the outcome included the Associate Commissioners Grenfell Rudduck and William Andrews, Chief Town Planner Peter Harrison, Executive Architect John Goldsmith, Secretary Manager Robert B. Lansdown, Landscape Architect John Grey, and later in the project Gareth Roberts, who became the NCDC's first Director of Architecture. The architects were also requested from time to time to discuss the project with Professor Denis Winston from the Department of Town and Country Planning at the University of Sydney. Professor Winston was a consultant to the Commission on town planning matters. The landscaped outcome for the completed project reflected the NCDC's commitment to the overall landscaping character of Canberra. The Department of Interior Parks and Gardens Section was an important contributor, in addition to the NCDC's Chief Landscape Architect, Richard Clough.

As a matter of policy, the NCDC consulted the National Council of Women regarding the functionality of the proposed flats. Their comments lead to a major re-design of what became the single storey Garden Flats.

All of these people and organisations made significant contributions not only to the Northbourne Housing Precinct but to the development of Canberra as the national capital in the post-war decades.

As noted under Criterion (c), the Precinct makes an important contribution to an understanding of the development and provision of public housing in post-war Canberra – an important historical theme within the context of the ACT. It also signifies the early and very direct intervention of the newly formed National Capital Development Commission in a massive and urgent campaign to provide accommodation for a huge influx of public servants from Melbourne and Canberra. The Precinct was one of the earliest large scale housing projects (originally conceived as 150 dwellings) adopted by the NCDC to encourage the establishment in Canberra of large scale building contractors who could then deliver the urgently needed housing.

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

This criterion does not apply to the Northbourne Housing Precinct.

- (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 Northbourne Housing Precinct does not meet this criterion.

The Council acknowledges that the Precinct can provide information that contributes to an understanding of the cultural history of the ACT, however there is insufficient evidence before it to demonstrate that it has provided, or is likely to provide, information that will contribute significantly to a wider understanding through its use or potential use as a research site, teaching site, type locality or benchmark site.

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

This criterion does not apply to the Northbourne Housing Precinct.

- (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.**

This criterion does not apply to the Northbourne Housing Precinct.

## SUMMARY OF THE PLACE

### HISTORY AND PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

#### HISTORY

##### **Public housing in Canberra and the city's early growth and development**

Public housing forms a crucial element in Canberra's history. Unlike other cities, where the main focus of public housing is to provide a minimum level of accommodation for those who cannot afford to provide it for themselves, in Canberra, a large program of public housing established from 1927 has provided housing for all classes of society. It was not until 1972 that the number of privately built dwellings surpassed the number built by government (Wright, 2000 p. 6).

The Government provided housing in all manner of forms: hostels, hotels, detached residences, and flats. Well before Parliament's first sitting in Canberra in 1927, the Federal Government knew that it would need to provide housing for those relocating to the nation's capital.

In 1912 the Minister for Home and Territories stated that 'it appears that the Government must, therefore, be responsible for housing its officials who are transferred from Melbourne, and who are on a different footing from the commercial population, and will suffer some hardship and inconvenience on their compulsory transfer to the seat of government' (Wright, 2000 p. 6).

The Federal Capital Advisory Committee (FCAC) was established in recognition that the pace of work had to be lifted significantly if the Seat of Government were to move to the capital. (Wright, 2000:p.3) The FCAC, constrained by limited funding, built only 126 houses across four residential subdivisions. It had a little more success building hostels with the completion of Hotel Canberra (now the Hyatt Hotel), Hotel Ainslie (now Gorman House), Hotel Kurrajong and Hotel Acton and hostels in Brisbane Avenue and Telopea Park. (Wright, 2000 p.4)

The Federal Capital Commission (FCC) was established in 1925 and set about providing housing for the expected influx of construction workers and public servants. In the year to 30 June 1927 the FCC approved construction of 545 Government houses. A year later 646 public servants had been transferred to Canberra with office and residential accommodation provided. This included houses, hotel and hostel accommodation (Wright, 2000 p.17).

The Depression was accompanied by a downturn in the transfer program and with the change of Government in 1930, the FCC was wound up and Canberra reverted to divided departmental control. A partly elected ACT Advisory Council was then established to provide residents of the ACT with representation on local matters. ([http://www.library.act.gov.au/find/history/frequentlyaskedquestions/personal\\_stories/act\\_advisory\\_council,\\_1930-1974](http://www.library.act.gov.au/find/history/frequentlyaskedquestions/personal_stories/act_advisory_council,_1930-1974)).

By the late 1930s the piecemeal approach to development by the Department of Interior and other responsible agencies was having significant adverse impacts. In February 1939, there were 400 people on the waiting list for government housing in Canberra. Administration was not coping with Canberra's rate of growth (Wright, 2000: p.28).

There were also concerns about approaches to planning and development of the capital. To safeguard the Griffin Plan and maintain architectural standards, the NCPDC was established as an advisory body to the Minister of the Interior in 1939 (Arc hives ACT Finding Aid 'National Capital Development Commission Records'). This body reviewed and commented on many of the post-war housing development plans until 1958 when the National Capital Development Commission was established.

During World War II construction of Government houses in Canberra was halted leaving Canberra with an estimated shortage of 500 houses through the latter part of the war.

Putting still further pressure on the housing situation, Cabinet decided in 1948 to recommence the program of transferring the public service from Melbourne to Canberra (Wright, 2000 p. 29).

In 1955 the Administrative Building (the first public service office block of significant size) was nearing completion. In that year the Government planned to transfer 1,500 public servants from Melbourne to Canberra over three years, and the Department of the Interior estimated a need for 4,000 new dwellings by 1958.

After it became clear that the construction of single housing was not going to meet the growing waiting list for accommodation, alternative housing models were considered. To compound the problem, since World War II building costs had escalated dramatically, there were shortages of materials – which led to rationing arrangements – and a lack of tradesmen. A quick-fix solution was needed. Blocks of flats, which had previously been considered as the cause of congestion and unhealthy conditions, suddenly found favour (Wright, 2000 p. 29).

### **Construction of housing flats in Canberra**

The provision of public housing over the period of the construction and development of the National Capital is a significant and distinct example of Australian public housing provision. The Commonwealth Government was the predominant provider of housing in Canberra from the 1920s until 1972 when NCDC encouragement of private enterprise construction and the purchase of government houses succeeded in tipping the scales towards private investment in housing (NCDC p. 15)

In the post-war period government housing provision in Canberra entered a new phase of medium density development in response to the decision to complete the transfer of Government departments from Melbourne to Canberra. The NCPDC made a clear distinction between Commonwealth provision of public housing elsewhere in Australia as part of the post-war reconstruction program, and the provision of housing that would meet both the standards of planning and design in the National Capital and the needs of public servants. (41<sup>st</sup> meeting 6-7 October 1944) It was not until the 1970s that provision of public housing in Canberra became more aligned with the Commonwealth-State Housing Agreements concerning low-income social housing (Hutchison, 2000 p.50)

The three initial developments to be constructed by the Commonwealth Department of Works and Housing in response to the housing shortages were the Griffith Flats (1948), the Braddon and Reid flats (1951) and the Ainslie Flats (1952). The design of these flats followed Garden City principles, of two storey load bearing brick construction arranged around the edges of long rectangular blocks, facing the surrounding streets, irrespective of solar orientation with a shared central area. (Graham Brooks and Associates, 2014p. 55)

The Griffith Flats, consisted of 48 two-bedroom units on a rectangular site bounded by Canberra Avenue, Eyre Street, Oxley Street and Dawes Street. The units were spread over eight two-storey blocks, each facing a road frontage with the central area between the blocks containing facilities for car parking and clothes drying.

The Braddon Flats, located on a rectangular site on the northern side of Ainslie Avenue and facing onto Elimatta, Bateman and Gooreen Streets, comprised of eight two-storey buildings containing 48 two-bedroom flats. The Reid flats were directly opposite on a rectangular site facing onto Elimatta, Allambee and Gooreen Streets, comprised 20 one-bedroom units and 28 two-bedroom units. Both complexes comprised eight two-storey blocks, each facing a road frontage with the central area between the blocks containing facilities for car parking and clothes drying.

The Ainslie Flats, located on a rectangular site bounded by Hayley Street, Chisholm Street, Quick Street and Howe Crescent, consisted of 32 one-bedroom units and 56 two-bedroom units. The eight two-storey building were arranged to face street frontages with a central area between the blocks containing facilities for car parking and clothes drying.

The construction of the Allawah and Bega Courts (1956/57), the Currong Flats (1959) and the Northbourne Flats (1959) demonstrated a shift in design intent towards modernist site planning techniques and construction. The

need for an appropriate architecture for the large commission, and its important location, provided an opportunity to shift away from architectural styles previously employed on housing projects and to experiment with elements and concepts of International Style design and construction techniques. The flats were arranged on their sites to create smaller areas of shared open space with some of the smaller blocks raised on 'pilotis' or columns to allow parking below the buildings. (Graham Brooks and Associates, 2014p. 56)

The Allawah and Bega Courts consisted of eight three-storey blocks of two-bedroom flats. They presented to Cooyong Street as six blocks of 18 flats raised on columns over car parks with laundries under two blocks. Behind this row of blocks, a further ten blocks of 12 flats on the ground formed rectangular courtyards between. The complex demonstrates characteristics of Post-War International Style (1940-1960) including a cubiform overall shape, overhang for shade, plain, smooth wall surfaces, cantilevered balconies and contrasting texture between brick and rendered facades.

The Currong Flats, adjacent to Allawah and Bega Courts (known later as the 'ABC flats') consisted of six eight-storey buildings, comprising 184 one bedroom flats and 28 two bedroom flats. They presented to Currong Street and Ainslie Avenue and also demonstrated some aspects of the Post-War International Style, such as cubiform overall shape, overhangs for shade, plain smooth wall surfaces, cantilevered balconies and contrasting textures. (Graham Brooks and Associates, 2014 p.66)

The Northbourne Flats consisted of 24 three-bedroom, 154 two-bedroom and 70 one-bedroom flats located on two sites, in Turner and Braddon, facing each other across Northbourne Avenue. The development on the Turner side of Northbourne Avenue is bounded by Condamine Street, Forbes Street and Greenway Street and the development on the Braddon side of Northbourne Avenue is bounded by Henty Street and the boundaries of Haig Park and the Canberra Rex Hotel. The complex consists of two building blocks types, both 3 storeys high – those that contain two- bedroom flats with the one-bedroom flats attached by glazed links and those that contain three-bedroom flats. The Flats exhibit some features of the Post-War International Style (1940-1960) such as cubiform overall shape, plain, smooth wall surfaces and exposure of structure frames.

Allawah and Bega Courts were initiated and completed during the period in which the NCPDC was the advisory body. The Currong and the Northbourne Flats were initiated at the same time but completed by the NCDC after it came into operation in 1958. With queues for housing growing and more transfers planned, Stuart Flats, Lachlan Court and Gowrie Court were priority construction projects in the NCDC's first two years.

The Stuart Flats, Griffith constructed in 1959 continued the overall site planning arrangement evident in the Allawah and Bega Courts and the Northbourne Housing Precinct, although located on a steeply sloping site which resulted in less clarity of the parking and common areas. Furthermore their architectural expressions remained in the restrained Inter-War Georgian style. (Graham Brooks and Associates, 2014 p.56)

The Stuart Flats consisted of 29 bedsitters and 117 two-bedroom flats on a site bounded by Captain Cook Crescent, Stuart Street, Light Street, Evans Crescent and the boundaries of St Paul's Cathedral, the Russian Embassy and private flats. The units are spread over 12 separate blocks varying in height from two to four storeys plus part basement with some blocks raised on concrete frames to provide covered car parking. The central open space between the blocks contained additional car parking and drying areas however landscaping was minimal. There is little evidence of any strong concept, architectural style or a considered approach to site planning in the design of these buildings despite being designed in the highly regarded office of Spencer, Hanson and Partner.

Gowrie Court, Narrabundah, constructed in 1959, broke away from the 'donut' planning model partly due to the site not being surrounded by roadways. It demonstrates some architectural influences of the Post-War International style such as low pitched roof and overall cubist form. (Graham Brooks and Associates, 2014 p.56)

Gowrie Court consisted of 72 two-bedroom units in series of separate, three-storey blocks that ran parallel with each other for optimum solar orientation. This was in contrast to the early 1950s flats that were two-storeys high, and flanked all four boundaries of their sites regardless of individual orientation. Other evidence of the shift to a

more modern, International Style-influenced approach is exemplified by the very low pitch to the roof, accentuating the rectangular, cubistic form of the blocks. In another modernist tendency, the crisp, planar form is offset visually by the white-painted cantilevered balconies, which regularly punctuate the main facades.

Lachlan Court, Barton also constructed in 1959 received notoriety for its use of 'no-fines' concrete in place of typical load bearing brickwork. The complex consisted of 118 bedsitters over four separate buildings, one one-bedroom caretakers' cottage, a restaurant, central laundrette and 41 garages on a site bounded by Brisbane Avenue, Macquarie Street, Darling Street and National Circuit. In 1999 Lachlan Court was sold by the ACT Government and subsequently demolished for redevelopment.

The construction of the Red Hill Housing Precinct in 1961 demonstrated another shift in the planning layout of public housing towards the Post-War International style and were part of a group housing project, an idea discussed earlier by the NCPDC for new subdivisions, a similar scheme which would be evident in the future Northbourne Housing Precinct. This project consisted of a total of 145 dwellings in a variety of housing types including flats, bed-sitter units, houses and townhouses. The majority of the Precinct is bounded by La Perouse Street, Discovery Street, Monaro Crescent and Cygnet Crescent with a smaller section being located outside that perimeter on the other side of Cygnet Crescent. The nine blocks follow the gently sloping topography, street pattern on a symmetrical, semi-formal, curved radial layout set out in a series of radial wings which results in a series of open spaces. The buildings however made no reference to the Post-War International style.

The NCDC's construction of the Northbourne Housing Precinct, between 1959 - 1962 was a much more ambitious architectural undertaking along the avenue that was the main entrance to Canberra. This project established a significant difference to its predecessors in terms of the use of the variety of building types and group layouts, and proved more confident in its adoption of the Post-War International style. (Graham Brooks and Associates, 2014 p.57)

The Northbourne Housing Precinct stretches some 500 metres along Northbourne Avenue in Dickson and Lyneham and consists of five building types, comprising one, two, three and four storey buildings with variety of housing types including bachelor flats, two-storey paired houses and maisonettes. The Precinct was considered by the NCDC as a 'gateway' marking the entrance into the National Capital. The prominence and consideration given to its landmark status were novel qualities in Canberra's public housing, as previous examples were primarily considered as a quick response to housing shortages. Further information can be found under **The Planning and Development of the Northbourne Housing Precinct**.

Subsequent medium density public housing, such as Kanangra Court, Reid took a different approach to architectural and site planning.

Kanangra Court, Reid completed in 1965 demonstrated some domestic qualities of private houses associated with the Sydney Regional Style (1960- ) such as scale, footprint shape, massing, proportion of windows, detailing and building materials. Originally comprised of 118 bachelor flats over seven three-storey blocks, the flats has since been modified into two-bedroom flats. Bounded by Ainslie Avenue, Limestone Avenue, Allambie Street and Goren Street the buildings are set in an open landscaped area with covered carports and screened drying areas.

By the mid 1970s demand for government housing in Canberra had dropped significantly. The Government decided that building large flat complexes exclusively for occupation by government housing tenants was over, and that low-cost housing should be developed for the increasing number of tenants on welfare and aged pensioners. (Phillip Leeson Architects 2011 p.319).

Jerilderie Court, Reid completed in 1977 demonstrated this new phase in intent and design approach to public housing in Canberra. Developed in response to lobbying for low cost accommodation it was designed in response to a places' context rather than a conscious exercise in any specific architectural style. It contains a total of 62 dwellings within nine blocks ranging from two to three storeys in height. Dwelling types include three-bedroom townhouses, single-storey garden units, maisonettes and mews-style units with car parking provided at ground

level under some blocks, in group carports and in open parking spaces. The units are bounded by Ainslie Avenue, Allambee Street, Doonkuna Street and Elimatta Street.

### **The planning and development of the Northbourne Housing Precinct**

The Precinct makes an important contribution to an understanding of the intervention of the newly formed NCDC in the development and provision of medium density accommodation for the huge influx of public servants from Melbourne and other capitals in the post-war period. In its layout of distinct housing types, landscaping and provision of facilities designed to meet government standards and particular advice such as that provided by the national Council of Women, it is an exemplar of NCDC medium density residential construction and of a distinct provision of public housing in Australia that is no longer practised. (Graham Brooks and Associates, 2014 p.148)

The Precinct was among the first medium density public housing schemes undertaken by the NCDC, as it commenced several decades as the major driving force in the development of Canberra and its consolidation as the National Capital. It provided an opportunity for John Overall and senior Commission staff throughout the design and construction to provide strong guidance on the desired direction and outcomes for the project. The original design brief specifically stipulated a mix of dwelling sizes and called for a high level of civic design.

The NCDC invited leading Australian architects, including Ancher, Mortlock and Murray; Arthur Baldwinson and Edwards Madigan Torzillo, to design 150 houses along Northbourne Avenue. Ancher Mortlock and Murray were selected with Sydney Ancher as Director in charge and the Design Architect and Stuart Murray as the Project Architect. Professor Denis Winston, head of the Department of Town and Country Planning at Sydney University and consultant to the NCDC on town planning matters, was also engaged on this project. Ancher's output was not extensive and the Precinct is his only large medium density housing design, and also the largest project in extent and cost he completed. Furthermore, it is one of only two of his projects to be built in Canberra (the other being the original ANU Students Union Building, now the Pauline Griffin Building).

As the Commissioner, John Overall maintained a close watch on the development of the master plan and subsequent sketch designs, often requiring meetings with Sydney Ancher to resolve issues or request additional resolution of design matters. Overall had also been steeped in International Modernist architecture and planning through his pre-war membership of the Modern Architecture Research Society, and post-war involvement with William Holford and other leading planners in the United Kingdom.

Other senior NCDC staff who contributed to the outcome included the Associate Commissioners Grenfell Rudduck and William Andrews, Chief Town Planner Peter Harrison, Executive Architect John Goldsmith, Secretary Manager Robert B. Lansdown, Landscape Architect John Grey, and later in the project Gareth Roberts, who became the NCDC's first Director of Architecture. The architects were also requested from time to time to discuss the project with Professor Denis Winston from the Department of Town and Country Planning at the University of Sydney. Professor Winston was a consultant to the Commission on town planning matters. The landscaped outcome for the completed project reflected the NCDC's commitment to the overall landscaping character of Canberra. The Department of Interior Parks and Gardens Section was an important contributor, in addition to the NCDC's Chief Landscape Architect, Richard Clough.

As a matter of policy, the NCDC consulted the National Council of Women regarding the functionality of the proposed flats. Their comments lead to a major re-design of what became the single storey Garden Flats.

The NCDC always envisaged the Precinct would be an important site on the approach to Canberra and it was designed and constructed to present as a 'gateway' into Canberra which required a high degree of civic design. The original brief was to design a precinct comprising of 150 dwellings in a mix of one, two and three storey buildings, incorporating flats and attached dwellings. A strong landscaping program for the precinct was also designed to reinforce and complement the civic design and its presence on Northbourne Avenue and to create amenity for incoming residents rather than to reinforce the geometric urban structure.



The Precinct also manifests elements of the plan for Canberra designed by Walter Burley and Marion Mahoney Griffin. That plan anticipated along the tree lined boulevard and main thoroughfare that is Northbourne Avenue, “contiguous terrace buildings and small (fine grain) blocks with rear service lanes [and] individual tenancies to public street frontage” (Graham Brooks and Associates 2014 p.13). The Precinct achieved residential density along the avenue, with the main access being from quiet rear streets, but the residences were not all designed in terrace format.

The Precinct has been designed in the Post War International Style (1940-1960) by Ancher, Mortlock and Murray, a firm considered to be key practitioners in the Post-War International Style movement in Australia. The design also demonstrates influences of the Weissenhof Siedlung, most likely as a result of Ancher’s travels through Europe, and Radburn planning principles.

#### The Weissenhof Siedlung

The Weissenhof Siedlung (or model housing estate at Weissenhof) was an exhibition held in 1927 near the City of Stuttgart to demonstrate the latest thinking in housing design, interior fittings, and construction technology. The Deutscher Werkbund proposed the exhibition and vice-president, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe was placed in charge. Sixteen leading architects from across Europe were invited to participate including Le Corbusier and Walter Gropius. The concept behind the exhibition was to design modestly scaled dwellings units suitable for mass production. A variety of approaches emerged from individual designers but commonalities, such as painted white finishes, functional windows emphasizing the horizontal and flat roofs were crucial in the development of the Modern movement. The common thread of rational or functional design could be detected in all buildings. (Moffit, 2003 pp. 519-520)

#### Radburn Planning 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 p. 1).

The main principles of the Radburn housing included 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.

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 19 August 2014).

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 demonstrated a different approach to medium density housing than the freestanding individual residences at Curtin, Fisher and Charnwood.

### Landscaping

An important aspect of the Precinct was the visual presence of its landscaping along the Avenue. As the NCDC sought to develop the Precinct into a 'gateway' into the capital, the landscaping was to form an important visual, physical and symbolic role on this approach route. (Graham Brooks and Associates 2014 p.111)

The landscaping philosophy adopted in the Precinct centred on loosely arranged groups of trees planted in open spaces between the housing groups and along the cul-de-sac leading off De Burgh Street. Included within the landscaping were play areas, walkways and undercover parking.

The landscaping was initiated in the early 1960s by the Executive Architect of the NCDC, John Goldsmith, through discussions with John Gray of the ACT Parks and Gardens Department. Their intent was to mitigate the visual impact of the Precinct along the avenue and complement the existing nearby treed avenue to blend with both the architecture and site layout. (Graham Brooks and Associates 2014 p.111)

Two major planting phases were carried out:

- 1) Early/mid 1960s, under the direction of John Gray; and
- 2) 1979/80, under the direction of Deverson Scholtens Bombardier (DSB Landscape Architects).

Phase one preferred tall growing trees, such as *Cedrus deodara*, *Cedrus atlantica*, *Casuarina cunninghamiana*, and *Cupressus arizonica*. Together with these species, *Prunus cerasifera* (plum), *P. dulcis* (Almond) and *P. mume* (Japanese Flowering Apricot) were also planted.

Phase two included planting a range of species types, including oaks (*Quercus spp*), pistachio (*Pistacia chinensis*) and ash trees (*Fraxinus oxycarpa* and *F. pennsylvanica*). (Graham Brooks and Associates 2012 p.160)

## DESCRIPTION

The Northbourne Housing Precinct (the Precinct) is located on two sites stretching some 500 metres facing each other across Northbourne Avenue. One site is in the suburb of Dickson, while the other is in Lyneham (Block 8, Section 51, Lyneham and Block 41, Section 6, Block 1 Section 12, and Block 4 Section 1, Dickson). The Precinct comprises of five building types ranging from single, one, two, three and four stories, providing accommodation of 169 flats in a combination of one, two and three-bedrooms. The five building types are arranged in five groups, each with its own distinctive and cohesive character. The five groups are:

- 6) Bachelor (Bedsitter) Flats;
- 7) Pair Houses;
- 8) Maisonettes;
- 9) Garden Flats (Courtyard Houses); and
- 10) Three Storey Flats (Owen Flats).

### Bachelor (Bedsitter) Flats

The four bachelor blocks of flats are located at the northern end of the precinct on both sides of the avenue, one block is located on the west side (Lyneham) and the remaining three on the east (Dickson). The Bachelor Flats are present as 'point blocks' enhancing the Precinct's civic design as a 'gateway' to the capital. These four blocks consist of four-storey buildings, each containing seven bed-sitters. The ground floor comprises of the main entry, defined by a curved wall, mail boxes, common laundry and one flat. They are constructed of concrete frames to the lower floor, load bearing masonry walls and suspended concrete slabs to the upper levels finished with a flat roof. The lower level is cement rendered smooth and painted grey/blue and the upper levels are exposed sand/brown render however the block located on the Lyneham side has since been painted entirely white. The windows are full height vertical panels in timber frames painted white. Landscaping consists of planter boxes, external benches and concrete paths. The original pergolas are no longer extant.

### Pair Houses

The pair houses are located to the west of the avenue (Lyneham). These houses comprise of eleven, two-storey blocks, each containing a pair of semi-detached and two single houses with interlinks of double carports. An additional house is located at the De Burgh Street end of some groups. The pair houses are flat roofed, cement rendered brick, painted mushroom/grey. The windows and pergolas are timber painted white. Private courtyards have since been introduced around each house and are constructed of timber paling fences and exposed brick. The courtyard walls are unsympathetic to the original rendered construction and reduce the common open space between the groups resulting in a significant distortion of the original design intent of the pair houses.

### Karuah Maisonettes

The Maisonettes are located on the east side of the avenue (Dickson), south of the Visitor Information Centre. They comprise of five, three-storey blocks, each containing six terrace (row) houses with a carport, laundry and entry. The Maisonettes are flat roofed structures with painted brick in off-white to the ground level and cement rendered brick, painted pale khaki, to the upper storeys. The windows and doors are white painted timber with aluminium screens over. Private courtyards have since been introduced around each house and are constructed of timber paling fences and exposed brick. The courtyard walls are unsympathetic to the original rendered construction and reduce the common open space between the groups resulting in a significant distortion of the original design intent of the Maisonettes.

### Garden Flats (Courtyard Houses)

These flats are located to the east of the Maisonettes on the east side of the avenue (Dickson). The flats comprise of sixteen single storey houses, of one and two bedroom types, linked with a garden and carport. The flats are cement rendered flat roofed structures painted khaki/cream, with timber eaves painted white. The window frames are timber painted white with aluminium flyscreens.

### Three Storey Flats (Owen Flats)

These flats are located to the south of the pair housing on the west side of the avenue (Lyneham). The flats comprise of four, three-storey, blocks, each containing 12 flats, two stairs and one laundry per two flats. There are separate carports, drying yards and motor court. The flats are cement rendered flat roofed structures with timber door and window frames and aluminium sashes. The associated carports are of painted brick construction.

The Precinct has been designed in the Post War International Style (1940-1960). The key attributes of Post-War International Style (1940-1960) the Precinct demonstrates include:

- cubiform overall shape;
- Expression of structural frame; and
- Large sheets of glass.

Other indicators of the style represented within the precinct include:

- Plain, smooth wall surfaces (all housing types);
- Contrasting non-rectangular shape (Bachelor flats);
- Overhang for shade (Owen Flats); and
- Cantilever elements (Maisonettes).

The Precinct is uniformly detailed and finished with a fine aggregate 'Tyrolean' render to the external walls, flat metal roofs and timber framed glazing with aluminium sashes. The interiors have plaster walls and ceilings plastered with marble dust mixed with white cement.

### **Physical condition and integrity**

An external inspection of the Precinct was conducted by ACT Heritage on 23 April 2014. Overall the Precinct remains relatively intact in terms of physical condition and integrity in relation to extant buildings and planning layout. The physical condition of the buildings and its landscape relating to general maintenance however is considered to be poor.

The integrity of the 'gateway' status of the Precinct remains somewhat evident in the Bachelor 'point blocks' at the northern end of the Precinct, however their ability to be read as such is comprised by an increase in vegetation density. The integrity of the overall precinct, in respect to its 'gateway' status, has been diminished through expanding development and encroaching re-development, which both include higher density buildings and landscaping. The sense of entity, in relation to its original purpose to house relocated public servants, is no longer evident within the buildings.

The Precinct displays layers of maintenance work, such as repainting, most likely generated at tenancy turnover times, periodic inspections, accidental damage, vandalism, weather and the expected wear and tear. Maintenance appears to have been conducted in a sympathetic manner. Areas requiring further maintenance work include:

- the staining and cracking/chipping in the render (Bachelor Flats, Maisonettes, Courtyard Houses);
- flaking paint on window frames (Bachelor flats);

- removal of graffiti (Bachelor Flats, Owen Flats);
- flaking paint to roof capping (all);
- removal of ivy on external walls (pair house, maisonettes, Courtyard Houses);
- repainting of external render (Owen Flats, Maisonettes);
- large cracks through mortar and render (Maisonettes); and
- the landscaped common areas.

Original design elements no longer extant include:

- the pergola's linking and supplementing the Bachelor and Pair House buildings; and
- the curved rendered wall to carports on the Pair Houses.

Several additions have been made throughout the Precinct negatively impacting the integrity of the architect's original design intent. These include:

- the addition of bricked courtyard walls to the Pair Houses and Maisonettes;
- the addition of paling fences to the Pair Houses and Maisonettes;
- the enclosure of the internal shared open space to the Garden Flats.
- increased density to the original complementary plantings.

The original landscaping philosophy centred on loosely arranged groups of trees planted in open spaces between the housing groups remains evident throughout the Precinct, albeit to a greater density than originally planned. The trees appear to have matured well, achieving the desired effect of softening the buildings in the landscape, however again to a greater density and species than originally planned.

## SITE PLAN

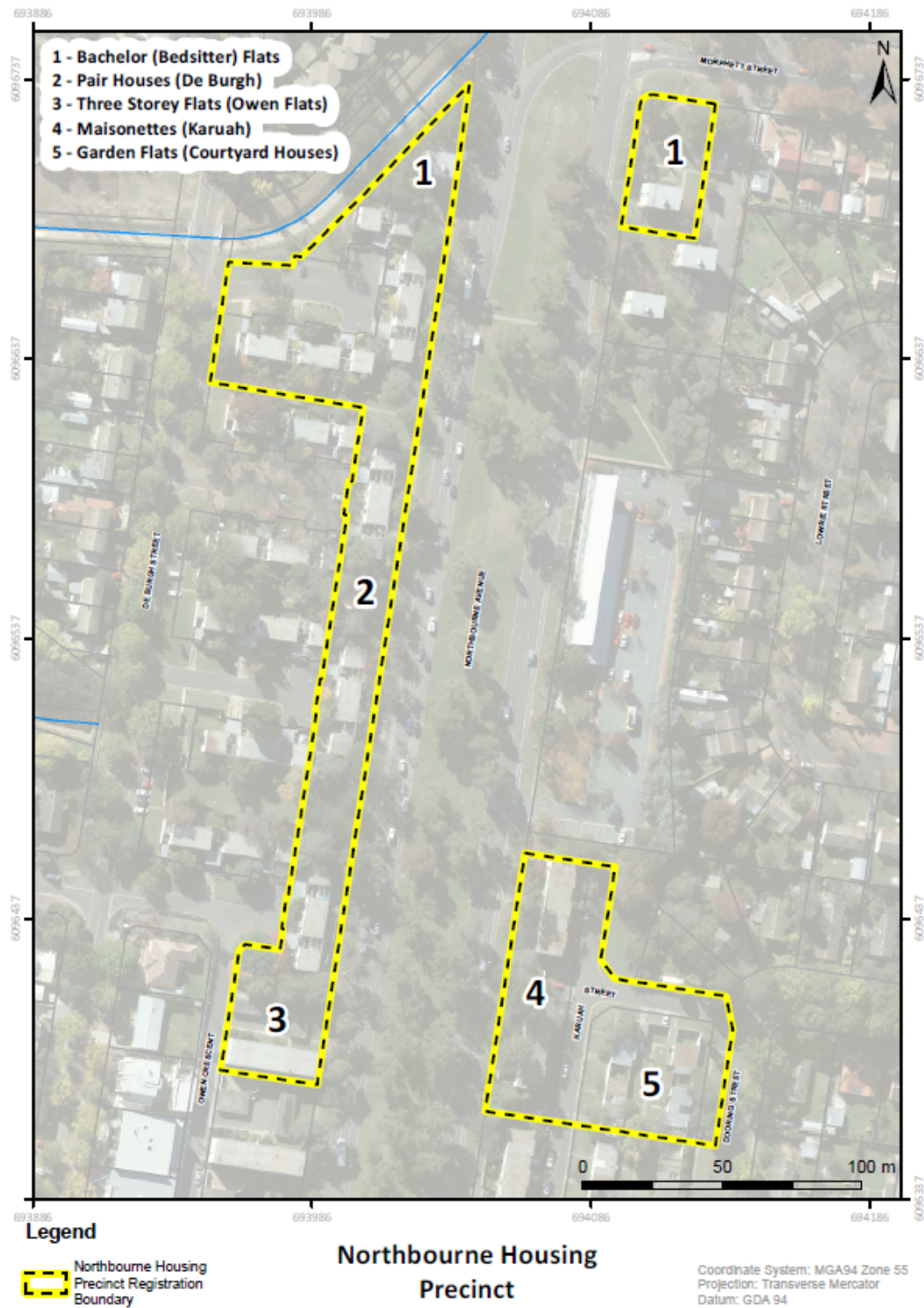
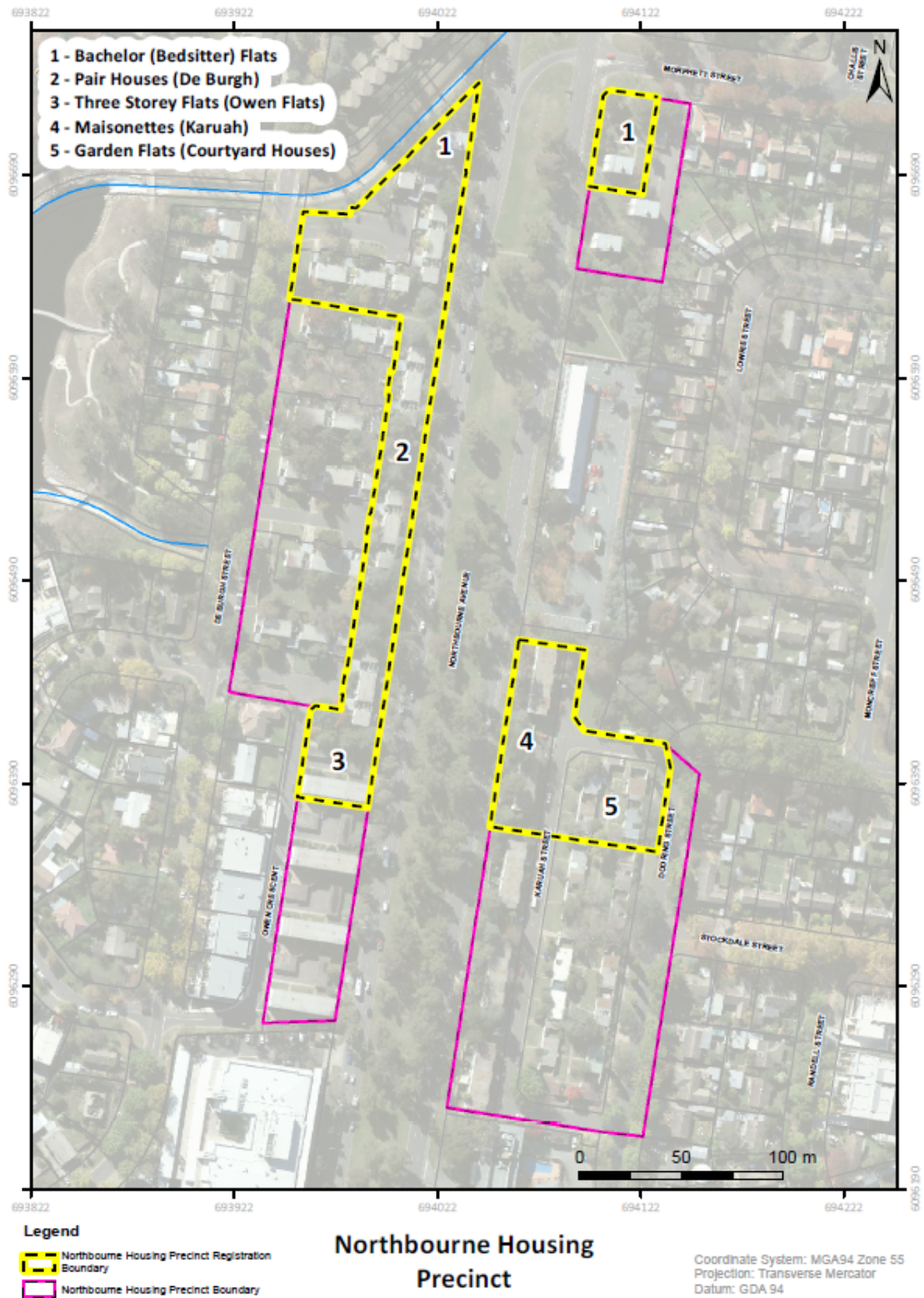




Image 1 Northbourne Housing Precinct, registration boundary



**Image 2** Northbourne Housing Precinct, as depicted in the context of the original precinct composition.

## IMAGES



**Image 3** Northern most Bachelor Flat, Dickson (ACT Heritage 2014)



**Image 6** Bachelor Flats, Dickson (ACT Heritage 2014)



**Image 4** Three storey flats (Owen Flats), Lyneham (ACT Heritage 2014)



**Image 7** Courtyard houses, Dickson (ACT Heritage 2014)



**Image 5** Maisonettes, Dickson (ACT Heritage 2014)



**Image 8** Pair houses, Lyneham (ACT Heritage 2014)





**Image 9** Pair Houses, Lyneham, 1961 (NAA A7973, INT614/7)



**Image 11** Pair Houses, Lyneham, 1961 (NAA 73, INT614/5)



**Image 10** Pair Houses, Lyneham, 1961 (NAA A7973, INT 614/3)



**Image 12** Pair Houses, Lyneham, 1965 (NLA nla.pic-nv3643918)



**Image 13** Northbourne Housing Precinct in its entirety, 1964 (Irving, 1999:4)

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