

Heritage (Decision about Registration of the Red Hill Campsite, Griffith) Notice 2019

Notifiable Instrument NI2019—71

made under the

Heritage Act 2004, s40 (Decision about registration)

1 Name of instrument

This instrument is the *Heritage (Decision about Registration of the Red Hill Campsite, Griffith) Notice 2019*.

2 Decision about registration

On 7 February 2019, the ACT Heritage Council (the **Heritage Council**) decided to register the Red Hill Campsite (the **Place**).

3 Registration details of the Place

The registration details of the Place are in the schedule.

4 Reasons for the decision

The Heritage Council is satisfied on reasonable grounds that the Place has heritage significance as it meets one or more of the heritage significance criteria in section 10 of the *Heritage Act 2004*. A detailed statement of reasons including an assessment against the heritage significance criteria is provided in the schedule.

5 Date registration takes effect

The registration of the Place takes effect on the day after this notice is notified.

6 Revocation

The *Heritage (Decision about Provisional Registration of the Red Hill Campsite, Griffith) Notice 2018* (NI2018—529) is revoked.

Fiona Moore
Secretary (as delegate for)
ACT Heritage Council
7 February 2019



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:

Red Hill Campsite

located on the traffic island within the road easement bordered by Flinders Way, Durville Crescent and Hayes Crescent, **Griffith**

DATE OF REGISTRATION

7 February 2019 Notifiable Instrument: 2019 –

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

This statement refers to the location of the place as required in s. 12 (b) of the *Heritage Act 2004*.

LOCATION OF THE PLACE

Red Hill Campsite, located on the traffic island within the road easement bordered by Flinders Way, Durville Crescent and Hayes Crescent, Griffith.

This statement refers to the description of the place as required in s.12(c) of the *Heritage Act 2004*. The attributes described in this section form part of the heritage significance of the place. For the purposes of s. 12(c) of the *Heritage Act 2004*, the boundary of the place is at Image 1.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PLACE

Red Hill Campsite, also known as the 'last campsite of the Ngunnawal', consisting of the following attributes:

- Aboriginal oral histories relating to the use of the place as a campsite and its enduring importance to Aboriginal people as a gathering place where Connection to Country is maintained.

Note: modern infrastructure within the site boundary such as concrete paths, kerbing, power and light poles are not part of the significant features of the place, but any works that have the potential to disturb the ground will be subject to provisions of the *Heritage Act 2004*

This statement refers to the heritage significance of the place as required in s.12(d) of the *Heritage Act 2004*.

STATEMENT OF HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

Red Hill Campsite, colloquially known as the 'last campsite of the Ngunnawal' is a place where Aboriginal people camped in the late 1920s to 1940s. It is the only known place of its kind in the ACT. Oral histories of the place are part of the life of Matilda House, a Ngambri-Ngunnawal Elder in the ACT. A public park at the time, it was used as a camping ground and is an important example of how Aboriginal people were able to continue to live and work in the ACT region during a time of transient employment opportunities.

(note: all Aboriginal heritage objects and places are protected under the *Heritage Act 2004*, regardless of registration status).

CONSERVATION OBJECTIVE

The guiding conservation objective is that Red Hill Campsite shall be conserved and appropriately managed in a manner respecting its 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.

REASON FOR REGISTRATION

The Council has assessed the Red Hill Campsite, Griffith against the heritage significance criteria and is satisfied that the place has heritage significance when assessed against four criteria [a, b, g and h] under s.10 of the *Heritage Act 2004*.

ASSESSMENT AGAINST THE HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA

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

In assessing the heritage significance of Red Hill Campsite, Griffith, the Council considered:

- the original nomination and documentary evidence supplied by the nominator;
- the Council's *Heritage Assessment Policy* (March 2018);
- information provided by a site inspection on 11 May and 17 September 2018 by ACT Heritage; and
- the report by ACT Heritage titled, *Background Information Red Hill Campsite*, February 2019, containing photographs and information on history, description, condition and integrity;
- information and comments received during the public consultation period under s.37 of the Act on the provisional registration of Red Hill Campsite, consisting of:
 - six submissions were received, all in favour of registration
 - one submission questioned if the place should meet criteria (b) and (e)
 - the Council reconsidered the arguments used against the two criteria, but maintain the assessment supporting criterion (b) as the only site of its kind in the ACT and against criterion (e) as there is no evidence of the community valuing the place for its aesthetic values.
 - Another submission disagreed with the Council's assessment under criterion (c), suggesting that further finds cannot be ruled out
 - the Council reconsidered the argument against criterion (c), but maintain the assessment against, noting that there is always a possibility that more material could be found, but that what was found does not support the view that a more complete excavation would recover anything more substantial (the criterion requires that there be evidence of potential for not just more archaeology, but for it to be important)

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. Future research may alter the findings of this assessment.

(a) importance to the course or pattern of the ACT's cultural or natural history;

The Council has assessed Red Hill Campsite against criterion (a) and is satisfied that the place meets this criterion.

Sometimes referred to as 'the last campsite of the Ngunnawal', this place is the only known site of its kind in the ACT. It is an important example of a place where Aboriginal people camped and interacted with each other and the wider community during the early part of the twentieth century.

Designated as a park in the 1920s, open spaces such as this site were important in allowing Aboriginal people to continue to move through, camp and remain connected to Country. This

occurred at a time when Aboriginal people, whilst actively engaged in the construction of the Nation's Capital, were not formally acknowledged as doing so.

This place is representative of the informal campsites common in the ACT in the 1930s and 1940s by workers who came to the ACT in search of employment during the late Depression years. The Depression had a significant impact on work available at the time and saw large movements of people across the ACT and NSW seeking employment. Many of these people ended up camping in vacant spaces close to water sources and employment possibilities. More specifically Red Hill Campsite represents a place where Aboriginal people gathered and maintained Connection to Country whilst being actively involved in the early workforce of the ACT region.

(b) has uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of the ACT's cultural or natural history;

The Council has assessed Red Hill Campsite against criterion (b) and is satisfied that the place meets this criterion.

Red Hill Campsite is the only known place of its kind in the ACT. There is a clear association between this place and the movement of Aboriginal people throughout the ACT during Australia's late depression years (1930s and 1940s). This was a time punctuated by periods of uncertain employment and significant change in the cultural landscape of the ACT region.

There is very little known about Aboriginal campsites in the ACT, particularly those close to the Molonglo River as is the case with Red Hill Campsite. This is because most campsites were flooded with the formation of Lake Burley Griffin or later destroyed as a consequence of urban development. Red Hill Campsite is also unique as an accessible, urban location which is uncommon for Aboriginal places in the ACT.

As an early recorded example of a contact site in the ACT, the campsite represents an important phase in the urban development of the region. This growth required a steady stream of workers, comprised of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people, to build the Nation's Capital. This place gives tangible form to the intangible oral history of marginalization experienced by the Aboriginal community who significantly contributed to this development.

(c) potential to yield important information that will contribute to an understanding of the ACT's cultural or natural history;

The Council has assessed Red Hill Campsite against criterion (c) and is satisfied that the place does not meet this criterion.

Archaeological investigations undertaken in 2016 were conducted in order to assess the potential for any sub-surface physical evidence relating to the use of the site as a Ngambri-Ngunnawal campsite.

Material culture recovered from the excavation includes artefactual material related to the park's use as a recreational facility. It is possible that artefacts such as glass bottles are related to past camping episodes. However, the existence of a shared material culture between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people during this period makes identifying Aboriginal presence difficult to determine archaeologically.

Whilst Red Hill Campsite is significant as a representation of Aboriginal past ways of life and customs, the place is not considered to yield any further information beyond that which is already

available. In order to meet threshold, the potential to provide information must relate to the physical evidence available at the campsite itself, and not the associated recorded evidence. Therefore, this criterion is not met.

(d) importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural or natural places or objects;

The Council has assessed Red Hill Campsite against criterion (d) and is satisfied that the place does not meet this criterion.

Red Hill Campsite is significant for its intangible heritage values which demonstrate land use and movement. However, there is insufficient evidence before the Council at this time to suggest that this place represents the principal characteristics of its class to a significant degree that is beyond the ordinary.

(e) importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics valued by the ACT community or a cultural group in the ACT;

The Council has assessed Red Hill Campsite against criterion (e) and is satisfied that the place does not meet this criterion.

Red Hill Campsite is significant for its intangible heritage values. There is insufficient evidence before the Council at this time to suggest that the community of the ACT values the place for its aesthetic characteristics to a significant degree.

(f) importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement for a particular period;

The Council has assessed Red Hill Campsite against criterion (f) and is satisfied that the place does not meet this criterion.

There is no evidence before the Council at this time to suggest that the place represents a high degree of technical or creative achievement. Artefacts uncovered during archaeological excavation at the campsite include bottle glass fragments that assist in dating the use of the place for recreational purposes. They do not demonstrate a particularly fine construction or design technique beyond that which is common to the era.

(g) has a strong or special association with the ACT community, or a cultural group in the ACT for social, cultural or spiritual reasons;

The Council has assessed Red Hill Campsite against criterion (g) and is satisfied that the place meets this criterion.

Red Hill Campsite has a strong and special association with the Ngambri-Ngunnawal group of the ACT region, in particular with the life of Ngambri-Ngunnawal Elder Matilda House and previous generations of her family. Further, the campsite is representative of Aboriginal heritage and associated strong Connection to Country. The utilisation of this place by successive generations of Ngambri-Ngunnawal people shows the length of their association with Red Hill Campsite. In sharing the history of her own relationship with this place, Ms House is telling the story of many Aboriginal families. Red Hill Campsite survives as a rare, extant example of what would have once

been a common type of gathering place for Aboriginal people. It was a place to rest, to refuel and to connect with other families in the region.

Given little visible material relating to the oral history of this site, it is the intangible cultural heritage of place that is the most significant aspect of Red Hill Campsite. Intangible heritage is an important part of Aboriginal culture and this campsite demonstrates known episodes that occurred at this place. Red Hill Campsite is representative of Aboriginal involvement in the multi-cultural workforce of the early ACT. The fact that Aboriginal people were able to work on Country and maintain a Connection to Country throughout the twentieth century is of high significance for Aboriginal people in the region.

Places where Aboriginal people camped during the 1920s to 1940s and to which an oral history can be attributed are rare and highly valued by the Aboriginal community, and as such, are highly enduring in contemporary oral sources and the shared experience of connection.

(h) has a special association with the life or work of a person, or people, important to the history of the ACT.

The Council has assessed Red Hill Campsite against criterion (h) and is satisfied that the place meets this criterion.

Red Hill Campsite has a special association with the Ngambri-Ngunnawal people of the ACT. More broadly, it is a place demonstrative of the informal campsites common in Canberra in the 1930s and 1940s. It is a place that is strongly associated with contemporary oral history that is related to the use of this place by workers who significantly contributed to the economy of the ACT. The Aboriginal community's association with this land is long lasting and is not only aligned with Ngambri-Ngunnawal Elder Ms Matilda House's family history, but forms part of the history of the Ngambri-Ngunnawal people and the broader history of the ACT region. That Aboriginal people worked on Country and maintained Connection to Country throughout the twentieth century is a very significant story for the Aboriginal community of the ACT.

Ms House is a prominent and well respected member of the ACT community. As an Aboriginal Elder she actively promotes improved relations between the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community and the wider ACT population. Her lasting influence on the community and her contribution to the ACT's history is evidenced by her being named Canberra citizen of the year for 2006.

Ms House's association to the place is enduring and distinctive for its representation as a site which tells the continuing story of Ngambri-Ngunnawal Connection to Country. Red Hill Campsite is the only known place of its type in the ACT. The intangible heritage of the place, as recorded in Ms House's oral history, is an integral story in the development of the ACT region. The region's transformation from a pastoral zone to the Nation's Capital is ostensibly represented by non-Aboriginal people. By telling the story of Red Hill Campsite, Aboriginal stories and sense of place are recounted as an integral part of the history of the ACT. Their voice is celebrated as a story of resilience and connection to the economic progression of the region.

SITE PLAN



Image 1 Red Hill Campsite registration boundary marking out the traffic island within the road easement bordered by Flinders Way, Durville Crescent and Hayes Crescent.