



**HERITAGE  
COUNCIL**  
OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

## **REGISTER OF HERITAGE PLACES – ASSESSMENT DOCUMENTATION**

### **11. ASSESSMENT OF CULTURAL HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE**

The criteria adopted by the Heritage Council in November 1996 have been used to determine the cultural heritage significance of the place.

#### **PRINCIPAL AUSTRALIAN HISTORIC THEME(S)**

- 3.8.1 Shipping to and from Australian ports
- 2.5 Promoting settlement on the land through selection and group settlement
- 3.7.1.2 Developing harbour facilities
- 3.8 Farming for export under Australian conditions
- 3.15 Struggling with remoteness
- 5.1.2 Coping with dangerous jobs and workplaces

#### **HERITAGE COUNCIL OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA THEME(S)**

- 104 Land allocation and subdivision
- 201 River and sea transport
- 302 Rural industry and market gardening
- 301 Grazing, pastoralism and dairying
- 405 Sport, recreation and entertainment

#### **11.1 AESTHETIC VALUE\***

*Tanker Jetty, Esperance* has aesthetic significance due to its considerable size, scale and construction. Its visibility from the town of Esperance and its strong presence in the seascape ensure its landmark status. (Criterion 1.3)

*Tanker Jetty, Esperance* has historic and visual links with the commercial centre of the town and is therefore part of Esperance's cultural environment. (Criteria 1.4)

#### **11.2 HISTORIC VALUE**

The construction of, and subsequent modifications to, *Tanker Jetty, Esperance* demonstrate the development of Esperance region from a modest pastoral

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\* For consistency, all references to architectural style are taken from Apperly, R., Irving, R., Reynolds, P. *A Pictorial Guide to Identifying Australian Architecture. Styles and Terms from 1788 to the Present*, Angus and Robertson, North Ryde, 1989.

For consistency, all references to garden and landscape types and styles are taken from Ramsay, J. *Parks, Gardens and Special Trees: A Classification and Assessment Method for the Register of the National Estate*, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1991, with additional reference to Richards, O. *Theoretical Framework for Designed Landscapes in WA*, unpublished report, 1997.

district to a grain producing area, and finally to a region which is currently (2006) producing a variety of primary products for export. The facilities offered by *Tanker Jetty, Esperance* were no longer adequate for the developing region indicating the changing nature of primary production in the region. (Criterion 2.1)

*Tanker Jetty, Esperance* is significant as an illustration of the importance of the opening up of the area known as the 'mallee' north of the town of Esperance. The decision to build *Tanker Jetty, Esperance* indicates the government's commitment to the development of farming in this area. (Criterion 2.2)

The place contributes to an understanding of the development of sea transport in the region and in the state. (Criterion 2.2)

*Tanker Jetty, Esperance* is significant for its association with the period of economic depression during the 1930s, and its role as a major project in the region that brought work to many workers in the vicinity. (Criterion 2.2)

The place is typical of jetty and bridge construction that was carried out within Australia and more specifically within Western Australia by the Public Works Department. It is a continuation of the traditional construction in timber for jetties and is the last jetty that remains in Esperance. (Criterion 2.4)

### **11. 3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE**

The land and sea floor adjacent to the jetty structure has the potential to hold archaeological information about the former uses of the jetty. (Criterion 3.1)

### **11. 4. SOCIAL VALUE**

*Tanker Jetty, Esperance* is important to the community of Esperance for its association with the period of economic growth in the region in the 1930s and the development of local industries. (Criterion 4.1)

*Tanker Jetty, Esperance* is highly valued by the local community as evidenced by the local action group who have formed to save the jetty from demolition and decay. The commitment to the project has resulted in a high profile campaign in the local media and voluntary maintenance of the place. (Criterion 4.1)

The place is valued by the community as it been the site of social and recreational pursuits since its construction in 1935 and more specifically since the 1980s when it has been solely used for recreation. (Criterion 4.1)

*Tanker Jetty, Esperance* contributes to the Esperance community's sense of place as a landmark structure and icon. (Criterion 4.2)

## **12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE**

### **12. 1. RARITY**

*Tanker Jetty, Esperance* is a rare example of a substantially intact timber jetty on the coast of Western Australia. This jetty is one of only four predominantly timber jetty structures that remain substantially intact. Eighty such structures were built, modified, extended or replaced in Western Australia between 1832 and 1942 for the purposes of shipping activities. (Criterion 5.1)

## **12.2 REPRESENTATIVENESS**

*Tanker Jetty, Esperance* is a good representative example of a timber jetty constructed by the Public Works Department of Western Australia used to facilitate the transportation of shipping needs of the Esperance region and town site.

### **12.3 CONDITION**

The condition of the jetty varies from poor to reasonably good.

The decking and the beams are in good condition and require no immediate maintenance.

The timber corbels and timber bracing are in poor condition and will need repairing and replacing respectively.

The galvanised diagonal rod bracing was found to be in poor condition, in almost all bays. The rod braces will need replacing.

All central piles not supporting the structure should be removed to minimise the drag forces on the structure. These piles are no longer required due to the removal of the railway.

The majority of the piles require remedial action due to splitting.

### **12.4 INTEGRITY**

*Tanker Jetty, Esperance* has moderate integrity. While it is no longer in use as a facility for transportation of cargo, this original purpose remains highly visible and it has remained in use as a venue for recreational activities such as fishing, and as a tourist attraction for pedestrians.

### **12.5 AUTHENTICITY**

Overall the authenticity of the place is moderate to high. The majority of the fabric of the jetty is original with concrete topping laid to a portion of the surface walkway.

### 13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

The documentary evidence has been compiled by Prue Griffin, Historian. The physical evidence has been compiled by Kris Keen Architect of KTA Partnership, with additions and/or amendments by HCWA staff and the Register Committee.

#### 13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

*Tanker Jetty, Esperance* is a timber jetty curving out into the Esperance Bay of approximately 670 metres in length. It was constructed in 1935 by the Public Works Department of Western Australia to serve the shipping needs of the Esperance region and townsite.

The townsite of Esperance, derives its name from the bay on which it is located. Esperance Bay was given this name by Admiral Bruny D'Entrecasteaux, commander of the French expedition which explored this coast in 1792. The name honours the ship "L'Esperance" commanded by Captain Huon de Kermadec, which anchored here on 9 December 1792. The bay provided safe anchorage while repairs were made to the "L'Esperance".<sup>1</sup> The region was visited by Matthew Flinders in 1802, who charted the southern coastline and in 1826, the military outpost at King George's Town (Albany) was established. Thereafter the southern coast of Western Australia was the province of sealers and whalers. They used the beaches and islands as locations for rough camps in which they lived and processed their catch. The processing consisted of rendering blubber down in huge vessels and drying the seal skins. These small outposts were serviced by ships.<sup>2</sup>

The land was considered worthless for agriculture following the tragic journey of Edward John Eyre from South Australia in 1842 and confirmed by Surveyor General Roe when he explored the southern hinterland in 1848-49.<sup>3</sup> In 1859, settler Albert Hassell of Jerramungup had explored as far east as Esperance but was equally unimpressed with the land for agriculture.<sup>4</sup> However pastoralists, Charles, James, Andrew and William Dempster decided to take up pastoral leases in the region in 1864. They were motivated to establish their pastoral leases some distance from the established farming locations by the generous leasing conditions offered by the government and because the region was closer to Albany, the primary port in the colony and Adelaide where their product could be sold.<sup>5</sup>

The Dempsters stocked their leases with sheep and succeeded in establishing very profitable runs at Esperance. Other settlers followed their example and began to settle in the area. In 1893, the Dundas Goldfields was proclaimed following the discoveries of gold to the north of Esperance resulting in an increase of people travelling through the area to the Goldfields.<sup>6</sup> Other prospectors went on to the Goldfields' at Kalgoorlie and Coolgardie. In December 1893 the townsite of Esperance was gazetted and the town prospered.

In the early years of its occupancy the town of Esperance was predominantly accessed from the sea. Overland routes were long and arduous with few cleared

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1 Department of land Information website, origin of country town names, [www.dola.wa.gov.au](http://www.dola.wa.gov.au)

2 Voigt, Don *Old Esperance Pictorial History 1894-1947*, Albany WA, 1996, p. 15

3 Erickson, Rica *The Dempsters* UWA Press, 1978, p. 81.

4 Erickson, Rica *The Dempsters* UWA Press, 1978, p. 81.

5 Erickson, Rica *The Dempsters* UWA Press, 1978, p. 81.

6 Voigt, Don *Old Esperance Pictorial History 1894-1947*, Albany WA, 1996, p. 16.

roads. The Dempsters built a small jetty opposite their homestead on Dempster Head, which served their needs and the settlers in the area. In 1890, the Hampton Plains Company built the first major jetty called the Newtown jetty north of the existing town area in what is now known as the Castletown area. This wooden structure was serviced by rail.<sup>7</sup>

In 1895, the first public jetty was constructed in Esperance Bay at the bottom of James Street. It was built by the Public Works Department and served the town's shipping needs for over 40 years from the era of sailing ships to modern ships.<sup>8</sup> The construction of this jetty was prompted in part by the discovery of gold at Kalgoorlie and Coolgardie and closer at hand in the Dundas region. This prompted prospectors to make their way to the goldfields from Esperance as one of the closest ports. The construction of the deep water port at Fremantle in 1897 led to the decline of Albany as the major port in the colony, consequently fewer prospectors left for the goldfields from Esperance.

Esperance town went into a period of decline in the 1900s but developed following the opening up of lands for farming by the state government from 1910 onwards. The area known as the 'mallee' around Salmon Gums townsite was subdivided and allocated to settlers at generous rates. Many settled in the area and grain production took over from the pastoral industry as the primary produce of the area.<sup>9</sup> As the production of grain increased, the local community requested the government to provide better facilities to export their product. A petition was sent to the Public Works Department in 1927 to request a new jetty.<sup>10</sup> After much debate within the government departments and the consideration of the costs involved at a time of economic stringency, it was eventually decided to go ahead with a new jetty rather than recondition the 1895 jetty. Plans were drawn by the Public Works Department under the guidance of the Engineer in charge of Harbours and Rivers John Stevenson Young in 1933.<sup>11</sup> The estimated cost for the project was £120,000.

The first pile for the new jetty was ceremonially driven in by Mr Alex McCallum on 29 January 1934.<sup>12</sup> During the construction of *Tanker Jetty, Esperance* it was a period of economic depression with little work to be had, particularly in regional areas. The Secretary of the Waterside Workers Federation wrote to Mr Nulsen, MLA requesting that the neediest be employed. The Minister for Employment and Industrial Development James Kenneally responded in January 1934.

I desire to inform you that when picking up men for work at Esperance, first consideration will be given to those men who are in destitute circumstances, and in this consideration due regard will have to be made to the general unemployment position throughout the state, in conjunction with the genuine residences of the Esperance district.<sup>13</sup>

*Tanker Jetty, Esperance* was completed in April 1935 and opened by the Hon Minister for Mines, Walter Selby Munsie. At that time the jetty was 1140ft long by

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7 Bailey, Christine 'Esperance Jetties' in *An Esperance Digest : 1988 : memories, past and present* / collected in 1987 by members of the Esperance Branch of the Fellowship of Writers

8 Bailey, Christine 'Esperance Jetties' in *An Esperance Digest : 1988 : memories, past and present* / collected in 1987 by members of the Esperance Branch of the Fellowship of Writers

9 *Faith, Hope and Reality: Esperance 1895-1995* Esperance Shire Council, 1995, p. 12.

10 File 1890/23, Dept of Works and Trading Concerns –Esperance new jetty – proposal. Reconditioning old jetty, moorings , dolphins. Cons 689, item 1923/1890v1, folio 220, SROWA.

11 PWD plan series 27418, Dept of Housing and Works.

12 *The West Australian* 3/2/1934,

13 Letter from James Kenneally, 4 Jan 1934, in file 1934/0361, Esperance New Jetty Construction , Cons 689, SROWA.

38ft and the depth of water at the outer berth was 37ft 6ins.<sup>14</sup> From 1935 to 1965, *Tanker Jetty, Esperance* was the major berth at Esperance and exports of wheat, salt, copper concentrate and other minerals left from the jetty.<sup>15</sup>

A primary function of the jetty was also the transportation of oil to the Goldfields. Pipelines ran along the length of the jetty and new pipelines were installed in 1956 for the Shell Oil Company.<sup>16</sup>

Access to *Tanker Jetty, Esperance* was via rail from outside the town enabling grain and primary produce to be directly taken to the jetty for loading and for supplies to be unloaded directly to railway carriages. Photographic evidence from the 1950s shows the position of the railway line on the jetty.<sup>17</sup>

In 1964, lots 874 and 915 where the jetty adjoins the land were designated as Reserves for recreation and vested in the Shire of Esperance.<sup>18</sup> In 1965, the first land backed berth was constructed at Esperance. A second berth was constructed in 1972 and a third in 2002.<sup>19</sup>

Following the construction of the new land backed berths *Tanker Jetty, Esperance* underwent minor changes to modify it for its role as the tanker berth. A new control gate was erected at the entry point to the jetty and new bollards were fitted to the jetty.<sup>20</sup>

In 1976, a new jetty was constructed adjacent to the port area at Taylor Street which served the growing commercial fishing fleet in Esperance. This was extended in 1979/80 but it was soon apparent that more facilities were needed.<sup>21</sup> Consequently in 1983 a new boat harbour was constructed at Bandy Creek. As a result, during the 1980s, *Tanker Jetty, Esperance* lost its viability as a commercial jetty but was used for recreational pursuits. The condition of a portion of the jetty was poor and for safety reasons the head of the jetty was separated from the main jetty. This break of approximately 200 meters, or seven piers, remains between the jetty and the head platform in the bay. The removal of the pylons left the ocean floor littered with debris, and the once very good dive site was now virtually uninhabited by fish. During the 1980s, a ten year maintenance agreement was drawn up by the shire council and State Government, with the Port authority responsible for repairs up to Pier No 124.<sup>22</sup>

Community members became concerned with the perceived lack of interest in *Tanker Jetty, Esperance* by the relevant government bodies. Volunteers from the Esperance Dive Club donated their time and materials to build an artificial reef to replace the lost pylons, and provide a habitable environment for marine life. The first ten modules of the new reef were constructed in just over 12 months and installed with the help of dive club volunteers. The Landcare and Environment Action Group (LEAP) was awarded a grant to complete the project, and with the help of local business sponsors and dive clubs, the remaining pylons were

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14 Voigt, Don *Old Esperance pictorial History*, Albany 1996, p. 184.

15 Esperance Port Authority website, [www.esperanceport.com.au](http://www.esperanceport.com.au)

16 Esperance Shell Company Ltd – oil pip along jetty and on railway reserve, item 1956/19269, Cons 4817, SROWA.

17 009303d Esperance railway jetty 1952 and 12076d Esperance Jetty 1955. Battye Library.

18 Crown land Record Vol 3075 Fol 418, 16 May 1997, Dept of Land Information. Original Gazettal 6/11/1964 p. 3697.

19 Esperance Port Authority website, [www.esperanceport.com.au](http://www.esperanceport.com.au)

20 PWD plan 42743 and 36237, Dept of Housing and Works.

21 Bailey, Christine 'Esperance Jetties' in *An Esperance Digest: 1988: memories, past and present* / collected in 1987 by members of the Esperance Branch of the Fellowship of Writers.

22 Joan Colliver 'Save Our Jetty!' in *Destinations* May – June 1989, p. 24.

installed.<sup>23</sup> A community group 'Save the Tanker Jetty' was formed in approximately 1988 and undertook 'busy bees' to help maintain the jetty. Their work consisted of fixing new metal straps to hand rails, securing loose nails, and painting hand rails. As one member wrote at the time; '[E]very effort, no matter how small, helps ensure that the town's most dominant man made feature, has more chance of remaining a historical fixture, not just a historical memory.'<sup>24</sup>

In 1990, the Esperance Shire took over entire control of *Tanker Jetty, Esperance* from the Western Australian State Government and received \$150,000 toward the upgrade of the jetty.

In 1997, local dive operators and community members became concerned that excessive fishing and boat activity around the artificial reef section of the jetty was depleting fish stocks and damaging the reef. At their meeting of 27 May 1997, the Shire of Esperance supported the Esperance-Goldfields Regional Recreational Fishing Advisory Committees recommendation to enforce a permanent fishing ban over and around the artificial reef.<sup>25</sup>

The Esperance Port Authority operates the harbour at Bandy Creek and the port predominantly exports primary produce from the region. The mining industry exports nickel, iron ore and granite from Esperance while the farming sector exports barley, wheat, oats, lupins, peas and canola. Imports to Esperance harbour are raw materials for the farming and mining industry including petroleum, phosphate, urea, copper, zinc, mono ammonium phosphate and other manufactured fertilisers.<sup>26</sup>

In 2002, Engineers Van Der Meer undertook a structural assessment of *Tanker Jetty, Esperance* for the Shire of Esperance to determine its structural capacity and the costs involved for repairs. This study found that the structure was generally sound and the concrete topping on part of the deck seems to have been applied since this date.<sup>27</sup>

The Shire of Esperance commissioned the Esperance Townsite Foreshore Redevelopment Master Plan in May 2004, to guide the future development of the Esperance Townsite Foreshore. The report was completed by consultants GHD in May 2005 and presented to Council in June, with Council requesting that the report be submitted for public comment. The plans for the area around *Tanker Jetty, Esperance* include the construction of viewing platforms for whale and sea watching and landscaping the approach to the jetty for pedestrian users and passive recreation.<sup>28</sup> It is suggested that similar facilities to Busselton jetty be provided, such as a train and kiosk.

In June 2006, *Tanker Jetty, Esperance* is used for fishing and recreational use.

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23 Shire of Esperance – 'Artificial Reef – Tanker Jetty,' *Chief Executive Officer's Report, Planning & Building Services Meeting*: Tuesday 17 June 1997 p.24-25

24 Bailey, Christine 'Esperance Jetties' in *An Esperance Digest : 1988: memories, past and present* / collected in 1987 by members of the Esperance Branch of the Fellowship of Writers.

25 Shire of Esperance – 'Artificial Reef – Tanker Jetty,' *Chief Executive Officer's Report, Planning & Building Services Meeting*: Tuesday 17 June 1997 p.24

26 Esperance Port Authority Annual Report 2005 p. 15.

27 'Structural Assessment of Esperance Tanker Jetty' *draft copy* Van Der Meer consulting, 2002. Held in the HCWA file PD 831.

28 Shire of Esperance Foreshore Development Plan May 2005, pp. 25-27 and 51.

## 13.2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

*Tanker Jetty, Esperance* is a timber jetty 670m in length and approximately 11m wide. The remaining head section of the jetty is extant in Esperance Bay but is no longer connected to the main body of the jetty. The jetty runs approximately in a south easterly direction out of Esperance Harbour for the first 420 metres and then changes to a southerly direction for the rest of the 250 metres of jetty. Its original length was 1140 feet (347.5m) long by 38 feet (11.5m) wide and it was added to during the period of its use as a commercial facility.

The jetty supports are comprised of timber piles driven 4.57 metres into the ground. The piles support twin timber half caps, which in turn support the corbels for the main longitudinal jetty beams. The timber deck and handrails are supported off these beams.

The timber decking appears to be in very good condition, very little degradation was observed in the timber planks.

The timber beams also appear to be in good condition with little degradation being observed.

The majority of external timber corbels were found to be in poor condition. Excessive splitting had occurred in the corbels because of the bolt holes for the connections were through the long connection.

The majority of timber cross braces were found to be split at the connections.

The galvanised rod tension braces are corroded quite badly, also the bracing is quite flat, reducing the efficiency of the bracing panel.

The lack of tightness in the tension bracing indicates that the jetty is swaying in the direction of the prevailing wind / waves.

The present deck alignment indicates that significant sideways sway has occurred, possibly due to the failure of the bracing.

The lower whaler is missing or poorly degraded in many bays.

Concrete sleeving of many piles appears to have failed and radically split in many cases.

The central piles in most cases were missing or cut off at water level.

In April 2006, *Tanker Jetty, Esperance* is used for recreation. The artificial reef attracts a variety of fish species, including *Centroberyx lineatus* (Swallowtail), *Centroberyx gerrardi* (Red Snapper), *Nemadactylus valenciennesi* (Queen Snapper), *Achoerodus gouldii* (Western Blue Groper), *Sphyaena novaehollandiae* (Snook), *Arripis georgianus* (Australian Herring), *Sillago bassensis* (Southern School Whiting), and *Pseudocaranx dentex* (Silver Trevally).<sup>29</sup>

## 13.3 COMPARATIVE INFORMATION

There are eight timber jetties on the Heritage Council of WA database. Of these places only three others are directly comparable to *Tanker Jetty, Esperance* as predominantly timber structures that remain substantially intact. These are *Bunbury Timber Jetty* (3402), *Busselton Jetty* (423) and *One Mile Jetty* (467) in

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<sup>29</sup> Shire of Esperance – ‘Artificial Reef – Tanker Jetty,’ *Chief Executive Officer’s Report, Planning & Building Services Meeting*: Tuesday 17 June 1997 p.25

Carnarvon. These timber jetties were built to designs of the Western Australian Public Works Department for the purpose of commercial shipping and handling.

The remaining places on the HCWA database are remnants of former jetties or are smaller jetties built for coastal fishing. They are *Hamelin Bay Jetty* (3466) built between 1880 and 1990; *Hopetoun Jetty* (2313) a ruined site of the jetty built between 1902 and 1907 and demolished in 1983; *McTaggart's Jetty* (6475) in Leeman built in 1958 and *Old Jetty – Site* ( 5837) in Jurien which is the ruin of a former jetty built in 1885.

*Busselton Jetty* (423) is included in the Register of Heritage Places. It was built in 1864 and at its peak in the 1950s reached 1386m in length. *Busselton Jetty* (423) was first constructed in 1865 and has the current (2006) length of 1830m. *One Mile Jetty* (467) was constructed in 1886 and measured 1600m in length.

In the period between 1832 and 1942 at least 80 timber jetty structures were built, modified, extended or replaced on the coast of Western Australia for the purposes of commercial shipping and handling. All of these structures were of a basic design and were generally constructed using Western Australian hardwoods. Apart from the remaining four jetty structures the shipping jetties on the coast of Western Australia have been demolished however remnants of the structures are extant at the site.

#### **13.4 KEY REFERENCES**

Structural Assessment of Esperance Tanker Jetty, Van der Meer Consulting, 2002.

Cumming, Garatt, McCarthey and Wolfe, 'Port Related Structures on the Coast of Western Australia', 1995,

#### **13.5 FURTHER RESEARCH**

Land based and marine archaeological investigation adjacent to the jetty may reveal further information about the methods and practices employed on the jetty during its period of commercial use.