



## 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)

- 8.9 Commemorating significant events and people
- 8.10 Pursuing excellence in the arts and sciences
- 8.10.5 Advancing knowledge in science and technology

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

- 307 Intellectual activities, arts and crafts
- 407 Cultural activities
- 604 Innovators

#### 11.1 AESTHETIC VALUE\*

The site is of considerable aesthetic merit, both as a place in an urban setting and as an internal spatial arrangement set firmly within late Victorian aesthetics, employing a variety of forms and styling that would be familiar to many cities in Britain, the United States and later the Commonwealth, with the predominant over arching style being Federation Romanesque. The elements of the place have sufficient harmony for the whole assembly to be of strong aesthetic value and even the visual tensions created by the awkward juxtaposition of buildings on Beaufort Street contributes aesthetic value.

George Temple Poole and John Grainger's Jubilee Building is an imposing and sober three storey building rendered in the Federation Romanesque style. It is set well back from James Street and once had a large expanse of lawn between the building and fence in the manner of Natural History Museum in Kensington. The entrance arrangement stands in contrast with the Romanesque treatment of the arcade and is more akin to R. N. Shaw's Scotland Yard with its use of bartizans and pinnacles above the more Romanesque door with its strong pier and stylised dossierets. The Government Geologist's Office is a three storey building and the Art Gallery is a two storey brick, stone and terracotta tiled building designed in the Federation Romanesque style of the Jubilee Building, but making use of

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

Federation Gothic elements in connection with entries. The use of terracotta decorative tiles in the arcade, relief frieze and decorative elements around the entry is more exuberant than the Jubilee Building, though some of the latter's design elements are repeated at the first floor level. The buildings share rusticated stone plinths or lower storeys in common, but in all other respects the detail varies.

The interiors have undergone considerable change and adaptation, but the spatial qualities of the principal areas of the original concepts are either partly or wholly legible or capable of being revealed. The major spaces of the interiors are of considerable merit and items such as the Hellenic Gallery are of exceptional aesthetic worth. (Criterion 1.1)

The Jubilee Building was the first purpose-designed building for the museum and had a profound influence on the remaining buildings in the complex, influencing, eventually, the notion of a Cultural Centre in the Northbridge location. It exhibits creative excellence in its idiosyncratic interpretation of the Romanesque style and with its arcades and Flemish bond brickwork to the principal elevation, must have been a more subtle building when its roof was covered in slate.

The Art Gallery and Government Geologist's Office, which was designed as one entity, is a building of its time and employs contemporary solutions for highlighting the sculpture gallery and top lighting the painting gallery. The exterior of the building is of considerable creative achievement, as are the interior spaces. The painting gallery or Hellenic Gallery remains largely untouched and with its Parthenon frieze is a space of high artistic merit. It employs a much larger palette of materials and decorative devices than the Jubilee Building and achieves an overall considerable aesthetic achievement. (Criterion 1.2)

The site is a Perth landmark, given the significant visual impact that the buildings create. The Jubilee Building can be seen well before the railway is even crossed when moving away from the city, and also frames the vista down James Street toward the west between the former CIB offices. Collectively, the buildings are major visual contributors to James and Beaufort Streets, and to the definition of the Beaufort and Francis Street corner. (Criterion 1.3)

The site is an important component of the museum as a local cultural environment and to the wider context of the Perth Cultural Centre as a whole. (Criterion 1.4)

## **11. 2. HISTORIC VALUE**

The Jubilee Building was the first combined Museum, Art Gallery and Library for Western Australia and initially held broad, diverse collections that are now spread throughout the Perth Cultural Centre and elsewhere in the State. The inclusion of the Art Gallery on the site in 1908 represented an important advance in the resources available for reference and was an indication of the growing sophistication of the institutions available to the public to enrich their cultural life and education. It was particularly important as a reference for the development of art and design in the newly emerging State. (Criterion 2.1)

The Jubilee Building (with the intention of it being a Public Library) was to have been opened for Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee (1887), but in the event only the foundation stone was laid. The prospect of the Queen's Diamond Jubilee in 1897, new found prosperity of the colony and the desire to house

the growing collections lead the State Government to commit the land at James Street and funds for the construction for the first stage of a museum complex. The Jubilee Building was to honor the monarch and as a celebration of achievement in the colony. Later, the construction of the Art Gallery was also intended to coincide with a celebration. The Duke of Cornwall and York laid the foundation stone of the Art Gallery to commemorate Her Late Majesty, Queen Victoria on the occasion of his visit to Western Australia in July 1901, following the federation of Australia. (Criterion 2.2)

The site is closely associated with an enormous list of individuals who played an important part in the history and development of the State as well as the Jubilee Building and Art Gallery. Some of the figures include: Bernard Woodwar, Sir John Winthrop Hackett MLC, Dr James Skyes Battye, Ludwig Glauert, George Pitt Morison, Dr David L. Ride, George Temple Poole, John Grainger and Hillson Beasley. (Criterion 2.3)

The collections that were once housed in the Jubilee Building, together with the spaces made to accommodate them, typified the Victorian passion for eclectic collecting, cataloguing and viewing collections. Though the collection is dispersed in a different manner today, there are reminders of this era and style of presentation in the modified Mammal Gallery. The spaces themselves have all been modified to a degree, but retain most of their essential features. The building as a set piece and the main interior spaces remain as places of artistic excellence. The treatment of the exterior and the detailing of the interior and interior finishes are of a high standard and contribute to a complete piece of architecture of considerable artistic merit.

The exterior of the Government Geologist's Office is of importance in terms of creative excellence, especially those sections facing Beaufort and Francis Street.

The Art Gallery achieves excellence internally and externally. The quality of the craftsmanship and design of the elements such as the fence, purpose-made light fittings, stair, frieze, sections of relief work and the decorative work to the ceilings, timber trusses, staircase, tall clerestory and the integration of the Elgin marble casts are some of the many minor features that make the building a place of artistic merit. (Criterion 2.4)

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

The Museum housed in the Jubilee Building historically had an impact on the community of Western Australia as a course of information and knowledge. It continues to fulfil that role, though the collection in the building is much more focused than it was during its initial years of operation and many elements have been dispersed to other sites and institutions. It was a place where native flora and fauna were categorised, taxidermy was practised and where exotic species were displayed. It was a place of self-guided viewing, public lectures and the like, initially housing an enormous range of activities under one roof. The scientific importance of the building lies as much in the activities that once took place there and continue to do so, the collections once displayed and of those remaining in place, rather than in the buildings themselves, which contribute little in scientific terms that could not be learned from other large contemporaneous public buildings. Most of the practices, both curatorial and building, were commonplace in their time. The fragments that remain of the early displays and display cases are of interest for what they reveal about museum policy in the first twenty or so years of its existence.

The Art Gallery was important as a public cultural oasis in the early days of its existence and an important contributor to education, with the arts maintaining close links with the Education Department and Perth Technical College. The gallery, through its exhibitions, influenced the development and application of the arts and crafts in Western Australia. The building demonstrates curatorial practices typical of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. (Criterion 3.1)

The Jubilee Building has, through further study, the capacity to reveal something of the social and cultural context in which it was conceived, the uses to which the place was put and by whom, and perhaps aspects of late Victorian curatorial practice. Similar values could also be explored in relation to Perth and the State of Western Australia, though this kind of study may not be of direct assistance in the conservation and adaptation of the place. It may be of some value for interpretation of the place. The Jubilee Building housed indigenous and exotic specimens.

Like the Jubilee Building, the Art Gallery also began with an eclectic collection. Indian, Asian and other exotic craftwork being the first collected, followed soon after by examples of European Australian art and examples and copies of English and classical art. The work collected was in the spirit of the Aesthetic Movement encompassing a wide definition of art including design – from ‘Art Industry’ through ‘black and white’ illustration to paintings by eminent European artist. Work from exhibitors at international exhibitions was solicited and from leading English artist-crafts people. (Criterion 3.2)

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

The Jubilee Building has social value for its various collections, the historic role it played in education from the time of its completion until the present day and as part of a complex that has brought and continues to bring education and delight to the children of Western Australia and visitors alike. The displays, which change periodically, continue to instruct and entertain. Work produced by staff is carried on in the basement and ground floor levels, but public awareness of the nature of these activities is likely to be slight.

The Art Gallery filled an important place in the education of the West Australian public for many years, before its relocation to the purpose built West Australian Art Gallery. The collection was aimed at a teaching role and in the early years, in the eyes of its curator at least, it was one of the most extensive in the country including electrotypes, casts and copies of famous works. The continued social value of the building is dependent on its capacity to respond to the changing requirements of the museum. At present it fills the requirements of temporary display and suffers from the limitations imposed on the structural condition of the first floor. The entry was once a place of gathering and meeting and activity. The relocation of the entrance to the complex away from the Beaufort Street lobby has contributed to its diminished social importance. The complex as a whole has social value and the component parts under discussion in this document clearly play an important and enduring part of its social value. (Criterion 4.1)

The Jubilee Building was the first, and in many ways the finest, step on the long road to the establishment of a museum complex, leading ultimately to the creation of the much larger Perth Cultural Centre. It is a reminder of Queen Victoria’s Diamond Jubilee. It is amongst the most widely known places in Perth, if not on its own account, certainly as part of the Museum Complex. Similarly, the Beaufort Street Building is a widely known place and known as an integral part of the Museum Complex. It is also the product of a

celebration, namely the visit of the Duke of Cornwall and York in 1901, and of the coming into being of the federation of the Australian States. It is one of the physical symbols of the maturing city and is an important part of the whole Cultural Centre Complex. Collectively the Jubilee Building, Beaufort Street Wing, Hackett Hall and the Old Perth Jail are among the small number of structures that have, for some time, been able to claim a role in contribution to the sense of place for the population of Western Australia and is likely, with the maintenance and improvement of standards, presentation of the place and its setting, to remain true. (Criterion 4.2)

## **12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE**

### **12.1. RARITY**

The Jubilee Building has some rarity value as the surviving element of the first purpose built museum in Western Australia and for setting the pattern for the ensuing development to a large extent. Some of the original showcases are in place, if not in their original locations, and some of the specimens displayed are as old as the museum itself and they will remain, with proper conservation, an important part of the museum's early fabric and contents. More importantly, *Art Gallery and Museum Buildings* are rare examples of their genre in State and Nation, since other States chose different modes of classical revival to symbolise cultural values in the latter half of the century and the early part of the twentieth century.

It is highly likely that the roof lanterns in the Art Gallery are (along with those of Hackett Hall) the only surviving lanterns of this size in Western Australia. (Criterion 5.1)

The Art Gallery is representative of a late nineteenth and early twentieth century notion of displaying sculpture and painting. The system made maximum use of natural ventilation and daylight. There was a shift to less harmful lighting in the middle part of the twentieth century and shortly afterwards a complete shift to the controlled environment. The kinds of practices that were associated with the displays in the Art Gallery have now passed and the collections have been moved to artificially controlled environments. (Criterion 5.2)

### **12.2 REPRESENTATIVENESS**

The Jubilee Building is a representative example of the museum genre of the late nineteenth century and falls within the notions of current practice of the time. It was rendered in an architectural style and arrangement that found common acceptance for institutional buildings. Similarly, the Art Gallery was common practice for its time with international examples of the particular approach pre-dating the early sketches for it by some twenty or so years. The building is representative of the mainstream approach, though it differs in detail, reflecting the architect's pre-occupations with style. (Criterion 6.1)

The Jubilee Building was conceived in a time of emerging wealth and represents a variety of facets of late Victorian society in the Colony, which provided Western Australia with some of its finest architecture and settings, together with institutions that remain part of our present society. It was conceived in a time of pursuit of a broad education, the desire to create order, collect and classify all manner of things with a view very often to exploring its potential for exploitation. The planning of the Art Gallery is indicative of the

shift in the needs and maturity of the growing city and its concern for the betterment of its people through opportunities for cultural enrichment.

The Jubilee Building is representative of a philosophy associated with the late nineteenth century and of the absolute confidence of the British Empire and its member States, in technology and the power of man to subdue and exploit nature, explain, classify, catalogue and disseminate knowledge about it. As time has passed alternative means of conveying information compete with the notion of preparing and displaying specimens has developed, though many of the traditional practices are maintained. (Criterion 6.2)

### 12.3 CONDITION

The Jubilee Building remains little changed from the time of its construction. The external elevations with rusticated pediments, stone arches and brick infill panels remain intact and the open piazza remains infilled with glazed panels. Some of the detail of the roofscape has been lost as a result of the process of installing replacement roofing materials on two occasions whereby gambrels and other small details were removed. The remainder of the external fabric is intact. Changes to the street levels and landscaping have obscured some of the building and the main stair has been partly buried in the process.

The Government Geologist Building was designed as an integral part of the Art Gallery and the exterior of the building survives in almost original form. Alterations to the exterior are confined to the rear elevation where openings have been altered and a bridge link connection has been made to the adjoining Francis Street Building. The plain tile roof has been replaced with Marseilles pattern tiles, but otherwise few changes have occurred. The interior of the building has undergone a number of changes. The floor level of the first floor was altered, the stair between the first and second floor replaced, windows blocked and air conditioning introduced. The planning on the ground floor is cellular and similar to the original plan. Most of the original partition walls are intact. The mezzanine floor has been completely rearranged to provide staff amenities. The first floor level has also been much altered. Although it still reads as a single space as per the original plan, the floor level itself has been much altered, the stair has been replaced and large air conditioning ducts introduced into the southern corners of the room. Of all the buildings, the Government Geologists building has suffered the most from alterations, though the major changes are internal. The changes have diminished the significance of the interiors, but have not impacted on the significance of the place as an integral part of the Beaufort Street suite of buildings of the Eastern Wing.

The exterior fabric of the Art Gallery is largely intact apart from changes to the Beaufort Street entrance screen and some alterations to the western or rear elevation. The service structures added to this elevation are intrusive. The interior of the building has undergone relatively little change and is considered largely intact.

The new entrance between the Jubilee Building and Hackett Hall, completed in 1999, achieves the resolution on an historic problem created by the differing design philosophies of Poole and Beasley, providing access and creating a new entry in a manner that is subservient to the architecture of the two significant historic buildings. It fulfills the requirements of the Burra Charter with respect to new buildings associated with places of cultural significance.

#### **12.4 INTEGRITY**

The Jubilee Building retains a high degree of integrity, being purpose built to house the Museum. The Art Gallery holds a high to moderate degree of integrity, no longer being used for its original purpose, but nevertheless still associated with the cultural centre of Perth in its present use as part of the Museum. The Government Geologist's Office was built as a temporary home for the Government Geologist. It retains a moderate to high degree of integrity, given that it was designed as an integral part of the Art Gallery and remains a significant element of the cultural centre.

#### **12.5 AUTHENTICITY**

The majority of the exterior fabric of the Jubilee Building is authentic with the exception of the arcade infill and the changes associated with it, together with the changes to the roof detail and floor materials. The interior fabric contains a substantial proportion of authentic elements, with the exceptions previously noted. It is possible, through the removal of later interventions, to reveal a great deal of the authentic fabric and there is sufficient evidence to reconstruct most missing elements. Removal of later internal changes would reveal authentic spaces, treatments and finishes. In summary, the Jubilee Building retains a moderate to high degree of authenticity.

The exterior fabric of the Government Geologist's Office is largely authentic and there are authentic elements in the interior, but overall the interior has a low degree of authenticity due to substantial alterations to all but a small section of the ground floor and the ground floor to mezzanine stair. Overall, this part of the building retains a moderate degree of authenticity.

Interventions, such as the toilets and the introduction of some new doors, ceilings and structure, are among the small number of changes to occur to the Art Gallery. Underlying the changes is a substantial proportion of original spaces and fabric. The Art Gallery therefore retains a high degree of authenticity.

### **13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE**

Attached are key sections of the supporting evidence prepared by Considine & Griffiths Architects with Palassis Architects and Erickson & Taylor, 'Eastern Wing Western Australian Museum Conservation Plan' prepared for The Department of Contract and Management Services on behalf of the Western Australian Museum in February 1997.

Key sections used: Executive Summary & Introduction, 1.0 Documentary Evidence (p1-63), 2.0 Physical Evidence (p64-106), 5.0 Graded Zones and Elements of Significance (p121-130).

#### **13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE**

For a discussion of the Documentary Evidence refer to Considine & Griffiths Architects with Palassis Architects and Erickson & Taylor, 'Eastern Wing Western Australian Museum Conservation Plan' prepared for The Department of Contract and Management Services on behalf of the Western Australian Museum in February 1997.

#### **13.2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE**

For a discussion of the Physical Evidence refer to Considine & Griffiths Architects with Palassis Architects and Erickson & Taylor, 'Eastern Wing

Western Australian Museum Conservation Plan' prepared for The Department of Contract and Management Services on behalf of the Western Australian Museum in February 1997.

### **13.3 COMPARATIVE INFORMATION**

For a Comparative Analysis refer to Considine & Griffiths Architects with Palassis Architects and Erickson & Taylor, 'Eastern Wing Western Australian Museum Conservation Plan' prepared for The Department of Contract and Management Services on behalf of the Western Australian Museum in February 1997.

### **13.4 REFERENCES**

Considine & Griffiths Architects with Palassis Architects and Erickson & Taylor, 'Eastern Wing Western Australian Museum Conservation Plan' prepared for The Department of Contract and Management Services on behalf of the Western Australian Museum in February 1997.

Considine & Griffiths Architects with Palassis Architects and Erickson & Taylor, 'The Western Australian Museum Conservation and Management Plan' prepared for The Department of Contract and Management Services on behalf of the Western Australian Museum in September 1997.

### **13.5 FURTHER RESEARCH**

The Jubilee Building has, through further study, the capacity to reveal something of the social and cultural context in which it was conceived, the uses to which the place was put and by whom, and perhaps aspects of late Victorian curatorial practice. Similar values could also be explored in relation to Perth and the State of Western Australia, though this kind of study may not be of direct assistance in the conservation and adaptation of the place. It may be of some value for interpretation of the place.