



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)

- 6.2 Establishing Schools
- 6.4 Building a system of higher education

HERITAGE COUNCIL OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA THEME(S)

- 402 Education and science

11.1 AESTHETIC VALUE*

The Manual Arts building on the *John Curtin College of the Arts* site is a finely executed and highly intact example of a government designed Inter-War Functionalist style educational building. (Criterion 1.1)

The buildings on the *John Curtin College of the Arts* site generally comprise a group typical of post World War Two education buildings designed in the Post War International Style and with a focus on the integration of internal spaces with external landscaped courtyards. (Criterion 1.1)

The limestone boundary wall on Vale Street, together with mature Rottneist Island Tea Trees on the western side of the school buildings and the area of indigenous planting on the south western corner of the site, provide visual evidence of the site prior to the development of the school. (Criterion 1.3)

The *John Curtin College of the Arts* buildings and site features together provide an integrated cultural environment representing the development of the site from the development of the Skinner Street Cemetery wall in the nineteenth century to the development of the school from the 1950s. (Criterion 1.4)

11.2. HISTORIC VALUE

The Manual Arts building on the *John Curtin College of the Arts* site has provided specialist technical education from its inception in 1943 to the present. (Criterion 2.1)

John Curtin College of the Arts was the first government built secondary school in the southwest metropolitan region and one of the first four post World War Two secondary schools built in the State. Its establishment in 1956

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

represented the Education Department's focus on secondary education following World War Two. (Criterion 2.1)

John Curtin College of the Arts has provided secondary, technical and performing arts education on the site from 1956 and specialist dance education from 1976. As such the place is the leading secondary school for dance education in the State. (Criterion 2.1)

John Curtin College of the Arts oval was constructed on the site of the former Skinner Street cemetery, the principle cemetery for the Fremantle district from 1852 to 1899. (Criterion 2.2)

The central portion of *John Curtin College of the Arts* site was the location of anti-aircraft batteries, positioned as part of network of defences known as Fortress Fremantle and constructed in the vicinity of Fremantle during World War Two. (Criterion 2.2)

John Curtin College of the Arts was named after John Curtin, Prime Minister of Australia from 1941-1945, in recognition of his contribution to the area as the Federal Member for Fremantle. (Criterion 2.3)

11. 3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE

John Curtin College of the Arts site has the potential through archaeological excavation to provide information on the former use of the oval site for the former Skinner Street Cemetery. (Criterion 3.2)

11. 4. SOCIAL VALUE

John Curtin College of the Arts is highly valued by the teachers, students and parents who worked at, attended or have been involved in the development of the various educational facilities on the site from 1956 to the present. (Criterion 4.1)

John Curtin College of the Arts has been an important focus for the Fremantle community in its role in secondary public education since 1956 and therefore contributes to the community's sense of place. (Criterion 4.2)

12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE

12. 1. RARITY

The Manual Arts building at *John Curtin College of the Arts* is a particularly fine and rare example of an educational building designed in the Inter-War Functionalist style. (Criterion 5.1)

12. 2 REPRESENTATIVENESS

John Curtin College of the Arts is representative of the pattern of growth and development of Government secondary schools in Western Australia in the post World War Two period. (Criterion 6.1)

12. 3 CONDITION

Generally *John Curtin College of the Arts* buildings are in a good to very good condition. Ongoing school maintenance and development has ensured that the buildings have remained in use and have been well maintained.

Being in a coastal location the effects of this harsh environment will have an effect of the rate of deterioration of the buildings. This requires ongoing checking and maintenance.

The Manual Arts building is in good condition both internally and externally. This is partly due to its continued use for its original purposes, recent upgrade and continuous maintenance.

Other buildings on the site were not inspected internally or in detail, however they appear from visual inspection to be in sound condition.

Some of the playing surfaces of sports fields and tennis courts require attention and have not been maintained.

The area of recent indigenous planting on the south-western corner of the site is in fair condition.

12.4 INTEGRITY

John Curtin College of the Arts has a high level of integrity. The original intention of the Manual Arts building is clearly intact. The place is currently used for educational purposes.

12.5 AUTHENTICITY

John Curtin College of the Arts has a high level of authenticity. The site has developed over time, however much of the fabric remains in its original state, and has not been adapted to suit other uses. There is only minor evidence of alterations and additions.

13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

The documentary evidence has been compiled by Carmel Given, Historical Researcher. The physical evidence has been compiled by Annabel Wheel, Architect. The assessment has been edited by Rosemary Rosario, for Heritage and Conservation Professionals.

Whilst the whole of the school site, as indicated on the site plan attached, is recommended for entry in the Register of Heritage Places, it is noted that some features and site areas are of greater cultural heritage significance than others. The Manual Arts Building (1943) and limestone boundary wall of the former Skinner Street cemetery are considered to be of considerable significance, whilst the other school buildings identified and landscape features are of some significance.

13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

John Curtin College of the Arts is a State Government Senior High School comprising a group of buildings including Manual Arts (1943), Classrooms, (1954-1958), Canteen (1963), Science Block (1968), Library (1969) and Performing Arts (1987). The place occupies 11.65 hectares of land defined by Ord, Ellen, East and Vale Streets, Fremantle. The site is adjacent to the Fremantle Arts Centre located to the north west of the school at the corner of Finnerty and Ord Streets.

The first known development on the site was the Skinner Street Cemetery, opened in 1852 that occupied the northeast portion bounded by Vale and 'Skinner' streets.¹ The first burial, however, was Alice Wray, the fifteen

¹ Skinner Street later became East Street.

month old daughter of Lt Wray, Royal Engineer, in 1851.² The Cemetery was one of the principal burial grounds in Fremantle until its closure in November 1899, and the subsequent opening of the Carrington Street Cemetery. In special cases, burials were still conducted at Skinner Street, for those wanting to be buried beside their relatives. The last burial took place in 1917.³

In the 1890s, the influx of immigrants and gold prospectors to Fremantle resulted in a 'tent city' on the outskirts of town, which included the study area and adjacent parklands.⁴

The school site, Fremantle Lot 1697, was set aside as a public reserve, specifically as a secondary school site, on 14 July 1922.⁵ However, development did not proceed. In 1925, and every year until 1953, J. B. Sleeman, M.L.A. for Fremantle from 1924-1959, urged the government to commit funds to build the new high school.⁶ However, the Depression and World War Two effectively stalled any school building programs.⁷

In the 1930s, public concern about the condition of the cemetery, which had fallen into disrepair after 1909, resulted in exhumation of some remains, and the relocation of about 200 headstones to the Carrington Street Cemetery in 1935.⁸ It is estimated that the remains of up to 200 bodies may still be buried on the site.⁹

During World War Two, the site was developed as part of the defence program. Anti-aircraft batteries were strategically positioned on four sites in the Fremantle area – at South Beach, East Fremantle Oval, South Fremantle Oval, and on the hill known as 'Bushy Park,' the present location of *John Curtin College of the Arts*. This network of defences was called Fortress Fremantle.¹⁰

The gun pits at Bushy Park were built by Italian POWs in 1941. Four dummy gun batteries were located in the central portion of the site. Up to 120 soldiers were located on the site to operate the guns, at first in temporary accommodation. Six barracks, a mess hall, officers' quarters and an orderly room were gradually built on the site. After the war, the six barracks were used for RSL accommodation. The guns were located on the portion of the site bounded by Ellen and East streets. The subsequent development of the school would have removed any evidence of these structures.¹¹

In 1941, the Fremantle Technical School's manual arts building in South Terrace was taken over for defence personnel training. The Minister for Education, Mr W. H. Kitson, called for a new manual arts building, as part of a proposed new Fremantle Technical High School. The East Street Site was chosen, and plans for a two-storeyed brick Trades Block were prepared by

² AN217/3, ACC1377, item 102, box 107, 1935 – 1936 'Skinner Street Cemetery'.

³ *Government Gazette*, 21 July 1899; Signage at the site of the former Skinner Street cemetery.

⁴ Cox Howlett & Bailey Woodland, *Draft Heritage Assessment John Curtin Senior High School*, Fremantle, prepared for EDWA, November 1998, unpaginated.

⁵ *Government Gazette*, 14 July 1922, p. 1333.

⁶ Johnson, Tim, *Guns, Graves & Dreaming: The History of Fremantle's High School John Curtin Senior High School*, 1992, unpaginated, Ch. 6.

⁷ Education Department of Western Australia [EDWA] Annual Report 1953, pp. 6-7.

⁸ AN217/3, ACC1377, item 102, box 107, 1935 – 1936 'Skinner Street Cemetery'.

⁹ Signage at the site of the former Skinner Street cemetery.

¹⁰ Johnson, Tim, op. cit., Ch. 4.

¹¹ *ibid.*; The location of the gun batteries and buildings can be seen in plans reproduced in Cox Howlett & Bailey Woodland, op. cit. from Johnson, Tim, op. cit.

the Public Works Department of WA in 1941.¹² A plaque attached to the building adjacent to the original front door reads:

This tablet was affixed by
The Hon. W.H. Kitson MLC
Minister for Education
on the 9th of April 1943
to commemorate
the opening of this building.¹³

The 1950s saw particular governmental interest in expanding and improving education in Western Australia. At the end of World War II, the shortage of classrooms due to the curtailed building program in the depression years and the almost complete stoppage of school building during the war, had placed the educational system under pressure for adequate resources. The population boom of the post-war years intensified the demands, with the Annual Report of the Education Department in 1956 stating:

It cannot be stressed too frequently that the number of children in State primary and secondary school has increased by 44 000...or 77% in the last ten years.¹⁴

Such factors saw the government turn its focus to providing more schools in Western Australia.¹⁵ With regard to high school education, the Education Department was further interested in encouraging students to complete their secondary education. With only 8.5% of students in the State reaching the Leaving Certificate in 1957, low retention rates were also of concern to the Education Department.¹⁶

It was at this period that the Education Department carried out a program of re-organisation of secondary education. Central Schools were reclassified as High Schools in 1946, offering three-year secondary courses. The government also undertook an intensive building program, which resulted in the construction of ten high schools in the late 1950s,¹⁷ including *John Curtin College of the Arts*, Armadale, Mount Lawley and Governor Stirling, all opened in 1956.¹⁸

After almost thirty years of campaigning, Sleeman's pleas for a high school finally came to fruition, and the foundation stone for the new *John Curtin College of the Arts* was laid on 29 October 1954, by the Premier A. Hawke. Guest of honour was Mrs Curtin, widow of the new school's namesake.¹⁹ John Curtin was Prime Minister of Australia from 1941-1945, and except for a period between 1931-1934, was parliamentary member for Fremantle from 1928 until his death in 1945.

The vision for the new school included a two-storey block with verandahs looking out over a courtyard and stage, and an open-air theatre to seat 2,500.

12 'Fremantle Technical High School Trades Block,' PWD Dwg 29434, 25 June 1941, cited in Cox Howlett & Bailey Woodland, op. cit.

13 Plaque attached to building, site inspection October 2000.

14 EDWA Annual Reports 1956, Votes and Proceedings 1957, Vol. 3, pp. 2314 – 2379.

15 EDWA Annual Reports 1953, pp. 6-7 & 1956, p. 13.

16 In 1957, the Director General of Education visited the United States, Canada and various other countries and on returning, wrote of the concern for the comparative low upper school retention rates in Western Australian, with an obvious desire to ameliorate the situation. EDWA Annual Report 1957, Votes & Proceedings 1958, Vol. 2, pp. 1533 – 1594.

17 EDWA Annual Reports 1955–1959.

18 EDWA Annual Report 1955, p. 13-14.

19 *West Australian*, 30 October 1954, p. 1.

Classrooms were to be provided for every aspect of education, and the entire cost of the project was estimated at £430,000. Earthworks to remove the limestone amounted to £6,450 alone.²⁰ At the laying of the foundation stone, the Minister for Works, Mr Tonkin, said that the school would be the first of its kind in Western Australia.

Its wide range of facilities, including indoor and outdoor theatres, would be available to the children, youth organizations, and adults working in the interests of the children and the school.²¹

Construction was carried out in three stages between 1954 and 1958.²² When *John Curtin College of the Arts* opened in 1956, it comprised five classrooms and two science rooms.²³ Approximately 2,500 students and 144 staff were spread across five other buildings, which included Princess May Annexe [*Princess May Girls' School (fmr)*], Finnerty Street Annexe [*Museum & Arts Centre*], Fremantle Boys' Annexe [*Film & Television Institute*], the North Fremantle Annexe [*North Fremantle Primary School (fmr)*] and the East Street Trades Centre (Manual Arts Building).²⁴ The high school was the first government senior high school in the south-western section of the metropolitan area.²⁵

The site of the former Skinner Street Cemetery was levelled to make the playing fields for *John Curtin College of the Arts*. All that visibly remains of the former cemetery is the limestone wall aligning the Vale Street frontage. A signboard erected on the site during Heritage Week in 1992 interprets the history of the former cemetery.²⁶ The former Skinner Street Cemetery was classified by the National Trust on 3 December 1990.²⁷

Construction of the school continued and by August 1957, the hall and 24 classrooms had been finished, and two gymnasias (one for boys, one for girls) were in progress. Another ten classrooms were planned for 1958.²⁸

The school was officially opened on 15 October 1958 by Premier Hawke, during Fremantle Festival Week.²⁹ The Opening was attended by many other dignitaries including the Minister for Education Mr W.E. Hegney, the Director of Education Dr. Robertson, the Mayor of Fremantle F. Samson, the Chief Architect, J Clare, and Mr. K. E. Beazley M.H.R. Approximately 1,500 parents and citizens also attended. After a luncheon, the official opening ceremony occurred. The school's yearbook for 1958, *The Sentinel*, reported:

The outdoor stage, where the official party was to be seated, was colourfully decorated with flags and plants, and the whole school had taken on a gala atmosphere ... To everyone's delight, Mr Hegney made the shortest but most eagerly awaited speech of the ceremony. He granted the school a holiday in recognition of the occasion. Three cheers were then led by the school captain, Bill Dunstone, to launch the school on its career. We know it will be long and glorious,

20 *The Sentinel*, John Curtin Senior High School Annual Magazine, Published by students, 1957, p. 7.

21 *West Australian*, 30 October 1954, p. 1.

22 PWD Dwg's included in Appendix B, Cox Howlett & Bailey Woodland, op. cit.

23 *The Sentinel* 1957, op. cit., pp. 5-7.

24 *The Sentinel* 1957, op. cit., p. 10.

25 EDWA Annual Report 1955, pp. 13-14.

26 Signage at the site of the former Skinner Street cemetery.

27 National Trust documentation,

28 *Daily News*, 15 August 1957, cited in Johnson, Tim, op. cit., Ch 6.

29 *Daily News*, 7 August 1958, cited in Johnson, Tim, op. cit., Ch 6.

and that John Curtin, the man and the school, will forever hold an honoured place in our thoughts.³⁰

By 1960, all but the first year students, still at the Princess May Annexe, were housed under one roof, and several extensions had been made to sporting facilities.³¹ In 1963, a canteen was opened.³² Future proceeds went towards school amenities, such as hot water showers.³³

In 1963, the school's first Principal Mistress, Miss Burgess, retired.³⁴ A year later, the first Head Master, Mr. Jack Howieson, also retired.³⁵ The new Principal from 1965 was Mr. A. B. Loneragan. In the foreword to the 1965 *Sentinel*, he wrote:

... the school, of modern design, was the first of the post-war Senior High Schools to be built and is regarded as the best equipped High School in the State. Students may be interested to know that their School Hall is probably the largest and finest in Australia ... Repairs, renovations and painting will in a few months make John Curtin as new.³⁶

The School Hall Loneragan referred to was known as the Fremantle Community Youth Centre. It was built in partnership between the Community of Fremantle and the Education Department of Western Australia. The purpose of the Youth Centre was to service the students' needs during school hours, and also to provide facilities for community youth groups after school hours. Control of the facility was vested in the Community Youth Centre Committee, comprising representatives of the local government, the Education Department and youth groups in the community. Members of the Youth Centre were offered hobby courses, music, library services and some sports on Wednesday evenings in the hall, as well as weekend activities such as camping and hiking.³⁷

In 1963, there were only ten senior high schools (offering five years' schooling) in the metropolitan area, of which *John Curtin College of the Arts* had the second highest number of enrolments, after Governor Stirling.³⁸

In 1966, trophy showcases and honour boards were donated for the foyer of the school hall, provided by the P&C through canteen funds.³⁹

In 1967, *The Sentinel* complimented the head gardener, Mr. Nicol, and his staff, for the further development of the lawn and gardens, which 'added to the overall attractiveness of the school.' In August of the same year, work commenced on a new science block.⁴⁰

During 1968, the State Government began a program to provide new library complexes to the larger, older senior high schools. Under this scheme

30 *The Sentinel* 1958, op. cit., pp. 39-40.

31 *The Sentinel* 1960, op. cit., p. 1.

32 *ibid.*

33 *ibid.*, p. 3.

34 *The Sentinel* 1963, op. cit., p. 1.

35 *The Sentinel* 1964, op. cit., p. 5.

36 *The Sentinel* 1965, op. cit., p. 5.

37 *ibid.*, p. 18.

38 EDWA Annual Reports 1963, p. 16 & 1964, p. 16.

39 *The Sentinel* 1966, op. cit., p. 3.

40 *The Sentinel* 1967, op. cit., p. 4.

Governor Stirling and *John Curtin College of the Arts* received new library blocks.⁴¹

The new library at *John Curtin College of the Arts* was named after the late Jack Howieson, the first principal. The Jack Howieson Memorial Library was officially opened on 5 June 1969, with Mrs Howieson and her son officially unveiling the entrance plaque. The Minister for Education, Mr. E. Lewis, the Director General of Education, Mr. H. Dettman, and Mr. Kim E. Beasley, M.H.R. were in attendance, along with approximately 600 guests.⁴² The new library could accommodate 125 students and 20,000 books, and was 'amongst the most modern in Australia.'⁴³

With the opening of the science block in 1969, Princess May was no longer needed as an annexe, and, after thirteen years, all students were finally accommodated at the main school.⁴⁴ The science block comprised physics, chemistry and research labs, a lecture theatre for 80 people, a seminar room and more classrooms and staff rooms.⁴⁵

1970 saw the retirement of two longstanding and well-respected staff members, Miss Hoad and Miss Dods. Miss Hoad had been Headmistress at the Princess May Annexe from 1957 to 1965, and then Head Mistress of *John Curtin College of the Arts* from 1965, after Miss Burgess. Miss Dods had been at Princess May from 1926 to 1956, and then at *John Curtin College of the Arts* from 1956 until 1969. Both women impacted positively on the school throughout their careers. Dods, in particular, had ensured that student records and archives were properly cared for when Princess May amalgamated with the new school in 1956.⁴⁶

In 1971, Principal Loneragan retired due to ill health. The new Principal, Mr. W. Speering was proud to take over at John Curtin, as he had 'been told that the Education Department ranks it as one of the three best schools in the State.'⁴⁷

In 1978, the library was extended, doubling the available floor area.⁴⁸

In 1969, the Dettman report resulted in a number of policy and curriculum changes in education. Commonwealth money also became more important in the 1970s because of the establishment of the Schools commission under Whitlam in 1973 and innovation and special projects were rewarded.⁴⁹ By mid 1970s, secondary schools began to develop their own educational policies.⁵⁰ The first to specialise in Dance was Tuart Hill Senior High School in 1975, followed by *John Curtin College of the Arts*, in 1976.⁵¹ The Minister for Education reported the following:

Following some difficult formative years, the Lively Arts Course at John Curtin Senior High is now well established after a year of good progress in 1977; and it is

41 EDWA Annual Report 1968, p. 21.

42 *The Sentinel* 1969, op. cit., p. 33.

43 EDWA Annual Report 1968, p. 27.

44 *The Sentinel* 1968, op. cit., p. 3.

45 *The Sentinel* 1969, op. cit., p. 48.

46 *The Sentinel* 1970, op. cit., pp. 5-6.

47 *The Sentinel* 1972, op. cit., p. 2.

48 'Library Report 1969,' cited in Appendix F, Cox Howlett & Bailey Woodland, op. cit.

49 AN45/34, ACC3097, 862/1983.

50 EDWA Annual Report 1975, p. 12.

51 EDWA Annual Report 1976, p. 10.

now felt that the course is playing an important part in the life of the school. Its continuing success is assured.⁵²

This was an astute observation. When student numbers declined in the late 1970s, the specialist education program in Theatre Arts and Dance attracted many students from outside the Fremantle area. Student numbers were boosted, such that enrolments had to be restricted in 1983 due to accommodation pressures.⁵³

In 1987, a new Performing Arts complex was built between the library and the hall to accommodate the new courses. It was officially opened on 14 May 1987. The Dance Studio has since been renamed the Paul Mercurio Centre, in recognition of the former student (1976-1979) who has since achieved national acclaim in dance.⁵⁴

By 1991, 70% of students at *John Curtin College of the Arts* were from outside of the local area, attracted to the school for its specialisation in Dance and Drama.⁵⁵

In 1997, additions and improvements totalling \$165,000 were completed at *John Curtin College of the Arts*.⁵⁶

In 2001, *John Curtin College of the Arts* continues to function as a school specialising in dance and drama.

13.2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

John Curtin College of the Arts is a State Government Senior High School comprising a group of buildings including Manual Arts (1943), Classrooms, (1954-1958), Canteen (1963), Science Block (1968), Library (1969) and Performing Arts (1987), located on a site comprising 11.65 hectares of land bounded by Ord, Ellen, East and Vale Streets, Fremantle.

The Manual Arts building is a single, two and three storeyed building of masonry construction. The Classrooms are wings of two and three storeyed, reinforced concrete framed buildings, with brick and glass infills forming an enclosed quadrangle. The Canteen is a single storey brick building with a flat roof and metal roller doors. The Science Block is a single storeyed brick building. The Library building and the Performing Arts Centre are both single storey brick buildings. The remainder of the site comprises a sports oval located on the site of the former Skinner Street Cemetery adjacent to Vale Street, and an area of undeveloped land to the south-western side of the school adjacent to Ord Street.

John Curtin College of the Arts is situated on an elevated site overlooking the city of Fremantle and the Fremantle Harbour, with Cantonment Hill to the north and Monument Hill to the south. The Fremantle Arts Centre is located adjacent at the corner of Finnerty and Ord Streets, on the north-west corner of the block containing *John Curtin College of the Arts*. A limestone wall on the eastern side of the Fremantle Arts Centre boundary separates it from *John Curtin College of the Arts*.

The school is situated on a limestone hill, with a cutting through the limestone, for the construction of East Street being visible to the east of the

52 EDWA Annual Report 1977, p. 14.

53 EDWA Annual Reports 1983, p. 24.

54 Cox Howlett & Bailey Woodland, op. cit.

55 Johnson, Tim, op. cit., Ch. 11.

56 EDWA Annual Report 1996/97, p. 115.

Manual Arts building and for the construction of Ellen Street to the south of the Classroom block.

The entrance to the site is from Ellen Street. The driveway is located to the eastern end of the site and is bounded by limestone entry walls. The bitumen driveway leads to a bitumen carpark that runs in an east west direction across the front of the school buildings. A series of steps and a ramp at the eastern end leads to a concrete slab paved area in front of the Library and Performing Arts buildings. Steps are also located near the centre of the carpark, leading to the administration area. Face red brick retaining walls run along the edge of the carpark and the raised grass area in front of the Classroom block. The raised grassed area contains large native eucalypt trees.

To the south of the carpark are bitumen tennis courts and an area of grass and native trees. Trees comprise Native Peppermints, Date Palms, Norfolk Island Pines and Rottneest Island Tea Trees, generally recent planting. There is a mature Tuart immediately adjacent to the Classroom block.

The Classroom block, located towards the centre of the site, also runs in an east-west direction with an ablution block located in the centre dividing the quadrangle into two separate spaces. These internal courtyards are landscaped with paving, grass trees, planter boxes and Canary Island Date Palms. The Science block is attached to the south-west corner of the Classroom block. The main Assembly Hall is located to the eastern end of the eastern quadrangle, with the Performing Arts building attached to the east of the Assembly Hall.

The Library is a freestanding building located in front (to the south) of the Performing Arts building.

The Manual Arts Building is located behind (to the north) of the Performing Arts building and is also free standing. The Manual Arts building runs in a north-south direction along East Street, above the East Street limestone cutting. There is a landscaped area on the eastern side of the building featuring Canary Island Date Palms and Native Peppermints.

The Canteen is located to the west of the Manual Arts building and is attached to the Classroom buildings by a covered walkway.

Two separate gymnasiums are attached to the north side of the north wing of the Classroom block with a row of Coral Flame trees between them. There are steps and a ramp that leads from the Classroom block level down to the oval. Cricket nets are located to the north-west corner of the oval.

The oval is located on the site of the former Skinner Street Cemetery. It is bounded by an original cemetery limestone wall to the north (along Vale Street). The wall appears to have been constructed in two stages. The western section of wall has rounded coping with mortar set with small rocks whilst the eastern section of the wall has a 'vee' shaped coping with smooth finished mortar. The western section of the wall partly retains the slope between the oval and the road at this point. There is a row of trees of comparatively recent origin comprising Native Peppermints, Rottneest Island Tea Trees and Figs along the inside of the stone wall.

There is an embankment from the oval up to the Manual Arts building and East Street to the east, steps and a ramp leading up to the Classroom block to the south and the Fremantle Arts Centre to the west. There are a number of Native Peppermints on the embankment.

To the west of the Classroom block are several groups of mature Rottneest Island Tea Trees (*Melaleuca pubescens*). Beyond these the ground is terraced

with tennis courts located at a lower level with steps and a path leading through an area of rough ground to Ord Street.

There is a bitumen path leading from the south-west corner of the site to the school buildings. This corner of the site contains several natural limestone outcrops and is covered by indigenous vegetation with evidence of clearing and some recent planting of indigenous species.

Manual Arts (1943)

The Manual Arts building is a single, two and three storeyed building of brick construction, designed in the Inter-War Functionalist style. The building has an asymmetrical massing with a long single-storey wing to the north and a narrower, deeper, two-storey wing to the south. Both wings are connected by a three-storey section containing the stairs, a strong vertical emphasis on the stair element being common in buildings of this style.

The building is constructed of load bearing cavity brickwork with a pitched CGI roof behind a parapet wall. The finishes to the north and south wings are the same, being face red brick with cream coloured mortar to the bottom courses (approximately 17 courses) with cream coloured rendered masonry above. The corners to these wings are curved and there are cantilevered concrete awnings above the windows at both ground and first floor levels. Above the awnings are two bands of lines rebated into the rendered walls.

The windows to the north wing are timber framed awning windows with two sashes, one above the other, in groups of one or two with rendered masonry columns between each group. The windows to the south wing are timber framed double hung sashes with a single steel framed hopper window below, in groups of three to the front (east) elevation and groups of one and two to the sides (north and south) and rear elevations. All of these windows have a horizontal glazing bar to each sash contributing to the overall horizontal line to these wings.

In contrast the connecting three-storey stair section is of face cream brick with squared corners. Originally this section contained the front entrance doors (which have now been replaced with windows). The three windows to this section are tall and narrow with aluminium frames. The windows are generally fixed panes of wired safety glass, with some sashes being pivot windows with wired safety glass. Two vertical cream colour stucco-rendered mullions run between the windows contributing to the overall vertical line of this central connecting wing. A cantilevered timber flagpole is attached to the top of the central wing. A stucco render coping is located on the top of the parapet wall to this wing.

Above the former front doors is a cantilevered concrete awning, which is wider than that over the ground floor windows but at the same height. This is the element that visually connects the three wings together.

A red brick paved area is located in front of the front door area and two red brick planters are located either side of the paved path.

The rear (west) elevation of the single storey wing consists of a verandah formed by the common roofline. The verandah and roof structure is timber with a CGI roof with a concrete floor. The parapet wall curves around from the east elevation, along the north and returns a short way along the west and south. The verandah roof is not behind the parapet wall.

An extension has been added to the rear of this north wing consisting of a single room under a skillion roof. The floor level is approximately 750mm below that of the original building. The walls are red face brick to dado

height with cream rendered masonry above. A metal tilt door is located to the south elevation and six louvred windows, in groups of three are located to the west elevation. An exhaust flue is located on the roof to this extension.

The two storey, south wing has the same treatments to all four facades. The parapet wall runs around all four sides of this wing. To the north of this wing is a loading dock with a pair of timber T&G doors.

Generally the doors to the building are timber framed with four panels. The two bottom panels being T&G boards and the top panels being glazed.

The gutters are generally of a squared profile and the downpipes are round. Box gutters run behind the parapet walls.

Immediately to the front (east) of the building is a 1.2m strip of grass, concrete kerbing, a bitumen driveway, another grassed strip with native and pine trees, limestone cut and limestone retaining wall and a drop to East Street below. On the opposite side of East Street is a cut through the limestone outcrop partly retained by a concrete block retaining wall.

Immediately to the north, south and west a bitumen area abuts the building and is used for parking and storage areas.

Internally, the Manual Arts building reflects the external divisions of the building. The north wing contains a large long room. The south wing contains an 'L' shaped corridor with classrooms to the east of the north south corridor and large, lofty work rooms either side of the east west corridor. The central wing contains the staircase and a small classroom on each level.

The internal finishes to the north wing are red face brick walls with cream mortar to dado height with cream painted red brick above. This is now one large long room with original built in cupboards running along the east wall under the windows and door and window openings to the verandah along the west. This room has timber floorboards and a plasterboard ceiling with battens. This room continues to be used for woodwork and metal work classes although internal walls, original furniture and equipment have been removed.

The skillion-roofed addition to the north west has a concrete floor and face brick walls.

The internal finishes to the south wing are generally timber floorboards, plastered and painted walls with curved corners and flush finished plasterboard ceilings. The walls have a line rebated into the plaster at dado height. A couple of the large workrooms have painted face brick walls with timber picture rails. Doors are generally timber framed with two panels, one timber panel below and a glazed panel with a horizontal glazing bar above. Original doors have a fanlight above. Some internally located square downpipes are visible. The large workrooms have awning windows in groups of three sashes, with three panes to each sash. These windows open to the internal corridors.

The internal finishes to the central wing are similar to those of the south wing. Walls are generally plastered and painted and the rebated line follows the rise of the stairs. The stairs are concrete with a black painted render skirting and a timber handrail. Decorative metal grilles are located inside some of the windows to the stairwell. The small classrooms to the central wing have decorative picture rails with rough-finished render below and smooth finished render above.

Changes to the original fabric and use of the building include:

Openings to the north elevation to the blacksmith shop blower room have been infilled.

Internal walls and original furniture and equipment to the north wing have been removed.

New extension (storeroom) to the west of the north wing has been added. This extension uses materials and details from the original building.

Front door has been removed and infilled with rendered brickwork to sill height and aluminium framed windows.

The entrance hall has been enclosed for use as an office.

Toilets at ground floor of south wing have been reconfigured.

New stud walls and aluminium framed flush panel doors to part of the upper floor corridor have been installed to create a computer room.

The Manual Arts building is generally in a good to very condition. Little alteration has occurred and the alterations that have occurred are easily discernible and the original intent easily read.

Classrooms, (1954-1958)

Designed in the Post-War International Style the Classrooms are wings of two and three storeyed, reinforced concrete framed buildings, with brick and glass infills forming an enclosed quadrangle.

The Classroom block has long wings of classrooms to the south and north and a short wing of classrooms to the west. These wings together with the western end of the main assembly hall form an enclosed area of open space. An ablution block located within the enclosed space divides it into two quadrangle areas.

The main entrance and administration block is located on the ground level of the south wing and in a two-storey wing to the south originally constructed to house the library on the first floor. Two gymnasium blocks are located to the north of the north wing.

The building is constructed of a rendered reinforced concrete frame with masonry infill panels. These infill panels are face brick to the walls facing the quadrangle and to the lower level of the north wall of the north wing. All other infill panels are rendered and painted. The classrooms have high-level louvred windows to the quadrangle and large steel framed fixed pane windows with hopper windows below to the external facing walls. A covered concrete and steel post verandah runs around the quadrangle at first floor level. The balustrade to the verandah is of a concrete upstand with steel vertical bars above.

Cantilevered steel-framed sunscreens are located to the north and west wall windows.

Internally, the typical classroom

... measures 30'long x 24'wide and has a sliding timber entry door, steel framed glazing from ceiling to sill level on sides open to the unprotected elevation, high level louvres on verandah elevation, fire box with inbuilt gas heater to front of room, with storage cupboard and blackboard. Ceiling [sic] are flush lined with surface mounted fluorescent lightfittings and sweep fans.⁵⁷

The Assembly Hall, located to the east of the eastern quadrangle, is constructed of a steel portal frame with face brick and steel frame, window infill panels. The roof is a gable roof covered with CGI sheets. The internal west wall is clad with acoustic tiles and the floor is of timber boards to a basketball court finish. A stage is set behind a face brick proscenium.⁵⁸

The quadrangles have central grassed areas surrounded by paving slabs. The quadrangles have been planted with Canary Island Palms *Phoenix Canariensis*, Peppermint trees *Agonis Flexuosa*, Bottlebrush trees *Callistemon Acuminatis* and Norfolk Island Pines *Araucaria Heterphylla*.⁵⁹

A steel framed covered assembly area is located to the west of the Main Assembly Hall. It has a steel frame infilled with a lightweight cladding. A raised stage was originally located in this position.

The undercroft area to the north of the north wing has been enclosed with face brick and aluminium framed windows.

A lift has been installed to the north of the north wing staircase that provides access to all levels of the classroom buildings.

Little other change has occurred to these classroom buildings and they remain in good condition.

Canteen (1963)

The Canteen is a single storey red face brick building with a flat metal deck roof, a painted timber fascia board and metal roller doors to the serving counter openings. Concrete steps lead from the bitumen drive area to the canteen undercroft. A metal deck and steel post covered walkway links the canteen area to the Classroom block. The ceiling to the undercroft area is a fibre cement sheet lining. Generally the canteen is in fair to good condition and has undergone little change.

Science Block (1968)

The Science Block is a single storeyed brick building attached to the south west corner of the Classroom block. The walls are face brick and have steel framed awning windows with rendered masonry panels below the windows. The roof is a low pitch gabled metal clad roof. The building is in good condition.

Library (1969)

The Library building is a freestanding single storey face brick building with a metal deck roof behind a metal deck clad fascia. The building has timber window frames with aluminium sliding sashes. An addition (1978) to the south has a skillion roof with high level south light windows. The building is in good condition.

Performing Arts (1987)

Performing Arts Centre is a single storey brick building and is attached to the eastern end of the Main Assembly Hall. This building houses an auditorium and a dance studio. The walls are face brick with a steel-framed roof. The fascia to the roof is clad with timber boards. Sections of the brick walls to the front of the building have been rendered and painted. There is a rendered concrete porch to the front entrance. The building has undergone few alterations and is in good condition.

58 ibid.

59 ibid.

Ancillary Buildings

A single storey face brick workshop with a low-pitched gabled custom orb roof is located between the Performing Arts Building and the Manual Arts Building. A similar building with a flat roof is located adjacent to this workshop building.

A freestanding steel clad store building is located to the north of the 1950s school building.⁶⁰

13.3 COMPARATIVE INFORMATION

After World War Two, the Education Department carried out a program of reorganisation and began to provide for increased secondary education in the State. Central Schools were reclassified as High Schools in 1946, offering three-year secondary courses. The first five-year high schools (Senior High Schools) were established at Collie and Kent Street in 1952.⁶¹

Kent Street was built in 1940 as a Central School offering three-year, post-primary courses, and was reclassified as a three-year high school in 1946. It first offered a fourth year of schooling in 1952.⁶²

Prior to Kent Street, the only metropolitan government Senior High School in the metropolitan area was *Perth Modern School*, built in 1911, and first offering five-year classes in 1918.⁶³

The first of the post-war high schools built were *John Curtin College of the Arts*, Armadale, Mount Lawley and Governor Stirling, all built in 1956. Of these, only Governor Stirling and John Curtin offered five-year schooling.

In 1958, a new Education Department policy entitled 'The Co-Educational, Comprehensive, Community High School' brought an end to government single-sex schools. It was also recommended that all new metropolitan high schools be situated in outer suburbs.⁶⁴

High schools to open in the following years included Belmont and Tuart Hill (1957), Applecross and Hollywood (1958), Kwinana and Scarborough (1959), Bentley and Melville (1960), Swanbourne and John Forrest (1962), Churchlands, Cyril Jackson and Hamilton Hill (1963). Of other schools in the vicinity of *John Curtin College of the Arts*, South Fremantle High School opened in 1967.⁶⁵

In the mid 1970s, secondary schools began to diversify, and develop their own educational policies.⁶⁶ The first to specialise in Dance was Tuart Hill Senior High School in 1975, followed by *John Curtin College of the Arts*, in 1976.⁶⁷ Tuart Hill is now Tuart College.

60 ibid.

61 Gregory, Jenny & Lisa Smith, op. cit., pp. 41-44.

62 Pearce, Janet, *Kent Street Senior High School 1940-1990: The first fifty years*, Kent St SHS, 1990, pp. 12-13, 33.

63 Hetherington, Judith, op. cit., p. 6.

64 Gregory, Jenny & Lisa Smith, op. cit., pp. 41-44.

65 EDWA Annual Reports 1953-1967.

66 EDWA Annual Report 1975, p. 12.

67 EDWA Annual Report 1976, p. 10.

With the exception of *Perth Modern School* [2450],⁶⁸ no high schools, private or public, are entered on the Heritage Council of Western Australia (HCWA) Register of Heritage Places.

Of the five associated buildings used as annexes to *John Curtin College of the Arts* during the 1950s, four are on the HCWA Register of Heritage Places - *Princess May Girls' School (fmr)* [0851], *Museum & Arts Centre* [0875], *Film & Television Institute* [0842], and the *North Fremantle Primary School (fmr)* [3135].⁶⁹ The fifth annexe is the Manual Arts Building, now part of *John Curtin College of the Arts*.

13.4 REFERENCES

No key references.

13.5 FURTHER RESEARCH

Two previous works have been referred to in the documentary evidence: Cox Howlett & Bailey Woodland Architects & Planners, *Draft Heritage Assessment John Curtin Senior High School Fremantle*, prepared for the Education Department of Western Australia, November 1998; and Tim Johnson's *Guns, Graves and Dreaming – The History of Fremantle's high school: John Curtin Senior High School*, 1992. However, referencing in both works is minimal and not all primary sources were able to be verified.

⁶⁸ HCWA Database No. 2450.

⁶⁹ HCWA database.