

JOHN CURTIN COLLEGE OF THE ARTS

Note: This policy focuses on the use, protection of the cultural heritage significance and the location of future new buildings on the John Curtin College of the Arts site. It is not intended to be a policy for the Fremantle Arts Centre. Reference is provided for the Fremantle Arts Centre Conservation Plan which is the key policy document for this site.

1. OBJECTIVES

The following objectives will apply to the policy area.

- (i) To protect and enhance the cultural heritage significance of the policy area and including protection of the heritage setting of the Fremantle Arts Centre.
- (ii) To ensure appropriate use of the site, consistent with the original vesting for the recreation and enjoyment of the Fremantle community. Use should also be consistent with the current educational, cultural and community uses in the policy area.
- (iii) Where new development/buildings are proposed, to encourage community oriented development that retains and enhances the existing open space and natural features of the policy area and reinforces the social, aesthetic, historic, scientific and rarity values outlined in this policy.
- (iv) To safeguard public access, visual and physical linkages across the policy area.
- (v) To reinforce the natural topography and the landmark and scenic importance of the policy area.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 Policy Area

The policy area covers a total area of 13.2 hectares and is bounded by Ord, Ellen, East, Vale and Finnerty Streets. See figure 1.

2.2 Current Uses

The policy area is a 'Public Purposes High School' reserve in the Metropolitan Region Scheme and the City of Fremantle town planning scheme.

Uses include the John Curtin College of the Arts (former technical and high school) and associated sporting facilities, and the Fremantle Arts Centre (former Asylum). The West Australian Museum also controls a portion of the site.

It comprises 3 reserves:

- 31435: 1.2 ha, reserved for Museum and Arts Centre
- 31436: 0.4 ha, reserved for Museum

• 17035: 11.6 ha, School site

Adjoining uses include the Fremantle Leisure Centre, Fremantle Park and residential development, including Samson House.

2.3 Natural Features/Environment

The policy area includes remnants of the limestone ridge, which together with Cyprus Hill, Cantonment Hill and Monument Hill, serve as prominent Fremantle landmarks. The ridge outcrops near the Ord and Ellen Streets corner and the adjoining Ellen Street cutting demonstrates the rock strata (see figure 1). Views to the city and Indian Ocean are available from elevated portions of the policy area.

The policy area accommodates a range of native and exotic species reflective of the site's history and use. Vegetation is used in many locations to frame buildings, define uses and provide amenity, including shade.

A more detailed description of vegetation can be found in the Heritage Assessment – John Curtin Senior High School, prepared for the Education Department of WA in November 1998 by Cox Howlett and Bailey Woodland.

2.4 Site History

A comprehensive summary of the historical development of the policy area is contained in the draft Heritage Assessment – John Curtin Senior High School, prepared for the Education Department of WA in November 1998 by Cox Howlett and Bailey Woodland. Key sites are shown on figure 1.

The Whadjuck tribal group inhabited the Swan River area prior to colonial settlement in 1829.

An 1874 survey plan indicates a portion of the site was used for a cemetery – the Skinner Street Cemetery, the Fremantle colony's first formal cemetery. The limestone wall on Vale Street is the only remnant of this facility. The site was officially closed as a cemetery in 1899, however, burials continued until 1906 and the site was referred to as 'New Cemetery'.

The 18.2 hectare (45 acre) Fremantle Park was proclaimed in 1879 and extended from east-west, from East Street to Parry Street and north-south between Ellen Street and Vale Street. The land was vested in Fremantle by the State government for the 'recreation and enjoyment of the public'. If the land ceased to be used for that purpose, the Crown retained the right to resume the land. Due to budgetary constraints only a portion of the site was cleared, planted and 'improved'.

Ord Street was cut through in 1968 and severs the policy area from the remainder of Fremantle Park. The remainder of the Park to the west of Ord Street is still in community/recreation use with playing fields, the Fremantle Tennis Club, Fremantle Bowling Club and the Fremantle Leisure Centre.

Four anti-aircraft guns were stationed on the site during World War 2, and with four other local sites, formed the defence for Fremantle and the region against aerial attack. No physical evidence remains, however, archaeological investigations may reveal some remains. The army personnel barracks were the first buildings on the school grounds.

Formalisation of a high school site was recorded in the Government Gazette in June 1922, however, the Fremantle Technical High School was not opened until 1943. It is noted that Council made available an additional 6 acres for school recreation.

Construction of the John Curtin High School began in 1954 and was largely completed in 1958. It was the result of a change in government secondary education policy, which favoured comprehensive coeducational facilities. Student intake began in 1956. School enrolments in the early years meant that the school operated as a multi location campus, supplemented by the Princess May School on Cantonment Street.

More recently the school has become a specialised performing arts centre with a specialist soccer program also. The school's existing performing arts centre at the east end of the assembly hall was opened in 1987.

Construction of the Fremantle Arts Centre (corner Ord and Finnerty Streets), a former asylum and women's home, was commenced in 1861, with the first stage completed by 1865. The buildings as we know them today were completed between 1890 and 1896, under the direction of architect George Temple Poole. The function of the facility was changed to a home for aged women in 1909. During World War 2, the buildings also accommodated United States personnel stationed in Fremantle. Educational use followed. In 1965, a community lead preservation campaign was successful in seeing government commitment to save the buildings and use them for a museum.

2.5 Assessment of Significance

2.5.1 Overview

The Fremantle Arts Centre is registered by both the Australian Heritage Commission and the Heritage Council of WA (HCWA). Approval from both agencies is required for any works within the respective reserves and adjoining sites. This policy should be read in conjunction with Council's Fremantle Museum and Arts Centre Conservation Policy.

The setting and buildings of John Curtin College of the Arts are not currently listed or recorded with the Australian Heritage Commission, HCWA *or* National Trust of WA. The college was added to the City of Fremantle municipal heritage inventory in June 2000.

The policy area is not recorded on the register of sites at the Department of Aboriginal Affairs.

The remnants of Fremantle Park form the setting of the Fremantle Arts Centre and any work in it, or in the vicinity of the Arts Centre may affect the heritage values of the site.

The Park remnants, including the John Curtin College of the Arts site, isare a historic open space and its registration per se is warranted for the aesthetic, historic, scientific and social values that it has for the community.

The following statement of significance is based on assessment by the City of Fremantle and the *draft Heritage Assessment – John Curtin Senior High School*, prepared for the Education Department of WA in November 1998 by Cox, Howlett and Bailey Woodland.

2.5.2 Social Value

The development of the policy area has been strongly linked to the demographic development of Fremantle from its early use as a cemetery (1852 to 1899) to current education and community uses, and active and passive recreation.

The limestone wall fronting onto Vale Street defines the extent of the former Skinner Street cemetery. The wall is listed as a significant limestone wall in the City of Fremantle Interim Heritage Database. It was also assessed by Cox et. al. to be of considerable significance.

The original Fremantle Park land grant was a significant gesture on the part of the State government in 1879 that has been gradually eroded over time.

Part of the policy area formed served as a defence site in World War 2.

Since 1943, secondary education for Fremantle and the south-west corridor of Perth has been a focus on the site, transforming from a technical education school to a college of the performing arts. The buildings and school's policy and curriculum focus reflective of changing community needs and values.

2.5.3 Aesthetic Value

The aesthetic value is strongly a function of its elevated position and openness, as the city is lacking in such spaces generally.

Remnants of the natural landform exist in the south-west corner of the site (along Ord Street and around into Ellen Street) where the limestone ridge outcrops. The same ridge was quarried in most locations in Fremantle for building material.

Vegetation in the policy area is a mix of native and exotic species and includes stands of *Callitris preissii*, *M. lanceolata* as well as other understorey species mainly on the limestone ridge. Some of these species are amongst the oldest and biggest in Fremantle.

Some of the buildings on the school site also demonstrate aesthetic merit such as the Manual Arts building. The grouping of the 1950s buildings also is representative of the Post War International style of

school building and architectural detailing. The value has been somewhat diminished through renovations.

2.5.4 Historic Value

The policy area has played a role in the development of Fremantle since 1852. Uses within the area have consistently been community oriented since that time and include a cemetery, recreation park, lunatic asylum, old women's home, World War 2 defence and accommodation, and a school.

2.5.5 Scientific Value

The scientific value of the policy area includes the natural history aspects relating to the association of the local limestone hilltops across Fremantle, vegetation and fauna. Some regeneration of native species is occurring on the limestone, which is in itself a matter of natural science interest.

Full investigation of pre European occupation has not been completed and may yield additional information.

2.5.6 Rarity Value

The Manual Arts building has been identified as a unique and substantially intact example.

2.5.7 Representativeness

The natural features remnant on the site provide significant visual evidence of landform prior to human settlement.

The school site also demonstrates the development of a suburban high school from 1941 to present day.

3.0 POLICY

3.1 Cultural Heritage Significance

The policy area reflects significant elements of social, aesthetic, historic and scientific values of the Fremantle area. The policy area is also representative of significant natural features in the Fremantle region. The Fremantle Park site, the Fremantle Arts Centre and school demonstrate the evolution and development of significant public facilities to meet changing local and regional needs.

Use and development on the site should restore, retain and enhance these recognised values.

3.2 Land Use

3.2.1 Fremantle Arts Centre and Museum Reserve

Council will support continued community, education and cultural use of the Fremantle Arts Centre as outlined in the Fremantle Museum and Arts Centre Conservation Policy.

3.2.2 John Curtin College of the Arts

Council's preference is to retain all existing open space areas on the college site consistent with the original vesting for recreation and community enjoyment.

Council may support new development on the site for education, exhibition (cultural) or community purposes (as defined in the Town Planning Amendment Regulations 1999) and where benefit to the Fremantle community can be demonstrated. Guidelines for the scale and appropriate form of any such development are provided in the Fremantle Museum and Arts Centre Conservation Policy in order to protect the identified heritage values of both the Arts Centre and the school. The guidelines also seek to enhance their respective urban settings, character, and ensure any development is compatible with and complementary to the landmark quality of the Arts Centre.

Construction on open areas and undeveloped portions of the college site is not supported as indicated on figure 2. As such, no building should occur on the oval and former Skinner Street cemetery. Redevelopment of existing college facilities within the hatched area shown on figure 2 is preferred.

The limestone wall fronting onto Vale Street defines the extent of the former Skinner Street cemetery. No demolition or incursions in any part of the wall will be supported by Council. In addition, the remnant limestone wall between the Arts Centre and the college on Ord Street, should be protected and enhanced.

Residential development in the policy area is not supported by Council.

Sale of any or a portion of the school reserve 17035 will not be supported by Council.

3.3 Visual and Physical Linkage

Visual links to and from the policy area should be maintained.

Council supports construction of 'One People's Walk', which runs along Ord Street between Ellen Street and The Fremantle Arts Centre. See figure 1. Refer also to the Fremantle Museum and Arts Centre Conservation Policy for further details.

The walk has been designed to link Samson House with the Fremantle Arts Centre, provide a safe, elevated community walkway, stabilise the remnant limestone land form and celebrate the diversity of people in Fremantle with plant species representative of the community ethnicity.

3.4 Natural Features

Protection of the limestone outcrop in the south-west corner of the school reserve will be pursued by Council as a significant remnant landform.

Documentation and a landscape plan should be prepared to enhance the policy area. Consideration should be given to enhancing the natural and scientific features of the site whilst giving recognition to the cultural and recreation use of the site.

References:

Fremantle Museum and Arts Centre Conservation Policy, Palassis Architects, June 200,1 for the City of Fremantle.

Heritage Assessment – John Curtin Senior High School, prepared for the Education Department of WA in November 1998 by Cox, Howlett and Bailey Woodland

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John Curtin College of the Arts and Fremantle Arts Centre Heritage Precinct Policy Area



