



ACT Heritage Council

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

14 Dominion Circuit, Forrest

(Block 3 Section 27, Forrest)

At its meeting of 7 April 2016 the ACT Heritage Council decided that 14 Dominion Circuit, Forrest is not eligible for provisional registration.

The information contained in this report was considered by the ACT Heritage Council in assessing the nomination for 14 Dominion Circuit, Forrest against the heritage significance criteria outlined in s10 of the *Heritage Act 2004*.

HISTORY

Post World War II construction in the ACT

In 1940, Canberra had a population of 12,000 with 2104 dwellings, many of which were considered to be substandard, and were located at the Causeway, Molonglo, Westlake and elsewhere (Gibbney, 1988: 224). In 1946, the number of private dwellings in the ACT numbered only 442 (Gibbney, 1988: 232). In the years immediately following World War II, Canberra faced a housing shortage, with numbers of new and returning residents increasing.

Up until – and during – this time, the ACT had a strong history of provision of public housing for its residents, including through hostels. Hostels proved unsuitable for families, and it became obvious that new houses had to be made for the expanding population (Gibbney, 1988: 236).

Initially, the wartime shortage of building materials and labour were not easily overcome (Gibbney, 1988: 237).

Gibbney (1988: 241) states that ‘between the 1947 census and 1951, the population of the city grew by 8374; from 16,905 to 23,530, of whom 18,355 lived in private dwellings and 5175 in hostels’. By 1955, the waiting list for public housing had grown to more than 3,000 families and individuals. (<http://guides.naa.gov.au/records-about-act/part1/chapter4/4.6.aspx> date accessed: 17 February 2016).

‘A large part of the increase was due of course to the growth in the number of public servants which, between 1948 and 1951, rose from 5931 to 7378. Many of the new arrivals were ex-service men from all over Australia, who had completed their government financed reconstruction training and were intent on carving out a niche for themselves’ (Gibbney, 1988: 241).

War Service Homes - overview

The *War Service Homes Act 1918* was legislated to provide Commonwealth loans for the construction of homes to ex-servicemen, who had served outside of Australia.

‘Through the War Service Homes Division, returned servicemen were able to apply for government assistance to finance approved plans and specifications for houses. The houses were usually conventional in style, and were designed by the War Service Homes Division or private architects’ (<http://guides.naa.gov.au/records-about-south-australia/chapter6/war-service-homes-loans.aspx>).

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The loan period for a War Service Home was usually 45 years, with interest charged at around 3% of a monthly balance (*The Canberra Times*, 3 August 1954).

War service homes were built in large numbers (precincts) in some suburbs across Australia, including in Adelaide (Plympton, Blair Athol and Glenelg North) and in Tasmania (Newstead).

War Service Homes in the ACT context

The provision of War Service Homes in the ACT contributed somewhat to the growth of Canberra in the post-war years, with 106 homes built in Canberra under the War Service Homes scheme between 1945 to 1953 (*The Canberra Times*, 3 August 1954). By way of comparison, between 1956 and 1962, the War Service Homes scheme had assisted in the purchase and/or construction of around 36,000 homes Australia-wide (Patrick, 2000: 7).

War Service Homes also contributed somewhat to the shortage of housing generally in the ACT.

In March 1948 the *Canberra Times* reported 'Arrangements are being finalised for a second group of homes under the War Service Homes Commission for Canberra. This follows the letting of a contract for 20 brick-veneer homes in the Griffith-Narrabundah area recently for purchase by Canberra ex-servicemen. Twenty-nine applicants registered for homes under the group scheme by the end of February. As completed, the buildings will be sold to applicants in order of need, each case being considered on its merits, rather than date of application. The Commission has handled 95 applications from Canberra residents, 64 of which have been approved or are receiving consideration. Apart from the group housing scheme, special advances have been made on five occasions, one home has been purchased out-right, and 12 others are awaiting private tenders' (*The Canberra Times*, 2 March 1948).

The following table provides an indication of the number of War Service Homes purchased and/or constructed in the ACT between 1951 and 1958:

Year	Purchased and/or constructed
1951-52	64
1952-53	34
1953-54	50
1954-55	unknown
1955-56	unknown
1956-57	unknown
1957-58	23

(*The Canberra Times*, 2 October 1953, 3 August 1954, 20 September 1958).

Across Australia in 1954-55, 5,885 building contracts were signed under War Service Home arrangements, and 5,777 the following year (Department of Housing, 1955, 1956). In 1955-56, Building contracts signed under a War Services Homes scheme accounted for 5.37% of the total building contracts across the country (Department of Housing, 1955, 1956). In comparison with other jurisdictions, the ACT had a relatively small number of War Service Homes provided from the inception of the scheme to 30 June 1956, as follows:

- Victoria 44, 887
- NSW 37,241
- Queensland 23,446
- South Australia 17,964
- Western Australia 15,590
- Tasmania 4, 091
- ACT 439
- Northern Territory 35
- New Guinea 4
- Norfolk Island 3

(Department of Housing, 1956)

14 Dominion Circuit was constructed in the context of a series of applications being put before the National Capital Development Commission (NCDC) affecting Section 27, Forrest during the 1950s. Among their considerations for Section 27, Forrest, the NCDC were a series of plans for two storey residences, which were favored by the NCDC,

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together with the generous block sizes and garden settings. NCDC minutes of December 1953 note that ‘there was little doubt of the demand at the present time for two storey residences in proximity to commercial centres... The committee expressed agreement to Section 27, Forrest, being developed for two-storey residences, and resolved to recommend accordingly’ (NCDC, 1953).

Between May 1948 and June 1953, building applications under the War Service Homes scheme in the ACT included 13 in Ainslie, 10 in Griffith, 7 for Turner, 5 for O’Connor, 2 in Reid and 1 each in Braddon, Narrabundah, Forrest, Red Hill, Yarralumla and Deakin (Charlton 2016).

In July 1950 the *Canberra Times* reported that ‘Group dwellings are being erected at Narrabundah, Yarralumla and O’Connor, and more homes will become available as the building rate increases. Consideration will be given to applications for English prefabricated dwellings, if costs are satisfactory’ (*The Canberra Times*, 13 July 1950).

In 1953-54, there were 31 applications on the waiting list for purchases of War Service Homes, and 19 on the waiting list for construction (*The Canberra Times*, 3 August 1954).

War Service Homes constructed in the ACT were of a superior standard, and also cost more, than those constructed in other Australian jurisdictions. Unlike other jurisdictions, War Service Homes in the ACT tended to be constructed of brick, and tended to be larger in size (*The Canberra Times*, 20 September 1958).

Today’s Defence Home Ownership Assistance Scheme offers an equivalent of the War Service Homes, with loans available to buy, build, modify or repair a house/unit, and to refinance a mortgage over a house/unit. A person is eligible for a Defence Service Home loan if they served with the Australian defence forces, or are the widow or widower of someone who served, and who completed a period of qualifying service. The maximum amount of loan is \$25,000 (<http://www.dsh.gov.au/>).

Construction of 14 Dominion Circuit, Forrest

14 Dominion Circuit was designed by the Department of Works’ architect JCE Fitzgerald, and constructed by local builder, Glen George Cappello. Capello was also an ex-serviceman, having served as a Private in the 35th Australian Infantry Battalion (<http://www.memorial.act.gov.au/person.php?id=915>).

The following information is taken direct from information supplied with the nomination for the place:

‘Flight Lieutenant John Robert Gardner, DFC, was Squadron Leader of 460 Squadron and a Lancaster bomber pilot, RAAF, located in Lincolnshire (England). He served in World War II in 1943 undertaking operations over German cities and some northern Italian cities. He was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross (DFC).

After the war he settled in Canberra and raised a family of 2 boys and 2 girls. He was a public servant with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. He retired in the mid-1980s.

The house was designed by the Department of Works as a war service home for the Gardner family.

Mr John Robert Gardner was Australia’s Trade Commissioner to Canada from January 1965 to August 1968 and then worked with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade rising to Assistant Secretary’.

The home remained in the ownership of the Gardner family until June 2011 when it was sold to another party.

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Early photo of original house.
Image credit: Mr J. Gardner. EMA, 2016.



Later photo showing early extensions and alterations
Image credit: Mr J. Gardner. EMA, 2016.

DESCRIPTION

14 Dominion Circuit, Forrest is a two storey cream brick veneer residence with terracotta tile roof. It was constructed in 1955-56 and has since undergone several extensions/additions, the most recent in 1986. Windows are timber framed and double hung.

Physical condition and integrity

14 Dominion Circuit, Forrest is in a good condition. Its integrity is sound, although attributable to no particular architectural style or design. It is a home of modest character, sited on a corner block.

SITE PLAN



Image 1 Site Boundary

This is an image indicating the site boundary, which includes the whole of the block.

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IMAGES

The following images were taken by ACT Heritage staff during a site visit on 22 February 2016.

	
<p>This is an image of the place taken from Dominion Circuit frontage</p>	<p>This is an image of the place taken from Canberra Avenue frontage</p>
	
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The following images are sourced from EMA, 2016, with image credits to Mr J. Gardner:

	
	

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The six images all depict more detailed aspects of the place, including detail of the front entrance, brick detailing, windows, and garden setting.

REFERENCES

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Newspapers:

The Canberra Times, accessed via trove/ National Library of Australia, 18/2/2016

- 2 March 1948
- 13 July 1950
- 2 October 1953
- 3 August 1954
- 20 September 1958