

# Heritage (Decision about Provisional Registration of Radio Hill, Fyshwick) Notice 2014

Notifiable Instrument NI2014–159

made under the

Heritage Act 2004, s34 Notice of decision about provisional registration

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**1 Name of instrument**

This instrument is the *Heritage (Decision about Provisional Registration of Radio Hill, Fyshwick) Notice 2014*.

**2 Commencement**

This instrument commences on the day after notification.

**3 Notice of Decision**

Pursuant to Section 32 of the *Heritage Act 2004* the ACT Heritage Council has decided not to provisionally register Radio Hill, Fyshwick to the ACT Heritage Register.

Anna Gurnhill  
A/g Secretary (as delegate for)  
ACT Heritage Council  
15 April 2014



## ACT Heritage Council

### STATEMENT OF REASONS

#### **DECISION NOT TO PROVISIONALLY REGISTER RADIO HILL (Block 22 Section 13, Fyshwick) IN THE ACT HERITAGE REGISTER**

This Statement of Reasons provides an assessment of Radio Hill, Fyshwick, and finds that the place does not meet any of the criteria of the *Heritage Act 2004*.

#### **Background**

An internment camp at Molonglo, today Fyshwick, was built in 1918 to house German civilians deported from China at the end of WWI. The intended internees did not arrive and the facility was instead used to house German civilians from nearby Commonwealth areas. The internees were released and the camp closed in 1920, with most of the assets sold and moved to new locations. What remained was used as workers quarters during the construction of the Federal Capital. Part of the original infrastructure built for the camp was a water reservoir which was located over 600m away on the nearby high ground that was later to become Radio Hill.

Starting in the back room of A J Ryan's electrical store in Kingston with a 50 watt transmitter in 1931, the 2CA Radio Station quickly became an important part of life in the National Capital. By the end of 1933 the transmitter and studio moved to a new location, Radio Hill, to allow for the installation of a significantly more powerful transmitter of 500 watts, which would reach a greater audience and attract greater advertising revenue. The most significant move came in 1938 when the station was sold and the studio and transmitter relocated to more appropriate locations: the studio facility moved into the city in a large purpose-built facility with studios, control rooms and a theatre; while the transmitting facilities were moved to the large open fields in Gungahlin which would allow the new 2,000 watt transmitter to reach its full potential.

Radio Hill was nominated in 2005 by a member of the public.

The ACT Heritage Council (the Council) conducted a site visit in March 2006 with George Barlin, one of the original employees of 2CA who worked on Radio Hill. During the visit it was noted that the reservoir was being used as a dumping site and arrangements were made to block unauthorised traffic entering the area and to clean out what had already been dumped. Also noted was that nearby trees were damaging the slab from the radio station and arrangements were made to cut down the trees and mitigate any further damage.

Radio Hill was inspected by the ACT Heritage Unit on 20 February 2014.

The Council discussed the nomination of Radio Hill at its meeting on 03 April 2014.

#### **Assessment**

The Council's assessment against the criteria specified in s.10 of the *Heritage Act 2004* is as follows.

In assessing the nomination for Radio Hill, the Council considered:

- information provided by a site inspection on 20 February 2014 by the ACT Heritage Unit;
- the report by the ACT Heritage Unit titled, *Background Information Radio Hill*, February 2014, containing photographs and information on history, description, condition and integrity; and
- A site visit in March 2006 by Council representatives.

Pursuant to s.10 of the *Heritage Act 2004*, a place or object has heritage significance if it satisfies one or more of the following criteria. The following assessment by the Council has been informed by research including that found in the references noted in the document *Background Information Radio Hill, March 2014*. Future research may alter the findings of this assessment.

**Criterion (a) *it demonstrates a high degree of technical or creative achievement (or both), by showing qualities of innovation, discovery, invention or an exceptionally fine level of application of existing techniques or approaches***

Radio Hill, Fyshwick, does not meet this criterion.

The efforts of A J Ryan and George Barlin in setting up and maintaining the studio and broadcasting facilities at Radio Hill can be considered pioneering in the field of commercial radio in Australia. The lack of ‘off-the-shelf’ equipment at the time meant that much of the equipment was improvised and was continually experimented with to improve the signal. However, as there is no longer any physical evidence of their technical or creative achievements, only the slab and footings of the structures, the place does not meet the basic requirements to meet the criterion

In relation to the adjacent water reservoir associated with the internment camp there is no evidence that it demonstrates a high degree of technical or creative achievement. The structure is a basic concrete reservoir located on a high point in relation to the area it was designed to service and is a common type for its period.

**Criterion (b) *it exhibits outstanding design or aesthetic qualities valued by the community or a cultural group***

Radio Hill, Fyshwick, does not meet this criterion.

There is no evidence that Radio Hill exhibits outstanding design or aesthetic qualities valued by the community or a cultural group. The facilities for which the place is nominated have been removed, leaving only concrete slabs or footings to represent their footprint on the site.

Additionally, the area surrounding the former radio station site has been planted with pine trees, now ~60years old, which provide a significant green area to the entrance of the industrial suburb of Fyshwick. However, there is no evidence that it is valued by the community or a cultural group for any outstanding design or aesthetic quality.

**Criterion (c) *it is important as evidence of a distinctive way of life, taste, tradition, religion, land use, custom, process, design or function that is no longer practiced, is in danger of being lost or is of exceptional interest***

Radio Hill, Fyshwick, does not meet this criterion.

In relation to the 2CA studio and broadcasting facilities, there is not enough physical fabric left on Radio Hill for it to be considered important as evidence, nor is radio broadcasting in danger of being lost.

In relation to the adjacent internment camp water reservoir, it is not considered important as evidence of the internment camp – while it was a part of the camp, it does not reveal anything important about the camp, rather it is considered to be a basic service. In addition, the reservoir is not important as evidence of a design or function related to water supply.

**Criterion (d) *it is highly valued by the community or a cultural group for reasons of strong or special religious, spiritual, cultural, educational or social associations***

Radio Hill, Fyshwick, does not meet this criterion.

There is no evidence that Radio Hill is valued by the community or a cultural group for reasons of strong or special religious, spiritual, cultural, educational or social associations. Some residents may have fond memories of listening to 2CA between 1935 and 1938 while it was operating from Radio Hill, but this is not evidence of the wider community or a cultural group highly valuing the place.

**Criterion (e) *it is significant to the ACT because of its importance as part of local Aboriginal tradition***

This criterion does not apply to Radio Hill, Fyshwick.

**Criterion (f) *it is a rare or unique example of its kind, or is rare or unique in its comparative intactness***

Radio Hill, Fyshwick, does not meet this criterion.

While the contribution to early entertainment and information distribution in the ACT is an important part of the region's cultural history, there is no longer any physical evidence of the facilities at Radio Hill that adequately represent a radio station broadcasting facility. As such, Radio Hill cannot be considered to be a rare or unique example of its kind, or considered to be rare or unique in its comparative intactness.

**Criterion (g) *it is a notable example of a kind of place or object and demonstrates the main characteristics of that kind.***

Radio Hill, Fyshwick, does not meet this criterion.

Radio Hill is precluded from being counted as a notable example of a commercial radio studio and broadcasting facility as the physical material is no longer easily identifiable as such. The studio building, aerial masts and all associated materials have been mostly disassembled and removed from the site.

**Criterion (h) *it has strong or special associations with a person, group, event, development or cultural phase in local or national history***

Radio Hill, Fyshwick, does not meet this criterion.

Radio Hill was a transitory location for the ACT's first commercial radio station. The station moved from its initial location in Kingston to Radio Hill, where it operated using the original equipment with the addition of a more powerful amplifier to boost the broadcasting signal. The facility operated from the location for less than five years before the studio moved to the city (later to Mitchell, where it currently resides) and the broadcasting facility to Gungahlin (where it has remained). Although 2CA had, and continues to have, an important role in the cultural development and history of the ACT through the provision of news, entertainment, advertising of local businesses, and information services, its association with Radio Hill is transitory and the evidence of its activity there can only be seen in a concrete slab and footings for one of the aerial masts (the other mast being unable to be located during the last visit).

In relation to the remains of the internment camp water reservoir, while it is the only in-situ evidence of the camp, it provides no evidence of the importance of the camp and the activities that occurred there. It was created for the provision of a basic service that is common to all serviced areas of the ACT at the time, so while it is directly associated with the internment camp, its importance as evidence of the camp is very limited.

**Criterion (i) *it is significant for understanding the evolution of natural landscapes, including significant geological features, landforms, biota or natural processes***

This criterion does not apply to Radio Hill, Fyshwick.

**Criterion (j) *it has provided, or is likely to provide, information that will contribute significantly to a wider understanding of the natural or cultural history of the ACT because of its use or potential use as a research site or object, teaching site or object, type locality or benchmark site***

Radio Hill, Fyshwick, does not meet this criterion.

**Criterion (k) *for a place—it exhibits unusual richness, diversity or significant transitions of flora, fauna or natural landscapes and their elements***

This criterion does not apply to Radio Hill, Fyshwick.

**Criterion (I) for a place—it is a significant ecological community, habitat or locality for any of the following:**

- (i) the life cycle of native species;*
- (ii) rare, threatened or uncommon species;*
- (iii) species at the limits of their natural range;*
- (iv) distinct occurrences of species*

This criterion does not apply to Radio Hill, Fyshwick.

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## **Conclusion**

The radio station 2CA has made an important contribution to the cultural history of the ACT. The place it was operating from between 1933 and 1938, Radio Hill, while an important and formative time for the station, was a transitory location in the station's history and growth. Additionally, there is insufficient evidence left on site to represent the activities that occurred there. The short duration of occupation combined with the lack of physical evidence means that the site is unable to meet the thresholds required for inclusion in the Register.

In relation to the adjacent WWI internment camp, the water reservoir was a basic facility that would have serviced any settled area and was incidental to the operations of the internment camp and the later workers' settlement. As such there is no evidence that it is important as evidence for technical achievement, or has an important association with the cultural history of the ACT.

This Statement of Reasons provides an assessment of Radio Hill and finds that the place does not meet any of the criteria of the *Heritage Act 2004*.