

Australian Capital Territory

Heritage (Decision about Provisional Registration of the Uriarra Forestry Settlement, Coree) Notice 2011

Notifiable Instrument NI2011–99

made under the

***Heritage Act 2004* s34 Notice of decision about Provisional Registration**

1. Name of instrument

This instrument is the Heritage (Decision about Provisional Registration of the Uriarra Forestry Settlement, Coree) Notice 2011

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 the Uriarra Forestry Settlement, Coree to the ACT Heritage Register.

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Mr Gerhard Zatschler
Secretary
ACT Heritage Council
GPO Box 158
Canberra ACT 2601

10 March 2011



ACT Heritage Council

STATEMENT OF REASONS

DECISION REGARDING THE INCLUSION OF THE URIARRA FORESTRY SETTLEMENT, COREE (Blocks 101, 105, 191, 193, 195, 198 and 213) IN THE ACT HERITAGE REGISTER

Background

Two nominations for the Uriarra Forestry Settlement were made in 1997. At that time the Uriarra Forestry Settlement included:

- 35 subdivided house plots, 23 with cottages;
- Approximately 3.5 hectares of vacant, readily serviceable land;
- ACT forests office/machinery depot;
- Uriarra Primary School;
- Ex-CSIRO Watershed Research facility;
- Mains water supply system;
- Mains sewerage system;
- Mains power supply;
- Mains telephone connection;
- Bitumen sealed roads with street lighting and some kerb and guttering;
- Road signs;
- Park areas and oval;
- Double tennis court;
- Children's playground equipment; and
- Ancillary services.

Since this time, the 2003 bushfires have destroyed much of the settlement.

At Council Meeting #36 on 10 March 2011 the ACT Heritage Council endorsed a Statement of Reasons which does not find the Uriarra Forestry Settlement eligible for provisional registration.

Detailed reasoning of why this place is not eligible for listing under the heritage significance criteria at Section 10 of the *Heritage Act 2004* is included under 'Assessment'.

History

Pine plantations were established in the ACT in the early twentieth century, the earliest being those at Stromlo, dating from 1914 and initiated by Charles Weston. The early plantations were established for aesthetic purposes for the Territory, although this quickly became a commercial venture.

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Statement of Reasons

The Uriarra Forestry Settlement is one of four forestry settlements which were established within the ACT. The other three settlements were Pierces Creek on Tidbinbilla Road, Stromlo Forestry Settlement on the Cotter Road and the Kowen Forestry Settlement.

The Uriarra Forestry Reserve was declared in 1882. However, little was done until after Federation when Charles Weston, the first Superintendent of Parks and Gardens, began trial plantings in 1915 of *Pinus radiata* at Mt Stromlo.

The original Uriarra Forestry Camp was established in 1913-1915 on the Brindabella Road, about three kilometres from the site of the current Uriarra settlement. The camp was established for forestry workers who cleared the existing eucalypt trees and established radiata pine plantations which formed the origins of the ACT plantation forest industry.

In 1928 the Uriarra Forestry Settlement was established in its current location, in recognition of the need to permanently house the forestry workers on site, reflecting their dual role as forestry workers and also as fire surveillance officers. The census for that year showed 30 people living at the Uriarra Settlement.

Two cottages were built in 1928, with another two in 1935, and a further two in 1938. Of these, at the time of nomination in 1997, only the two cottages built in 1938 remained (cottages #10 and 11).

It was during the 1940s that the settlement grew into a thriving community, with the construction of a number of houses. It wasn't until 1952 that electricity to the settlement was connected. In this year the settlement consisted of 8 temporary houses for married staff, a tennis court and children's swings.

A proposal was put forward at this time to demolish the 8 temporary houses, construct 20 new ones, move the school to a more central location, provide sites for a small hall and future shop and provide outdoor recreation facilities. Construction for this proposal began in 1953.

Cottages constructed at this time were of weatherboard, with green corrugated metal roofs. Five houses constructed at this time reflected a more sophisticated design for upper level staff occupancy.

Construction works continued through 1964 and 1965 with 11 new houses at the settlement.

At the time of nomination, the settlement was characteristic of the 1940s and 1950s development and style of town planning, with a curved street setting of residences fronting onto a tree-lined median strip.

The road connecting the settlement with Canberra was sealed in 1978, ending 50 years of difficult access and enabling workers to live in town and commute to the forest workplace. This meant that it was no longer necessary for forestry workers to live at the Uriarra Settlement and, hence, the era and cultural phase of the settlement began to decline.

By the 1980s, changes in mechanisation of forestry operations meant that the full complement of workers were no longer required at Uriarra.

As a result, in 1984 the ACT Housing Authority took responsibility for the management and maintenance of the settlement's housing. A mix of forestry and non-forestry tenants ensued.

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During the 1990s Housing ACT demolished many of the cottages as they became vacant, due to their run down state, and ‘because they represented an inconvenience to the public housing system’ (CBRE Consulting, 2007: 3).

In May 1999 the ACT Government announced its plans to relocate Uriarra tenants to other housing accommodation within Canberra, due to costs associated with the provision of services and maintenance of the Uriarra houses. This decision was reversed the next month, in response to the Uriarra community’s campaign to retain the village as residential accommodation. At this time, there were 23 houses in the settlement, 21 of which were occupied. The oldest remaining houses at that time were Cottages 10 and 11, constructed in 1938. Community facilities including an oval, parks, children’s play equipment and tennis courts, although extant, were not being maintained.

In January 2003, the ACT lost 55 rural properties to bushfires, including 16 at the Uriarra Settlement. Seven of the forestry settlement houses remained. The 16 house sites destroyed by fires were then further impacted by the subsequent bulldozing activity which occurred.

In 2007, Cottage 35, which was constructed in the mid 1960s and had been abandoned since before the 2003 fires, was demolished.

Schoolhouse history

The earliest school in the area was established to the north of the Uriarra Station in 1897, in an old church building. This school closed in 1907 before being reopened ten years later. However, the school again closed in 1920.

In 1934 a subsidised school was opened and the Commonwealth Educational Department agreed to establish a provisional school in the area in 1936. Initially, a converted cottage on Uriarra Road was used for this purpose.

However, a new school was built at the Uriarra Forestry Settlement in 1937, with 16 students enrolled. In 1940 the school became a public school. By the 1960s student numbers had increased to 40 and a second teacher was employed. A second school building was constructed in 1969 (author unknown, 2004: 39).

The original 1937 building was used as the Uriarra pre-school from this time. The school closed in 2000 when student numbers dropped to eight.

Physical Description

The Uriarra Settlement precinct today consists predominantly of a number of modern homes, constructed since 2003, with six houses, two school buildings, tennis court and parkland remaining from the Forestry Settlement, mostly dating from the 1950s and 1960s. The area retains a rural village character through the street layout and design. The existing homes and other features from the time of the Forestry Settlement provide a historical context and character for the area.

Features which remain at the Uriarra Settlement are:

- Cottage 1 –constructed 1964-65.
- Cottage 2 –constructed in 1953.
- Cottage 29 – constructed in 1964.
- Cottage 31 – constructed in the mid-1960s

Statement of Reasons

- Cottage 34 – constructed in the mid-1960s.
- Cottage 36 – constructed in the mid-1960s.
- School building and yard – old school house was built in 1937. Newer school constructed in 1969.
- Roads – three sealed bitumen roads connecting the various parts of the settlement. These roads have been in existence since at least 1948.
- Sports oval. Date unknown.
- Tennis courts – dating to at least 1952.
- Parkland

These features are interspersed throughout the village, with two areas of key concentration within the Uriarra Settlement. The predominant area is near the school on Kelvin Street, Ray Donnelly Street and Jim Bradley Crescent, containing the majority of these features. Modern homes are interspersed between and around these features. Two houses sit outside of this area, in close proximity to one another to the north-western end of Jim Bradley Crescent, near the western entrance to the village. Again, modern homes are situated between and around these features.

The forestry buildings are predominantly weatherboard with hipped and gable tiled roof forms.

The 1937 schoolhouse building is typical of small rural schoolhouses from the early twentieth century. It is constructed of weatherboard, with a brick chimney and large pane sash windows, a hipped roof clad in corrugated iron and overhanging eaves. The building sits on stump footings to one side. The schoolhouse building contributes a discrete and picturesque element of historic character to the village, set back from the road.

Since the 2003 bushfires, the integrity and intactness of the precinct as a forestry settlement has become low, given the sparse number of features dating from the forestry settlement, the large number of modern homes, and the relatively late date of construction of those structures that do survive from the forestry settlement period.

Relocated original forestry building

One of the original Uriarra Forestry Settlement huts was relocated in 1929 to the Callum Brae Precinct, Symonston and is entered in the ACT Heritage Register as part of the citation for that place.

The Uriarra forestry hut at Callum Brae is a single-roomed weatherboard structure located at the rear of the house. It has a corrugated iron gable roof and a timber floor. It was originally used as a bedroom and later as a playroom at Callum Brae.

Images taken 17 December 2010



Cottage 1 on RHS



Cottage 2



Cottage 29



Cottage 31



Cottage 34



Cottage 36



1937 school building



1969 school building to front.
1937 school building behind



Uriarra Village landscape



Aerial image of the Uriarra settlement post 2003 bushfires. Image taken from google Earth 17 December 2010

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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 the Uriarra Forestry Settlement, Coree, the Council considered:

- The material identified under the heading 'References', above; and
- A site visit undertaken by Heritage Unit staff on 17 December 2010.

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

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*

Heritage Council assessment:

The place does not show a high degree of technical or creative achievement and therefore does not meet this criterion.

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

Heritage Council assessment:

The place does not exhibit outstanding design or aesthetic qualities and therefore does not meet this criterion.

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*

Heritage Council assessment:

The Uriarra Forestry Settlement was a component of a distinctive way of life that is no longer practiced. The distinctive way of life was that of the practice of forestry settlements in the early to mid twentieth century.

Forestry settlements are independent villages that provide permanent residences in isolated locations for Forestry workers and their families. Such settlements were common when road connections were basic, communications were poor, and the forest industry was distant to urban areas. The provision of job-tied housing and services for workers helped to ensure a stable workforce for the industry, and also ensured fire surveillance during the summer months..

The fact that there are few remaining features of the early settlement, coupled with the predominant housing stock today being of modern character, make it difficult to understand the way of life of the forestry settlement as it operated in the early to mid twentieth century. As such, the Uriarra Forestry Settlement cannot be considered to be ‘important as evidence’ of this way of life and does not meet this criterion.

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*

Heritage Council assessment:

No information has been provided to suggest that the Uriarra Forestry Settlement is highly valued by the community or a cultural group.

The Uriarra Forestry Settlement cannot be assessed in relation to this criterion.

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

Heritage Council assessment:

This criterion is not applicable.

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

Heritage Council assessment:

The Uriarra Forestry Settlement is of the kind of place of a twentieth century forestry settlement.

However, it is considered now to be a poor example of its kind, due to the limited number of features and structures remaining from this period of settlement and the intrusion of a large number of modern homes. It therefore follows that it can not be considered to be a ‘rare or unique’ example in this context.

In comparison with the other three forestry settlements established in the ACT in the twentieth century, Uriarra has the highest level of intactness and integrity. However, in saying this, to place perspective on the level of integrity, there are no built remains at Pierce’s Creek, one ruin at Kowen, and very few remains at Stromlo.

The level of integrity of the Uriarra Forestry Settlement is greater than these other forestry settlements, but is also so low (with very few buildings remaining, and the predominant character of the village today being of modern homes), that it would be a misrepresentation of this criterion to consider it as meeting the criterion as a rare or unique example in its comparative intactness.

The Uriarra Forestry Settlement does not meet this criterion.

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

Heritage Council assessment:

The Uriarra Forestry Settlement is of the kind of place of a twentieth century forestry settlement.

The main characteristics of this kind of place include a rural village character with housing stock dating throughout the period of settlement including its early origins; community facilities such as school, parkland, sporting facilities, and other amenities; twentieth century planning layout.

The Uriarra Forestry Settlement demonstrates many of these characteristics.

However, a crucial characteristic in demonstrating the twentieth century forestry settlements is the ability to demonstrate the early origins and initial settlement phase. As all housing stock at the Uriarra Forestry Settlement dates from the 1950s and 1960s, it does not demonstrate the main characteristics of this kind of place.

Further, given the low level of integrity of the forestry settlement, and today's predominant character as a modern settlement, the Uriarra Forestry Settlement cannot be considered a 'notable example' of this kind of place.

The Uriarra Forestry Settlement does not meet this criterion.

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

Heritage Council assessment:

The Uriarra Forestry Settlement has an association with a cultural phase of local ACT history.

The cultural phase is that of the establishment of Forestry Settlements and the commercial harvesting of timber within the ACT soon after the establishment of the Federal Capital Territory.

The Uriarra Forestry Settlement has played a pivotal role within this cultural phase since its establishment in 1928, early in the history of the Federal Capital Territory and nation's capital.

However, the limited remains dating from the early settlement makes it difficult to read and understand the role which the settlement played in the early forestry industry in the ACT.

The Uriarra Forestry Settlement does not meet this criterion.

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

Heritage Council assessment:

This criterion is not applicable.

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*

Heritage Council assessment:

Given the extent of damage of the 2003 bushfires, the subsequent bull-dozing and clearing of the land, and the later redevelopment of the area, it is unlikely that the Uriarra Forestry Settlement will be able to provide information that will contribute significantly to a wider understanding of the natural or cultural history of the ACT.

The Uriarra Forestry Settlement 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

Heritage Council assessment:

This criterion is not applicable.

Criterion (l) 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*

Heritage Council assessment:

This criterion is not applicable.

Conclusion

The Uriarra Forestry Settlement today retains its original layout and comprises a limited number of structures dating primarily from the 1950s and 1960s.

Given the limited number of extant structures from the forestry settlement period, the 1950s and 1960s construction dates of the remaining buildings from the forestry settlement, and the predominant character of the area today as modern development, the Uriarra Forestry Settlement does not demonstrate an easily understandable example of the ACT's forestry industry and its workers and their family's way of life.

The Uriarra Forestry Settlement has a low level of intactness and integrity, rendering it unable to meet any of the criteria of the *Heritage Act 2004*.

While the place is below the threshold of significance as a whole to satisfy the Register criteria, the fragments of the settlement, particularly the street layout and the schoolhouse, indicate the place's history, and should be retained and the place's history interpreted.

This Statement of Reasons provides an assessment of the Uriarra Forestry Settlement precinct and finds that the precinct does not meet any of the criteria of the *Heritage Act 2004*.

Gerhard Zatschler (Secretary)
ACT Heritage Council

10 March 2011