



ACT Heritage Council

## STATEMENT OF REASONS

### DECISION REGARDING THE INCLUSION OF SECTION 47 TURNER IN AN INTERIM HERITAGE PLACES REGISTER

#### Background

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Section 47 Turner was nominated for inclusion to an interim Heritage Place Register by a resident of Section 47 (Mr CJ Colvin) in a detailed submission dated 1/9/00.

All Section 47 lessees and Planning and Land Management (PALM) were subsequently advised of the nomination. PALM advised that they had commenced a process to develop a Section Master Plan for Section 47 Turner.

The Heritage Council received three responses to the nomination from lessees; one in support and two opposing the nomination. One of the objectors provided further historical background after reviewing the original nomination.

The ACT Heritage Council discussed the nomination for Section 47 Turner at its meeting of 16 November 2000, following a walking tour of Section 47.

#### Assessment

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The Council's assessment against the criteria specified in Schedule 2 of the *Land (Planning and Environment) Act 1991* follows:

In assessing the nomination for Section 47 Turner the Heritage Council considered:

- the original documentary evidence supplied by the nominee;
- supplementary documentary evidence supplied by commentators;
- the physical evidence and surrounding context as ascertained from the walking tour, and
- experience and knowledge gained by Council through the listing and management of the existing 12 residential precincts within the ACT.

Criterion (i) *a place which demonstrates a high degree of technical and/or creative achievement by showing qualities of innovation or departure or representing a new achievement of its time;*

Criterion (ii) *a place which exhibits outstanding design or aesthetic qualities valued by the community or a cultural group;*

The dwellings are standard Department of the Interior designs, predominantly red face brick with hipped roofs forms, typical of designs from the late 30's – 50's. The designs reflect a unity of style, detailing and material however they are not acknowledged as particularly innovative or

of aesthetic value. For example, the houses lack the acknowledged aesthetic value of the rendered and even timber Federal Capital Commission designs from the 1920's. Whilst appreciation may increase over time at present the built form is of negligible heritage value.

The basic streetscape and landscape components are generally valued including the wide grassed verges and mature street trees and the very few remnant hedges.

*Criterion (iii) a place which demonstrates a distinctive way of life, taste, tradition, religion, land use, custom, process, design or function which is no longer practised, is in danger or being lost, or is of exceptional interest;*

*Criterion (v) a place which is the only known or only comparatively intact example of its type;*

The area constitutes a small scale example of post-WWII residential development within inner Canberra and is contemporaneous with areas of Dickson, Ainslie, Campbell, Griffith, Red Hill, Deakin and Yarralumla. The houses were built to accommodate public servants. Post WWII saw the relocation and expansion of government departments in Canberra and hence the need for additional public servants and housing in which to accommodate them.

The planning practices of utilising simple architectural designs in sets of government housing plans, introducing hedge row planting to delineate the public from the private domain, eliminating front fences, incorporating internal public reserves and introducing wide verges and street trees are common themes in garden city planning that are evident across much of Canberra today.

Section 47 does demonstrate some attributes of early Garden City planning in a minor manner including:

- Street layout around the small central parks on Holder Street;
- Ordered arrangement of original buildings and variations to front setbacks to create visual interest;
- Detached dwellings centrally located on blocks to facilitate a generous landscape setting for each dwelling;
- Dwellings on corner blocks angled to face the intersection point;
- Garages set to the rear of the property;
- Modest verges and street trees, and
- Unity of building design and materials.

However the ability of the Section to demonstrate town planning concepts is compromised by:

- The small size of the area;
- The lack of delineation to adjoining residential areas and therefore Section 47 does not appear as a distinct entity;
- The inclusion of only a single side of any street limits the potential streetscape value of the Section;
- The level of change to the original dwellings and garages, and
- The physical reality of the central parks being poorly landscaped and otherwise dysfunctional space not realising the aesthetic of the symmetrical plan.

The nominator states that 'the houses were built for a particular socio-economic group at the time' and provides a list of original residents and their occupations, stating that this was a continuation of the policy adopted earlier in the development of Reid and Braddon. This would require further substantiation and would not alone be sufficient to meet the threshold for inclusion in the Register.

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

The Council received a small number of mixed responses from residents. The small area of the Section and the lack of the sense of a distinct entity restricts the potential for the community to identify Section 47 as having a 'sense of place'. Furthermore there is no evidence at present that the area is valued to any extent by the wider Canberra community.

Criterion (vi) *a place which is a notable example of a class of natural or cultural places or landscapes and which demonstrates the principal characteristics of that class;*

Criterion (vi) *a place which has strong or special associations with a person, group, event, development or cultural phase which played a significant part in local or national history.*

The nominator suggests that the houses within Section 47 clearly demonstrate post-war austerity measures however the physical evidence does not support this claim as the houses are of solid masonry construction rather than from fibro, steel or recycled materials.

Examples of post war austerity housing in Canberra are found in the Tocumwal Precinct in O'Connor. In this precinct the government's solution to the critical housing shortage in Canberra at the time was to relocate and re-erect fibro cottages which were originally constructed at Tocumwal in NSW for the US Army Air Corps.

Another example is the Beaufort Steel House in Ainslie which is a rare prototype of a pre-fabricated steel house that was intended for mass production. It is significant as an example of how the war industry (in this case the Department of Aircraft Production) was restructured to accommodate the post war housing shortage. The house is very rare and this is the only example built in the ACT.

The nominator notes associative values linked to the street planting being consistent with the Lindsay Pryor's policies and the name of suburb originating from one of the Founders of the Constitution, a past Premier of Victoria and Treasurer in the first Commonwealth Government. Again these are minor associative values and are not sufficient to meet the threshold for inclusion in a Register.

Criterion (ix) *a place which is a significant habitat or locality for the life cycle of native species; for rare, endangered or uncommon species; for species at the limits of their natural range; or for district occurrences of species;*

Criterion (x) *a place which exhibits unusual richness, diversity or significant transitions of flora, fauna or natural landscapes and their elements;*

Criterion (xi) *a place which demonstrates a likelihood of providing information which will contribute significantly to a wider understanding of natural or cultural history, by virtue of its use as a research site, teaching site, type locality or benchmark site.*

Section 47 Turner has no demonstrated values under these criteria.

## **Conclusion**

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The ACT Heritage Council finds that Section 47 Turner is of insufficient heritage value to warrant inclusion in an interim Heritage Places Register.

## **Recommendation**

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The Council recommends that Planning and Land Management be advised to consider the following minor heritage values in the preparation of the Master Plan for Section 47 Turner:

- Broad landscaped verges and street trees;
- Corner treatment of blocks and built form with houses articulated across the corner;
- Consistency of materials, and
- Articulation of built form within the streetscape.

The Council considers that Section 47 Turner is part of post-war Canberra development and that there are similar inner city contemporary areas which appear to be relatively intact but for which no contextual studies have been undertaken to identify the relative heritage value of these areas within the history of the development of Canberra.

Council therefore recommends that a study be undertaken to analyse the wider context of contemporary Post-war City residential development and identify any heritage values.

It is anticipated that this study will be undertaken in the second half of 2001.

  
Sandy Blair  
**SECRETARY**  
**ACT HERITAGE COUNCIL**

7 July 2001