



## ACT Heritage Council

### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

#### **MARGARET TIMPSON PARK (Block 42 Section 54, Belconnen)**

At its meeting of 7 November 2013 the ACT Heritage Council decided that Margaret Timpson Park (the Park) was not eligible for provisional registration. The information contained in this report was considered by the ACT Heritage Council in assessing the nomination for Margaret Timpson Park against the heritage significance criteria outlined in s10 of the *Heritage Act 2004*.

### HISTORY

The ACT has five main town parks (ACT, 2013). City Hill and Glebe Park are currently the only town parks on the ACT Heritage Register. City Hill, established as a part of the Federal Capital Territory with planting from 1921, was an important part of Walter Burley Griffin's plan for the ACT as an axial point for radiating avenues and vistas; it is considered to be a landmark along the main vehicular corridor in the Capital and has been the site of royal visits and important events in the history of the ACT. Glebe Park was established in the 1870s as a private garden which later became a park; it has formed a focal point for many events in the city. The other town parks, established towards the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century by the National Capital Development Commission (NCDC) during a period of rapid development, are Woden Town Park (or Arabanoo Park), Tuggeranong Town Park and Margaret Timpson Park. Each of these parks was developed in the 1980s as a part of the NCDC's rapid expansion of the ACT from 1958 to 1989. During this time the population grew from 40,000 to 300,000 people. To provide for the influx of new residents they instituted a decentralised system of town centres with shopping facilities, government departments, public transport hubs and parks. The parks were considered important for the well-being of the people who lived and worked around the town centres.

Margaret Timpson Park was developed in 1984 as a way to connect the surrounding buildings with the town centre (Gray, 1997). It was originally known as the "Belconnen Town Park" with the design, "a result of the efforts and input from ACT Landscape (now Totalcare), [Lester and Firth Associates] LFA, Malcolm Munro and Associates and the National Capital Development Corporation (NCDC) [*sic*]" (p.30 Olds, 1999) and was originally envisaged as a significantly larger green space until the proposed shopping mall, today Westfield Belconnen, was moved from on top of the nearby ridge to the low flat ground of its current position, encroaching on the proposed park site (Olds, 1999). The design of the Park underwent several changes and revisions with many people and organisations altering it. The current form of the Park resulted in work commissioned by the ACT Planning Authority and carried out during 1995 which involved the addition of the two grassed pyramidal mounds, turfing and tree planting, paving of paths, additional lighting, drainage, irrigation, painting of existing features (e.g. the pergolas and existing lighting), granite gravel surface treatment under the Tumbling Cubes sculpture and other minor alterations.

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION – MARGARET TIMPSON PARK, BELCONNEN

The Park is a late addition to the ACT compared against other parks which have been developed to their current state as places of passive recreation on the ACT Heritage Register. Glebe Park was established during the 1870s, and Weston Park was established in 1914, Haig Park and Telopea Park in the early 1920s, with John Knight Memorial Park being established in the late 1960s and early 1970s, and developed to its current state in the 1980s. The final development of John Knight Memorial Park is contemporary with Margaret Timpson Park and serves the same area, but the former is significantly larger and has been landscaped with a variety of themed areas to appeal to a broad range of users.

The Park was dedicated to Margaret Timpson, an important campaigner for women's issues, in 1994, the year after her death. Margaret Timpson was a statistician with the Australian Bureau of Statistics, business owner, sportsperson, President of the Australian Federation of Business and Professional Women, and member of the National Women's Consultative Council. She was particularly active in social statistics and was able to use her role to highlight issues with employment and marginalised groups. Margaret Timpson was the inaugural ACT Women of the Year in 1990 and was recognised as a Member of the General Division of the Order of Australia in 1991. (ACT 1993; TAMS, 2013)

A visitor survey conducted in 1997 by Market Attitude Research Services, and an informal survey for the book *Park Voices* in 1999, found that the park is not well known and that the majority of its users were just passing through while the rest lived or worked in the surrounding area and would go to the Park during their lunchtime to get outside. This suggests that the Park is used due to it being in a convenient location, but that it is not valued or recognised in, and of, itself.

The Park was noted in the 2001 Belconnen Town Centre Master Plan (Urban Projects, Planning and Land Management) as needing upgrading to encourage more use and higher visitation rates. Barbara Olds (in Deller-Evens, 1999) notes that the Park is incomplete and that plans for water features, lighting and public artworks were never completed.

A forward planning study by Redbox Design Group was commissioned by Parks and Places, Department of Urban Services in 2007. The study identified several key areas needing improvement in the park including lighting, drainage, access, facilities and signage. The public consultation conducted during the study reinforced the findings of the earlier visitor survey (Market Attitude Research Services, 1997) that the park was mostly used as a thoroughfare and was generally valued due to its proximity to workplaces. While the reasons people visit the park may have changed in the meantime, no evidence has been supplied on contemporary attitudes.

*Tumbling Cubes* by Bert Flugelman was commissioned by the NCDC in 1978 and placed outside the Cameron Offices in Belconnen. It was then moved to the Belconnen Library and then into storage. It was damaged as a result of these moves with several welds opening and water getting in. It was repaired before being placed in its current position in the Park contrary to the artist's intent. Flugelman was disappointed with the outcome, saying that it was "put in the worst possible spot. I wanted it destroyed, taken away...I haven't got the energy or anger to pursue it." (Pinson, 2008: p.57)

### **Description**

The Park is a formal design with several pathways, planter boxes, grassed areas, seating and artwork (Gray, 1997). It has the unusual features of six mature Canary Island Date Palms and two pyramidal grass mounds. Original designs had planned for water feature amongst the palms, but this has yet to be installed. (Olds, 1999)

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION – MARGARET TIMPSON PARK, BELCONNEN

The Park is on the corner of Benjamin Way and Chandler Street and covers an area of 1.14ha. The main entrance is on the northwest corner, which is where the entrance arch and the artwork by Bert Flugelman are located. The Park is open to the north and west and bounded by buildings to the east and south, with entrances in the southeast corner and to the west along the central axis. The Park is dissected with an east-west path and there are paths surrounding the perimeter of the park. Each half has a 15x15m pyramidal grass mound on the western side. There are six Canary Island Date Palms in the centre of the park and a number of trees as well as shrubs in planter boxes surrounding the park. The central space of the Park, ~0.5ha, is manicured grass.

### Physical condition and integrity

The Park is well tended and all of the plantings appear to be in good condition.

A shade sail has been added to the centre of the Park and the western side of the Park has been opened up to allow access, but otherwise there appears to be no significant alterations to the design of the Park.

### Plan



**Image 1.** Margaret Timpson Park nomination boundary.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION – MARGARET TIMPSON PARK, BELCONNEN

Images



**Image 2.** Main entrance with *Tumbling Cubes*. (ACT Heritage Unit, 2013)



**Image 4.** Northern pergola (ACT Heritage Unit, 2013)



**Image 3.** Central area featuring palms and grass pyramids. (ACT Heritage Unit, 2013)



**Image 5.** Overview from shopping centre. (ACT Heritage Unit, 2013)

## References

ACT (1993). Parliamentary Debates. Legislative Assembly. 23 November 1993.

ACT (2013) *Urban Parks*. [http://www.tams.act.gov.au/parks-recreation/parks\\_and\\_reserves/urban\\_parks](http://www.tams.act.gov.au/parks-recreation/parks_and_reserves/urban_parks) last accessed 2 September 2013.

ACT Heritage Council, ACT Heritage Register Entry, (Registered), Glebe Park, City.

ACT Heritage Council, ACT Heritage Register Entry, (Registered), Haig Park, Braddon and Turner.

ACT Heritage Council, ACT Heritage Register Entry, (Registered), John Knight Memorial Park, Belconnen.

ACT Heritage Council, ACT Heritage Register Entry, (Registered), Telopea Park, Barton.

ACT Heritage Council, ACT Heritage Register Entry, (Registered), Westbourne Woods, Yarralumla.

ACT Heritage Council, ACT Heritage Register Entry, (Registered), Weston Park, Yarralumla.

Belconnen Community Council (2013) *Media Release: Belconnen Community Council invites relocation of merry-go-round to its town centre*. <http://belcouncil.org.au/sites/all/files/MR%2020130705.pdf> last accessed 15/07/2013.

Ed. Deller-Evans, K. (1999) *Park Voices: voices from the community*. Ginninderra Press, Charnwood, A.C.T.

Gray, John & Canberra Urban Parks and Places (1997). *Statements on the historical & cultural background of selected urban parks in Canberra*. The Author, Canberra.

Olds, B (1999) History from 1984 to now. in Ed. Deller-Evans, K. *Park Voices: voices from the community*. Ginninderra Press, Charnwood, A.C.T. pp.30-33.

Pinson, P. (2008). *Flugelman*. Watermark Press, Boorowa, N.S.W.

Redbox Design Group (2006) *Margaret Timpson Park: preliminary sketch plan report*. Parkes and Places, Department of Urban Services, Canberra.

TAMS (2013) *Margaret Timpson Town Park*. [http://www.tams.act.gov.au/parks-recreation/parks\\_and\\_reserves/urban\\_parks/town\\_parks/margaret\\_timpson\\_town\\_park](http://www.tams.act.gov.au/parks-recreation/parks_and_reserves/urban_parks/town_parks/margaret_timpson_town_park) last accessed 15/07/2013.

Territory Plan,  
[http://www.actpla.act.gov.au/tools\\_resources/legislation\\_plans\\_registers/plans/territory\\_plan](http://www.actpla.act.gov.au/tools_resources/legislation_plans_registers/plans/territory_plan)

Urban Projects, Planning and Land Management. (2001) *Belconnen Town Centre Master Plan*. [http://www.actpla.act.gov.au/tools\\_resources/legislation\\_plans\\_registers/plans/master\\_plans/belconnen\\_town\\_centre2](http://www.actpla.act.gov.au/tools_resources/legislation_plans_registers/plans/master_plans/belconnen_town_centre2) last accesses 15/07/2013.