

Heritage (Decision about Provisional Registration of Margaret Timpson Park, Belconnen) Notice 2013

Notifiable Instrument NI2013–504

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 Margaret Timpson Park, Belconnen) Notice 2013*.

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 Margaret Timpson Park, Belconnen to the ACT Heritage Register.

Jennifer O'Connell
A/g Secretary (as delegate for)
ACT Heritage Council
7 November 2013



ACT Heritage Council

STATEMENT OF REASONS

DECISION NOT TO PROVISIONALLY REGISTER MARGARET TIMPSON PARK (Block 42 Section 54, Belconnen) IN THE ACT HERITAGE REGISTER

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

Background

Margaret Timpson Park, Belconnen, (the Park) was nominated to the ACT Heritage Register on 11 December 2002.

The Park was opened in 1984 and in 1994 dedicated to Margaret Timpson, an important figure for women's issues in the ACT.

The Park is designed as an open green space to link the surrounding buildings and is listed as Public Land Urban Open Space in the Territory Plan.

The site was subject to an inspection by the ACT Heritage Unit on 24 July 2013.

The ACT Heritage Council (the Council) discussed the nomination of the Park at its meeting of 7 November 2013.

Assessment

In assessing the nomination for Margaret Timpson Park, Belconnen, the Council considered:

- the original nomination and documentary evidence supplied by the nominator;
- information provided by a site inspection in July 2013 by the ACT Heritage Unit;
- the report by the ACT Heritage Unit titled, *Background Information Margaret Timpson Park*, November 2013, containing photographs and information on history, description, condition and integrity; and
- experience and knowledge gained by the Council through the listing of six existing parks within the ACT (City Hill, Glebe Park, Telopea Park, Haig Park, John Knight Memorial Park, and Weston Park), in various ways comparable to Margaret Timpson Park (see references in *Background Information Margaret Timpson Park*, November 2013).

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 Margaret Timpson Park*, November 2013. 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*

Margaret Timpson Park, Belconnen, does not meet this criterion.

The Park is an expression of ‘modernism’ from the 1980s and 1990s featuring strong geometric designs, concrete landscaping and metal pergolas with piers and decorative elements. The Park was designed by Rex Pepper from Lester and Firth Associates (LFA) with subsequent changes from ACT Landscape, Malcolm Munro & Associates and the National Capital Development Commission (NCDC), which resulted in a compromised design. The layout and features are formal and symmetrical with six Canary Island Date Palms flanked by two pyramidal grass mounds and bordered by mixed plantings of exotic and native trees and shrubs. Whilst the planting and design is interesting, the Council does not consider that it demonstrates a high degree of technical or creative achievement because of the compromised design lacking numerous intended features, and as it contains elements that are common to most city parks, such as manicured grass, hard surface walkways, shade trees, boxed plantings, landscaping and public artworks.

Whilst the Park does include a sculpture by a notable artist, *Tumbling Cubes* by Bert Flugelman, the Council does not consider that its inclusion in the Park demonstrates a high degree of technical or creative achievement. The sculpture was moved from its original location at the Cameron Offices in Belconnen where it was commissioned and designed to be. It was subsequently moved to the Belconnen Library and then into storage when it was finally placed at the Park in a context contrary to the artist’s intent. The final placement of the work at Margaret Timpson Park was considered by Flugelman to be the “worst possible place”, leading the artist to publically reject the work and calling for it to be destroyed.

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

Margaret Timpson Park, Belconnen, does not meet this criterion.

The Park is mainly used due to its convenient location amongst businesses, offices and public services. Whilst the Park provides an opportunity for passive recreation in an urban area, there is no clear evidence that it is highly valued by the wider ACT community or a cultural group for exhibiting outstanding design or aesthetic qualities.

Whilst the Park does include a sculpture by a notable artist, *Tumbling Cubes* by Bert Flugelman, the work is not valued by the artist and there is no evidence to suggest that the community or a cultural group value it for outstanding design or aesthetic qualities.

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*

Margaret Timpson Park, Belconnen, does not meet this criterion.

The Park is not 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.

Urban parks are a common feature in the ACT which has over one thousand places listed as Urban Open Space. The Park is designed as an open green space to link the surrounding buildings and is listed as Public Land Urban Open Space in the Territory Plan, and as such it is not considered to be in danger of being lost.

Modernist park designs, such as Margaret Timpson Park, are a common feature of new and relatively recent landscape projects. The Park, in particular, cannot be considered to be of exceptional interest as many features of the design were never fully realised and it is a compromised example.

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*

Margaret Timpson Park, Belconnen, does not meet this criterion.

There is no evidence to suggest that the Park is highly valued by the community or a cultural group for reasons of strong or special religious, spiritual, cultural, educational or social associations. Whilst the Park is named after an important campaigner for women's issues, Margaret Timpson's personal connection to the Park is unknown. There is also no evidence the naming of the park resulted from, or has generated, strong or special associations for the ACT community or a cultural group. Also, the Park may provide an opportunity for passive recreation in an urban area, but the evidence suggests that it is not highly valued by the community.

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

This criterion does not apply to Margaret Timpson Park, Belconnen.

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

Margaret Timpson Park, Belconnen, does not meet this criterion.

The Park is not a rare or unique example of its kind, an urban or town park, or is rare or unique in its comparative intactness. The Park was created as part of the rapid expansion of the ACT under the NCDC. It is one of the town parks, including Woden and Tuggeranong Town Parks, that was included in the development of the ACT's decentralised town centre system. Inasmuch as the park can be called a unique design, the same can be said of any park in the ACT and the Council considers that it does not show any qualities to a greater extent than other parks in urban areas, such examples already on the Register include Glebe Park, Telopea Park, Haig Park or the nearby John Knight Memorial Park. These parks provide areas of passive recreation for the community

through landscaped grounds consisting of grassed areas and mixed planting of native and exotic trees and shrubs. Glebe Park, Telopea Park and Haig Park are all associated with the early stages of development of the ACT, and have a wide variety of mature exotic and native trees planted in formal and informal areas. 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 for a variety of themed areas to appeal to a broad range of users. Even in the most narrow sense of the Park as a kind being a ‘modernist urban park design’ it could not be considered an intact example as many features of the design were never fully realised, nor is there any evidence that the Park is an historically important example of its kind.

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

Margaret Timpson Park, Belconnen, does not meet this criterion.

The Park is not a notable example of a kind of place, an urban or town park, or object that demonstrates the main characteristics of that kind. Whilst the Park’s geometric features and palms are unusual, the Council considers that it is not a strong theme that may make it notable, nor is there any evidence that this is an important example of an urban or town park. The Park’s compromised modernist urban park design is not considered to be a particularly fine or pivotal example and is not of sufficient value to justify registration.

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

Margaret Timpson Park, Belconnen, does not meet this criterion.

There is insufficient evidence to suggest that the Park has strong or special associations with a person, group, event, development or cultural phase in local or national history. Whilst Margaret Timpson was an important figure in the ACT as a campaigner for women’s issues, her association with the Park is considered by the Council to be tenuous; although the Park is named after her there is no evidence to suggest that she personally had a significant association with the Park, or that the naming of the park has generated such an association. This can be juxtaposed against the nearby John Knight Memorial Park, the namesake of which was largely responsible for establishing the park and preserving the Lake Ginninderra foreshore area in which it is sited.

The park was developed as a part of the Belconnen Town Centre during the rapid expansion of the ACT under the NCDC that saw the population grow from 40,000 in 1958 to 300,000 in 1989. While this was a significant period in the development of the ACT, the Council considers that the Park does not have a strong or special association with this phase in local history because this was considered to be standard practise at the time and it was not until the mid-1990s that the Park was developed to its current state.

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

Margaret Timpson Park, Belconnen, does not meet this criterion.

The Park is not significant for understanding the evolution of natural landscapes. The Park does not represent a natural landscape and whilst the Canary Island Date Palms may be uncommon in the ACT, there is no evidence that they have, or are likely to, provide information that has made, or will make, a significant contribution to our understanding of natural or cultural heritage in the ACT.

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*

Margaret Timpson Park, Belconnen, does not meet this criterion.

The Park has not provided, or is not 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, teaching site, type locality or benchmark site. The compromised design of the park is not of sufficient interest to justify its importance as a research or teaching site. Additionally, whilst the Canary Island Date Palms may be unusual in the ACT, it is considered that any information they may provide is unlikely to be of importance to the natural or cultural history of the ACT.

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

Margaret Timpson Park, Belconnen, does not meet this criterion.

The Park does not provide evidence that it exhibits unusual richness, diversity or significant transitions of flora, fauna or natural landscapes and their elements. Whilst Canary Island Date Palms may be uncommon in the ACT, the Council does not consider six examples of such to demonstrate a high enough richness or diversity of flora to meet this criterion. Also, there is no evidence that the place exhibits any richness, diversity or transitions of fauna, and as a built landscape, it does not show any evidence of natural landscapes.

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***

Margaret Timpson Park, Belconnen, does not meet this criterion.

There is no evidence to suggest that the Park, as a place, is a significant ecological community, habitat or locality for the life cycle of: native species; rare, threatened or uncommon species; species at the limits of their natural range; or distinct occurrences of species. There is no evidence that the plantings are part of a habitat for species that apply to this criterion.

Conclusion

Margaret Timpson Park is a welcome green space in an urban centre and is named after a notable person who campaigned for women's issues; however, the Park does not meet the criteria for inclusion in the ACT Heritage Register under the *Heritage Act 2004*.

The Park was designed by Rex Pepper from LFA with subsequent changes from ACT Landscape, Malcolm Munro & Associates and the NCDC, resulting in a compromised design. It was designed for passive recreation and contains elements that are common to most city parks, such as manicured grass, seating, thoroughfares and planting. The Park contains six Canary Island Date Palms, but this small collection of non-native plants, while interesting, is not considered to be outstanding. The unusual non-native palms and the common plantings throughout the Park are not sufficient to fulfil the criteria relating to flora and fauna, and the Park's built landscaping prohibits it from inclusion in criteria relating to natural landscapes. The use of public art in parks is another common feature used in the Park, however the inclusion of the sculpture *Tumbling Cubes* is a misguided attempt at placing an object contrary to its original artistic intent. As a result of the design and features of the Park not being outstanding, they are also considered to be unlikely to provide information that will contribute significantly to a wider understanding of the natural or cultural history of the ACT.

While the above elements are somewhat complimentary to each other and are an interesting design, there is no evidence that the Park, or any particular feature, is highly valued by the wider ACT community. It was also noted that the majority of visitors to the Park were passing through or were using it due to its convenient location, with no evidence that the Park was valued above any other green space.

Margaret Timpson Park is a fine example of the ACT's over 1,000 Public Land Urban Open Spaces, but is not considered to be rare or notable when compared against such examples as City Hill, Glebe Park, Telopea Park, Haig Park, John Knight Memorial Park, and Weston Park. Margaret Timpson Park does not compare favourably against these examples in terms of size, design or history. It is a relatively young park whose only contribution to the surrounding landscape is to provide a convenient green space for passive recreation to those who work nearby.

The namesake of Margaret Timpson Park was a prominent person who campaigned for women's issues. Margaret Timpson worked in the nearby Australian Bureau of Statistics building and used her position and statistical skills to highlight gender inequalities in the Australian Public Service. Margaret Timpson was a statistician, business owner, sportsperson, member of the National Women's Consultative Council, and President of the Australian Federation of Business and Professional Women. She was honoured in 1990 as the inaugural ACT Women of the Year and in 1991 as a Member of the General Division of the Order of Australia. The Council recognises the contribution Margaret Timpson has had in the ACT, but was not able to establish a strong link between her and the park that is named after her.

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