

Australian Capital Territory

Heritage (Decision about Registration of Flynn Primary School, Pre School, Health Centre and relevant parts of George Simpson Park) Notice 2010 (No 1)

Notifiable Instrument NI2010–330

made under the

Heritage Act 2004 s42 Notice of decision about Registration

1. Name of instrument

This instrument is the Heritage (*Decision about Registration of Flynn Primary School, Pre School, Health Centre and relevant parts of George Simpson Park*) Notice 2010 (No 1).

2. Commencement

This instrument commences on the day after notification.

3. Notice of Decision

Pursuant to Section 40 of the *Heritage Act 2004* the ACT Heritage Council has decided not to register *Flynn Primary School, Pre School, Health Centre and relevant parts of George Simpson Park*.

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

24 June 2010



ACT Heritage Council

STATEMENT OF REASONS

DECISION REGARDING THE INCLUSION OF FLYNN PRIMARY SCHOOL, PRE SCHOOL and HEALTH CENTRE (BLOCK 7, SECTION 18, FLYNN) and relevant parts of GEORGE SIMPSON PARK (BLOCK 6, SECTION 18) IN THE ACT HERITAGE REGISTER

Background

The former Flynn Primary School, Pre School, Health Centre (Block 7, Section 18, Flynn) and relevant parts of George Simpson Park (Block 6, Section 18, Flynn) were nominated to the ACT Heritage Register on 21 December 2007, by the John Flynn Community Group.

At the time of Flynn's construction in 1971, the Commonwealth Department of Education and Science was responsible for ACT education. As was standard practice, the Department developed an educational brief for the school which was provided to the National Capital Development Commission, who in turn prepared an architectural brief for the design and construction of the building,

Architect Enrico Taglietti designed the school in the Late Twentieth Century Organic Style of architecture. Flynn Primary School was completed in 1972 with semi open planned classrooms, reflecting the educational philosophy at that time, whereby schools were planned with influence from the United States concepts of large rooms with 2-3 teachers 'team teaching' several classes of children.

The School was further extended in 1976 and the east wing rebuilt in 2005 following a fire. This later addition was overseen by Enrico Taglietti consistent with the original style of the building.

Flynn Primary School was closed in December 2006 and remains vacant.

In 2008 the Australian Institute of Architects (ACT Chapter) received ACT Heritage Grant funding to undertake a comparative assessment of the four schools designed by Enrico Taglietti in the ACT. The assessment found that whilst Gowrie and Latham Primary Schools did not meet the threshold

GPO Box 158 Canberra ACT 2601

heritage@act.gov.au

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for entry to the ACT Heritage Register, Flynn Primary School and Pre School was considered to be of high heritage value whilst Giralang was considered to be of exceptional value.

Members of the Heritage Council visited both Giralang and Flynn Schools in early 2010 and met with Mr Alan Foskett, former First Assistant Secretary of the Commonwealth Department of Education and Science and former Chair of the ACT Education Planning Committee to gain a better understanding of educational philosophy at the time of construction of both Flynn and Giralang Primary Schools.

At meeting #32 on 24 June 2010 the ACT Heritage Council endorsed a Statement of Reasons which does not find Flynn Primary School, Pre School, Health Centre, grounds and relevant parts of George Simpson Park, eligible for provisional listing.

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

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 Flynn Primary School the Council considered:

- The original nomination form provided by the nominator and accompanying supporting information
- Background material relating to other Taglietti schools and buildings in Canberra, held on files in the ACT Heritage Unit.
- The monograph by RAI ACT Chapter members Ken Charlton, Bronwen Jones and Paola Favaro, *The Contribution of Enrico Taglietti to Canberra's Architecture*, 2007, Paragon Printers.
- The publication by Mr Alan Foskett, *ACT Education The Formative years 1912- 1978, The Evolution of New Education Systems in Canberra*, 2000, Aussie Print
- Report commissioned from RAI ACT under the ACT Heritage Grants Scheme 2009, Comparative Study of School Buildings Designed by Enrico Taglietti.
- The physical evidence and surrounding context as ascertained from an onsite visit in February 2010.
- Heritage Council meeting and discussion with Mr Alan Foskett, May 2010 regarding ACT educational philosophy in the early 1970s

Assessment

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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*

The nominator has assessed the place as being of high significance against this criterion.

The AIA comparative assessment notes that the place does not meet the threshold for heritage listing in relation to this criterion.

Heritage Council assessment:

The Flynn Primary School, designed in 1971, and constructed in 1972 is considered the earliest expression of the semi open plan school design in the ACT and shows some of the elements of this educational philosophy which were then later more fully expressed in Enrico Taglietti's design for Giralang Primary School. In terms of innovation, creativity and design qualities it is the Giralang Primary School, designed in 1974, which is Taglietti's foremost achievement in the Late-Twentieth Century Organic style of architecture as applied to the needs of open plan school education philosophy and the relationship of the building to the topography of its site.

Whilst Flynn Primary School demonstrates innovative use of poured concrete walls, one of the trademark features of Taglietti's work in free use of concrete; it is not considered to be of the high quality as required by this criterion.

The Flynn Primary School, Pre School and Health centre does not meet this criterion

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

The nominator claims the place meets this criterion to a high degree:

The AIA comparative assessment notes that the place meets the threshold for heritage listing in relation to this criterion.

Heritage Council assessment:

While the Flynn Primary School and Pre School are recognised as an example of the Late Twentieth Century Organic style of architecture, and as one of the architectural achievements in the portfolio of Enrico Taglietti's Canberra works it is, by the architects own admission, "*the seed that made possible the experiment of Giralang...*".

The design and aesthetic characteristics of the Late Twentieth Century Organic style of architecture discernable at Flynn Primary School were further refined and developed by Taglietti in his later design for the Giralang Primary School. It is the Giralang Primary School complex which is considered to exhibit the outstanding design and aesthetic qualities of Taglietti's work to its greatest extent.

To whom any design or aesthetic qualities of Flynn are valued, has not been identified.

The Flynn Primary School 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 practised, is in danger of being lost or is of exceptional interest*

The nominator claims the place meets this criterion to a high degree.

The AIA comparative assessment notes that the place does not meet the threshold for heritage listing in relation to this criterion.

Heritage Council assessment:

Flynn Primary School is considered the first ACT public school which was designed in relation to the open plan principle of learning and flexibility of internal spaces. At Campbell Primary School (1971) part of the building was altered to include a 70 pupil, 2 teacher learning area. Duffy and Weetangera Primary Schools (1973) were also constructed based upon this semi open plan approach to education and learning.

By the time Giralang Primary school was constructed in 1974 there was a discernable shift in relation to educational philosophy. Fully open plan schools, as observed by the Commonwealth Department of Education and Science, in England and Scotland during a study tour in 1973, provided the opportunity for the ACT to be consistent with international trends.

However, open plan schools as a teaching environment, generally were short-lived and by the time Taglietti designed the Gowrie Primary School in 1980, totally open plan designs were out of favour. Gowrie's semi-open plan design was similar to the Flynn design.

It is the Giralang Primary School complex which is considered to exhibit the most important evidence of the short lived phase of open plan schooling in Canberra.

The Flynn Primary School and Pre School does not meet this criterion

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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

The nominator claims the place meets this criterion to a high degree.

The AIA comparative assessment notes that the place does not meet the threshold for heritage listing in relation to this criterion.

Heritage Council assessment:

All communities feel attachment to their local community facilities. While not discounting it, the Flynn community's attachment to the former Flynn Primary School appears to be to the amenity which the premises offered, its contribution as a familiar local landscape feature and as a focus for the suburb. The special strong community attachment claimed is not unique and could be demonstrated at any local primary school.

Flynn Primary School and Pre School does not meet this criterion.

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

The nominator made no claim against this criterion.

The AIA comparative assessment has made no claim against this criterion.

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

The nominator claims the place meets this criterion to a moderate level.

The AIA comparative assessment notes that the place does not meet the threshold for heritage listing in relation to this criterion.

Heritage Council assessment:

Whilst the open plan philosophy of school design was relatively short lived there are other examples of schools throughout the ACT that demonstrate this approach to education including Hawker, Duffy, Weetangera and Campbell Primary Schools.

As a one of a group of four schools designed by the same architect Flynn primary School is neither unique nor rare.

The Flynn Primary School and Pre School 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.

The nominator claims the place meets this criterion to a moderate level.

The AIA comparative assessment does not make any claims in relation to this criterion.

Heritage Council assessment:

It is Giralang Primary School rather than Flynn which is the notable example of a fully open plan school and exhibits the key stylistic indicators characteristic of the Late Twentieth Century Organic style.

Flynn Primary School 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*

The nominator claims the place meets this criterion to a high degree.

The AIA comparative assessment notes that the place meets the threshold for heritage listing in relation to this criterion.

Heritage Council assessment:

While the Flynn Primary School was designed by Enrico Taglietti as a forerunner for a totally open plan school, it is not the primary example of either Taglietti's Canberra school designs or of an open plan approach to school design.

The fact that it was the first school to be built in regard to the open plan philosophy is insufficient to establish a strong association when the Giralang Primary School exhibits that educational approach to a far higher degree.

The nominators claimed associations with John Flynn and George Simpson are commemorative rather than substantive and direct.

The Flynn Primary School 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*

The nominator made no claim against this criterion.

The AIA comparative assessment makes no claim against this criterion.

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

The nominator claims the place meets this criterion to a moderate level.

The AIA comparative assessment notes that the place does not meet the threshold for heritage listing in relation to this criterion.

Heritage Council assessment:

In terms of providing opportunities for the study of the Late Twentieth Century Organic style and of the open plan school educational philosophy, the Flynn Primary School has some value and then primarily for comparative purposes in relation to more notable and better examples, such as Giralang.

The Flynn Primary School and Pre School 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

The nominator made no claim against this criterion.

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**

The nominator made no claim against this criterion.

Heritage Council assessment:

This criterion is not applicable.

Conclusion

Whilst Flynn Primary School and Pre School is recognised as an example of the Late Twentieth Century Organic Style (1960 -) of architecture designed by Enrico Taglietti, and as an example of semi open plan school design, the place does not meet the level of significance implied by the terms such as ‘outstanding’ and exceptional’. The ACT Heritage Council finds that Flynn Primary School and Pre School, Health Centre and relevant

sections of George Simpson Park are of insufficient heritage value to warrant provisional registration in the ACT Heritage Register.

Dianne Firth (Deputy Chair)
ACT Heritage Council

24 June 2010

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