

Australian Capital Territory

Heritage (Decision about Provisional Registration of the Stromlo Forestry Settlement, Duffy) Notice 2011

Notifiable Instrument NI2011–504

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 the Stromlo Forestry Settlement, Duffy) 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 Stromlo Forestry Settlement, Duffy to the ACT Heritage Register.

.....
Ms Jennifer O'Connell
Acting Secretary
ACT Heritage Council
GPO Box 158
Canberra ACT 2601

25 August 2011



ACT Heritage Council

STATEMENT OF REASONS

DECISION NOT TO PROVISIONALLY REGISTER THE STROMLO FORESTRY SETTLEMENT, DUFFY (Blocks 10 and 11 Section 56, and (Part) Block 5 Section 55, Duffy, Weston Creek) IN THE ACT HERITAGE REGISTER

Background

A nomination for the Stromlo Forestry Settlement was made in 1997. At that time the Stromlo Forestry Settlement included:

- 20 occupied houses
- Forestry depot
- Headquarters
- Windbreak planting, and
- Bus shelter

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

At Council Meeting #38 on 25 August 2011 the ACT Heritage Council endorsed a Statement of Reasons which does not find the Stromlo Forestry Settlement eligible for provisional registration.

Assessment

In assessing the nomination for the Stromlo Forestry Settlement, Duffy, the Council considered:

- The material identified under the heading 'References', above; and
- A site visit undertaken by Heritage Unit staff on 11 May 2011.

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

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 Stromlo 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 Stromlo Forestry Settlement is highly valued by the community or a cultural group.

There is no evidence before Council to indicate that the place meets 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 Stromlo 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.

All four forestry settlements in the ACT have a low level of intactness and integrity.

The Stromlo 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 Stromlo 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; and twentieth century planning layout.

The Stromlo Forestry Settlement demonstrates very few of these characteristics, with just three houses remaining, interspersed among more recent development, such that it does not portray a forestry settlement. It cannot be considered a ‘notable example’ of this kind of place.

The Stromlo 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 Stromlo 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 Stromlo 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 Stromlo 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 Stromlo 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 Stromlo 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.

History

Overview

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

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, first Superintendent of Parks and Wildlife in the ACT. The early plantations were established for aesthetic purposes for the Territory, although this quickly became a commercial venture.

While these early plantations were essentially part of an aesthetic plan for the Territory, in 1926 their administration was taken over by the Forestry section of the Department of the Interior and their function shifted towards a more commercial basis (Bell 1987).

The main impetus for the establishment of the plantations was to provide for the correction of cleared and eroded land of lower reaches of Cotter River, and the establishment of an industrial forest unit (Baskin, Martin & Riboust 1997).

Shortly after the acquisition of the pine plantations by the Department of the Interior forestry settlements were established at locations such as Stromlo, Uriarra and Pierces Creek.

The forestry settlements were communities with housing allocated to forestry workers on a hierarchical basis. These settlements were located in areas that not only placed the workers close to the forests where they were working, but they were also often in strategic locations that commanded excellent views of the forests and adjacent lands. Something that was essential to the role of forestry was the bushfire fighting service prior to the establishment of the ACT Emergency Service.

Stromlo

The earliest housing at Stromlo dates to 1928 and was built for Ranger Southwell, around the time of the earliest development of Canberra as the nation's capital. 'The priority given to the construction of such a place at this time indicates its importance' (Binns, 2001).

Twelve years later, a second range of job-tied housing was constructed at Stromlo, with a shift towards grouping cottages in settlements. An additional three cottages were built another 10 years later (Binns, 2001).

Binns (2001) states 'in 1959 the first of the larger 'Foresters' houses was built. This marked a major era in the development of the forests and the housing settlements, which was reflected at Pierce's Creek and Uriarra Forestry Settlements. The settlements became communities with hierarchical housing allocations'.

By the time the last house was constructed at Stromlo in 1972, there 'was a range of weatherboard houses, a forestry depot and headquarters, as well as recreational features such as tennis courts'' (Navin Officer, 2004: 21).

Prior to the 2003 bushfires, 20 homes at Stromlo were occupied, with reticulated sewer, water supply and electricity services.

The January 2003 fires caused extensive damage, including the destruction of 17 homes, and now only three survive. None of the other buildings associated with the forestry depot survived the fires. All of these sites have been heavily impacted by bulldozer activity as part of the clean-up process.

Physical Description

The area which was once occupied by the Stromlo Forestry Settlement has seen much change since the fires of 2003. It has been redeveloped based on new subdivision layout, new roads, and new housing.



Modern character of area in 2011

Three of the original forestry cottages remain – cottages 10, 21 and 22.

Cottage 10 was built in 1959 as the first of the Foresters' cottages. The house retained its function, housing the Stromlo Forester who was also chief Fire Control officer for the ACT, until 1981. It continued as a forestry worker's house until 1984 when it became the property of ACT Housing (Navin Officer, 2004: 30). The building itself is a well-maintained three-bedroom weatherboard house oriented diagonally (c.45°) across a corner block. The front entrance is via a short flight of stairs leading up to a recessed patio in the centre of the north-eastern wall. The house is built on brick footings, has a galvanised hip roof, and a brick chimney at the northern end. All of the

windows are of the wooden frame sash variety. Other than routine maintenance, the exterior of the building appears not to have been modified.



Cottage 10 (May 2011)

Cottage 21 is a three-bedroom weatherboard house with a concrete tile hip roof and brick footing. It is located in the southeast corner of the site opposite the central grassed area that served as a helicopter pad and communal area. The house was built in 1972 as part of the final phase of residential buildings at the Stromlo settlement, and was occupied by two different foresters between 1972 and 1991. This house is essentially a more modern version of Cottage 10, the main differences being the use of aluminium window frames, absence of a brick chimney and use of concrete roof tiles. The main entrance is via the north-west face.



Cottage 21 (May 2011)

Cottage 22, located directly to the east of Cottage 21 and on the same alignment as this cottage, is a well-maintained three-bedroom house. This building is an example of a slightly different style of housing used within the ACT Forestry Settlements. It is rectangular in shape, and has a gable rather than a hip roof. Otherwise it is built of the same materials as Cottage 21 (ie. weatherboard with concrete roof tiles, aluminium frame windows and brick footings). The entrance to this house is via a centrally placed concrete patio in the north-western elevation.

Construction of this house was completed in July 1972, and David Ferry (Forestry truck driver) and his wife moved in on 4 July 1972 (pers comm. David Ferry). The Ferry's moved to Stromlo to join Mr. Ferry's father who was already working in the forests and living at Stromlo. Mr Ferry accepted the *Canberran of the Year* award on behalf of ACT firefighters and his family have continued to be an important part of the population at Stromlo.



Cottage 22 (May 2011)

Physical condition and integrity

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.

References

Author unknown, 2004, 'Stromlo Rural Village – Sustainability Study', report to the ACT Government.

Baskin J, Martin J. and Riboust, P., 1997, 'Rural Properties of the ACT', Report prepared for the National Trust of Australia (ACT Chapter).

Bell, J., 1987, 'Mt Stromlo: The History of a Landscape', Unpublished assignment for Landscape history, Canberra College of Advanced Education.

Binns K., and Heap J., 2001, *Meet you at the RMB: A Report on a study undertaken by ACT Housing to assess the indicative heritage values of its rural housing stock*, ACT Housing, Canberra.

Boot, P. & D. Bulbeck 1990 Stromlo Forest Cultural Resource Survey and Conservation Plan. Volumes I & II. Report to ACT Forests and ACT Parks and Conservation Service.

Canberra historical Journal, new series no.31, march 1993, pp 21-25.

Lea-Scarlett, E. 1968 *Queanbeyan District and People*. Queanbeyan Municipal Council.

Moore, B. 1999, *Cotter Country: A history of the early settlers, pastoral holdings and events in and around the County of Cowley, NSW*, Greg Moore, Canberra.

Navin Officer Heritage Consultants, 2004, ACT Rural Villages Sustainability Report: Cultural Heritage Study. Unpublished report to McCann Property and Planning (February 2004), Canberra.

Pryor, L.D. 1938 The Botany, Forestry and Zoology of the Australian Capital Territory on an Ecological Basis. In K. Binns (ed.) *Handbook for Canberra*. Australian and New Zealand Association for the Advancement of Science, Government Printer, Canberra.

Sleeman, J. R. and P. H. Walker 1979 *The Soils of the Canberra District*. Soil and Landuse Series No. 58. Division of Soils CSIRO, Australia.

Conclusion

The Stromlo Forestry Settlement today retains little of its original layout and comprises a limited number of structures dating from the 1950s and 1970s.

Given the limited number of extant structures from the forestry settlement period, and the predominant character of the area today as modern development, the Stromlo Forestry Settlement does not demonstrate an easily understandable example of the ACTs forestry industry and its workers and their family's way of life.

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

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

Jennifer O'Connell (Acting Secretary)
ACT Heritage Council

25 August 2011