

Heritage (Decision about Registration of the Early Kingston Shops) Notice 2025

Notifiable instrument NI2025—476

made under the

Heritage Act 2004, s 40 (Decision about registration)

1 Name of instrument

This instrument is the *Heritage (Decision about Registration of the Early Kingston Shops) Notice 2025*.

2 Commencement

This instrument commences on the day after its notification day.

3 Decision about registration

On 20 August 2025, the ACT Heritage Council (the *Heritage Council*) decided to register the Early Kingston Shops, (part) Blocks 1, 3-10, and 23-24, Section 21 and adjacent (part) road verge, Section 21, Kingston (the *Place*).

4 Registration details of the Place

The registration details of the Place are in the schedule.

5 Reasons for the decision

The Heritage Council is satisfied on reasonable grounds that the Place has heritage significance as it meets one or more of the heritage significance criteria in section 10 of the *Heritage Act 2004*. A detailed statement of reasons including an assessment against the heritage significance criteria is provided in the schedule.

6 Date registration takes effect

The registration of the Place takes effect on 20 August 2025.

7 Revocation

This instrument revokes the *Heritage (Decision about Provisional Registration of Early Kingston Shops, Kingston) Notice 2024* (NI2024-268).

Mary Clare Swete Kelly
A/g Secretary (as delegate for)
ACT Heritage Council
20 August 2025

Schedule

(See sections 3 and 4)



ACT Heritage Council

**AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY
HERITAGE REGISTER
Registration**

For the purposes of s40 of the *Heritage Act 2004*, an entry to the heritage register has been prepared by the ACT Heritage Council for the following place:

Early Kingston Shops

(part) Blocks 1, 3-10, and 23-24, Section 21 and adjacent (part) road verge, Kingston.

Date of Registration

20 August 2025

Notifiable Instrument: 2025-

Copies of the Register Entry are available for inspection online at <https://www.environment.act.gov.au/heritage> and at ACT Heritage. For further information please contact:

The Secretary
ACT Heritage Council

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13 22 81

Statement of heritage significance

The Early Kingston Shops was the first shopping precinct developed in the ACT and was significant as the premier shopping destination in the new capital from 1925 until the 1950s. These shops were essential for goods and services, as a social hub and for employment. For Canberra's first residents, the Early Kingston Shops were the first commercial amenities in the new capital city.

The community had a central shopping precinct that sold almost everything they needed and no longer had to order goods and groceries from canvassers going door-to-door or make the trip into Queanbeyan. This amenity contributed to the popularity of the place in the burgeoning community as a place to meet and socialise, which in turn reinforced its central role, making the Early Kingston Shops the preeminent shopping precinct during the early formation of the capital.

This statement refers to the heritage significance of the place as required in s12(d) of the *Heritage Act 2004*.

Location of the place

The Early Kingston Shops are located within the first 10 metres from the front block boundary, i.e. from the frontages along Giles, Jardine and Kennedy Streets, of Blocks 1, 3-10, and 23-24, Section 21, Kingston. These are the remaining blocks of the original 1920s shops along Giles, Jardine and Kennedy Streets. It also includes the area from the above-mentioned front block boundaries to the kerb. This covers the awning and the public realm and landscaping.

This statement refers to the name and location of the place as required in s12(a) and s12(b) of the *Heritage Act 2004*.

Description of the place

The Early Kingston Shops are a row of predominantly single storey shops along Giles, Jardine and Kennedy Streets. Shop frontages are approximately 6 metres wide, with 4 glazed shopfronts to the width of a standard block. A continuous, cantilevered awning provides shelter to the footpath and fosters a sense of intimacy. Apart from their width and regular pattern, there is little consistent treatment in modern shopfront glazing.

Parapets are a key architectural feature, unifying each block of multiple shopfronts in one cohesive building. They comprise rendered and painted masonry with string coursing and moulded capping with a subtle step up at the centre. Minor variations of the parapet treatment occur on different blocks, representing different interpretations of the original J. S. Murdoch concept.

Clerestory windows and/or corresponding blank cartouche panels are centred over

shopfront glazing above the awning level.

The following are attributes of significance:

- **Ongoing retail, commercial and other sympathetic services uses** in street level shops (extending 10m from the front block boundary, see Figure 1, 2, 4, 5).
- **Cohesive 1920s architectural composition** with simple, repeated design elements informed by J. S. Murdoch's concept drawing (see Figure 3). Elements are:
 - the parapet design, comprising rendered masonry with corbel and string lines, forming a continuous façade across the front boundary of the precinct
 - the awning and parapet design elements with minor treatment variations to each block, such as the parapet profile, rhythm of clerestory window or blank cartouche panels
 - a regular structural rhythm of masonry wall ends, approximately 6m apart, with predominantly glazed shopfronts between
 - continuous cantilevered horizontal awning form 3m deep (except for a small step out on the corner of Giles and Kennedy Streets), stepping up between blocks as the land rises, providing pedestrian shelter
 - clerestory windows and/or decorative blank cartouche panels above awnings, aligned with shopfronts below
 - any original or early shopfront fabric, including recessed entries and doors.
- **A public realm and landscaping** with a footpath shaded by awnings and an open-air shopping experience.

This statement refers to the description of the place as required in s12(c) of the *Heritage Act 2004*. The attributes described in this section form part of the heritage significance of the place. For the purposes of s12(c) of the *Heritage Act 2004*, the registration boundary of the place is at Figure 1 and Figure 2.

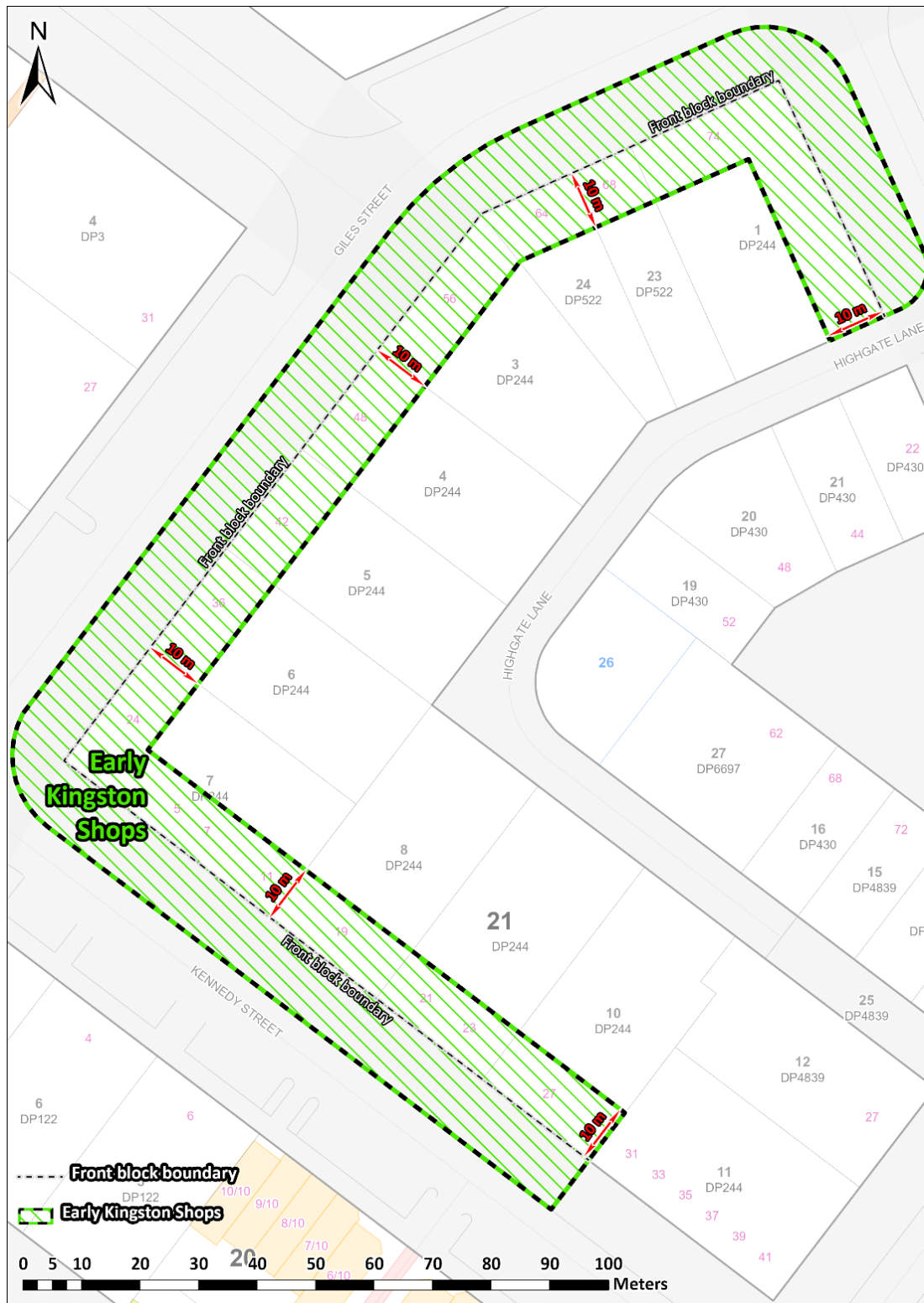


Figure 2 – Registration boundary for the Early Kingston Shops, cadastral map only – the area containing the significant features extends from the Giles, Jardine and Kennedy Street block frontages of Blocks 1, 3-10, and 23-24, Section 21 back 10m and from the same front block boundary to the kerb.

Conservation objective

The guiding conservation objective is that Early Kingston Shops shall be conserved and appropriately managed in a manner respecting its heritage significance.

The ACT Heritage Council may adopt heritage guidelines applicable to the place under s25 of the *Heritage Act 2004*. Other conservation measures may be adopted as appropriate, such as general policies, protocols for registered places, exempt works, and advice provided by Council.

For further information on guidelines applicable to the place, or for advice on proposed works or development, please contact ACT Heritage via email at heritage@act.gov.au or via 13 22 81.

Reason for registration

The Council has assessed the Early Kingston Shops against the heritage significance criteria and is satisfied that the place has heritage significance when assessed against criterion (a) under s10 of the *Heritage Act 2004*. A place is considered to have heritage significance if it meets one or more of the criteria.

Table 1 Criteria that the Council consider have been met.

CRITERION	(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)	(e)	(f)	(g)	(h)
MET	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No	No

This statement refers to the heritage significance of the place as required in s12(d) of the *Heritage Act 2004*.

Assessment against the heritage significance criteria

This section refers to the heritage significance of the place as required in s12(d) of the *Heritage Act 2004*.

The Council's assessment against the criteria specified in s10 of the *Heritage Act 2004* is as follows.

In assessing the heritage significance of Early Kingston Shops, the Council considered:

- the information and documentary evidence in the nomination for the Kingston Shopping Precinct, the Jardine Street Commercial and Banking Row, and the Site of AJ Ryan's Radio and Electrical Store
- the Council's *Heritage Assessment Policy* (March 2018)
- information provided by a site inspection on 10 and 11 September 2019, 27 July 2020 by ACT Heritage; 5 and 16 February 2024 and 13 February 2025 by the Heritage

Council

- the report by ACT Heritage titled, *Background Information Early Kingston Shops*, March 2025, containing photographs and information on history, description, condition and integrity
- information and comments received during the public consultation period under s37 of the Act on the provisional registration of Early Kingston Shops, as well as further considerations of submissions and consultation after the consultation period, summarised in the listening report attached to the background.

Pursuant to s10 of the *Heritage Act 2004*, a place or object has heritage significance if it satisfies one or more of the following criteria. Future research may alter the findings of this assessment. The Council's assessment against the criteria specified in s10 of the *Heritage Act 2004* is as follows.

(a) importance to the course or pattern of the ACT's cultural or natural history

MEETS CRITERION.

The Council has assessed Early Kingston Shops against criterion (a) and is satisfied that the place meets this criterion.

The Early Kingston Shops were the first leases available in the capital and subsequently the first shopping precinct developed in the ACT, quickly establishing them as the premier business and shopping destination. The Early Kingston Shops provided all the services the burgeoning community needed and acted as a central social hub and the starting point for many businesses that are significant in the ACT's cultural history.

The Early Kingston Shops came about through actions of the Federal Capital Advisory Committee (FCAC) in the absence of the Chair, John Sulman. When he returned and learnt of the new shopping area, Sulman insisted that his objections be recorded in the minutes as he thought that it was contrary to then current planning principles. Subsequent planners have worked with the success of the Early Kingston Shops and later expansions. But it was this quick start that established it as the premier shopping district in the early days of the ACT. This lasted until the National Capital Development Commission (NCDC) was formed in 1958 and changed the trajectory of Canberra's growth. The shops at Eastlake (officially changed to Kingston in 1928) developed as a precinct with its less stringent planning rules, the established catchment from the surrounding suburbs and industry as well as securing the large attractor store of J.B. Young Ltd. (colloquially referred to as J. B. Young's, or Young's).

The oversight that allowed the Early Kingston Shops to be approved with little government control and restrictions was an attractive incentive to prospective businesses and allowed it to be built quickly and in a manner that favoured the owners. This gave them an edge over the other shopping areas at Civic and Manuka which had more restrictive controls and required building to prescribed designs. This resulted in the Early Kingston Shops being fully built and trading while the other areas were still mostly under construction. This initial advantage created extra demand in the Early Kingston Shops for other services resulting in

the first bank, the first post office and petrol station all being located in Kingston. The Early Kingston Shops also boasted the major 'attractor' shop of J.B. Young's that remained as a feature for over six decades, until 1986; was the first location of the 2CA radio station and A.J. Ryan's Radio and Electrical store; the Eastlake/Kingston Post Office (that kept moving into larger premises in the area to keep up with demand until finally settling in to the purpose-built building in Section 22), Cusack's, and Harry Notaras' Highgate Café as well as other places important for socialising in the growing capital.

Despite the lack of official controls and different builders and owners, the Early Kingston Shops were built with a consistent form and scale (i.e. a general compliance to a unifying aesthetic). The unity of the built form came from Government Chief Architect J. S. Murdoch's sketch plan (see Fig. 3) and the Federal Capital Commission's actively persuading lessees to voluntarily comply with the concept. While the FCC could not enforce strict compliance with a set design, it was enough to encourage the various owners to build a sympathetic design that upheld the main unifying features of Murdoch's concept. These unifying features across the precinct are still evident to various degrees and can be seen in:

- the consistent parapet design, including the white render, corbel and string lines, and clerestory windows
- the continuous deep cantilevered awning
- the fine-grained pattern in the mostly glazed shopfronts

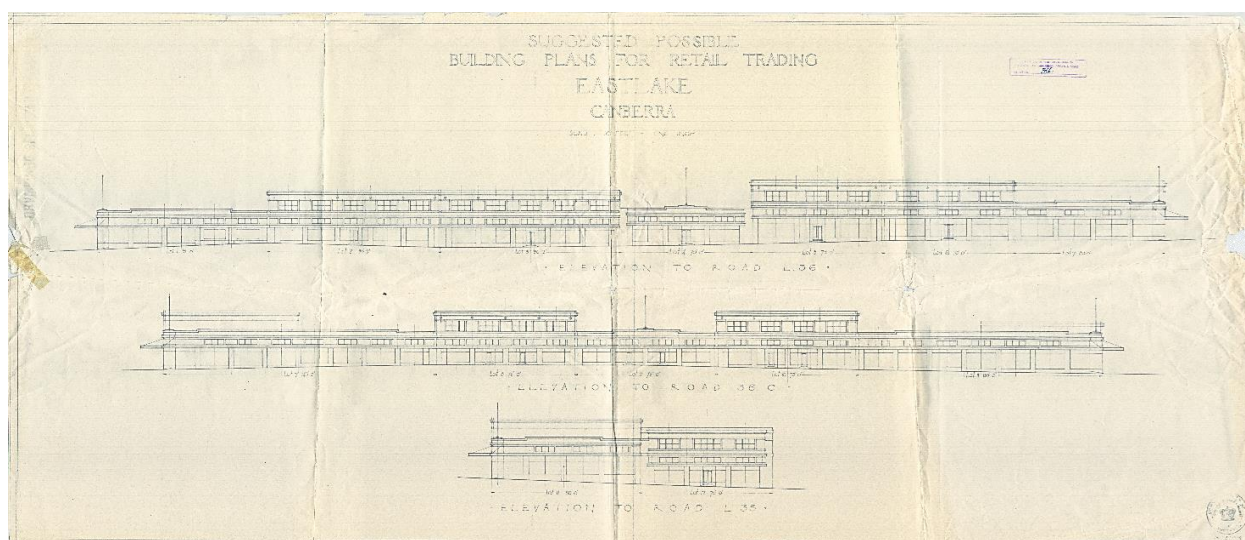


Figure 3. J. S. Murdoch's sketch elevations for the Eastlake retail area 30 April 1925

The Early Kingston Shops were originally only meant as a local shopping area, but as its importance grew beyond what the FCAC and then the Federal Capital Commission (FCC, formed in 1925) had envisaged, it was realised that the growth of the Early Kingston Shops was important for the growth of the ACT and it was expanded with better pedestrian access and lighting. In the post-war period it was significantly expanded with the new post office, the Green Square development (1953) and the Jardine St Banking and Commercial Row (1954). However, growth of the precinct was halted by the introduction of the NCDC in 1958 and its rapid development of the ACT under which the newly expanded precinct was relegated to a local hub, rather than the centre of business, retail and social lives that it had

been in the preceding three decades.

Most of the shops along Giles and Kennedy streets were built with a showroom or sales area fronting the street (Figure 4 and Figure 5) for customer access with staff facilities and stores further back and a small residential accommodation area with provision for loading access to the storeroom to the rear. The rear sections have been repurposed or developed as the shops have changed, but the front salesroom structure can still be discerned, even if internally they have changed and extended, this is the area that is most representative of the past use and important in conserving the cohesive 1920s architectural composition and any remaining original material. While not all of the blocks still have evidence of this, and some were originally or subsequently built with a larger salesroom area, the Council considers that a 10m deep conservation zone is enough of a representative area to retain an appreciation of the original scale and use of the area as part of the cohesive 1920s architectural composition.



Figure 4. Giles and Jardine Streets boundary detail showing the inclusion of front salesrooms within 10m of the front block boundary.



Figure 5. Kennedy and Giles Streets boundary detail showing the inclusion of front salesrooms within 10m of the front block boundary.

(b) has uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of the ACT's cultural or natural history

Does not meet criterion.

The Council has assessed Early Kingston Shops against criterion (b) and is not satisfied that the place meets this criterion.

The Early Kingston Shops does not have uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of the ACT's cultural history. Neighbourhood or local-level shopping centres are a common feature across the ACT and the fact that it had different planning controls to other examples is not considered to be enough of a difference to meet threshold under this criterion. The FCC style architecture is representative of the time but is not a strong enough example of the style to be considered under this criterion.

(c) potential to yield important information that will contribute to an understanding of the ACT's cultural or natural history

Does not meet criterion.

The Council has assessed Early Kingston Shops against criterion (c) and is not satisfied that the place meets this criterion.

As a well-documented built place, with all significant changes recorded in the ACT Building files and Development Applications, it is unlikely that new information will be garnered from the material fabric of the place that would be considered a significant contribution to our existing knowledge. The Early Kingston Shops does not have the potential to yield important information that will contribute to an understanding of the ACT's cultural history.

(d) importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural or natural places or objects

Does not meet criterion.

The Council has assessed Early Kingston Shops against criterion (d) and is not satisfied that the place meets this criterion.

The Early Kingston Shops may demonstrate the main characteristics of a shopping precinct as a class of cultural places, but there is no evidence it is important for demonstrating those traits.

A detailed analysis of the main characteristics of shopping precincts as a class of cultural places may show that the Early Kingston Shops demonstrates the characteristics of the class, but the Council is not convinced such an analysis would show that it is *important* in demonstrating these characteristics. As a type of place this class can include many variations, but at a minimum the Early Kingston Shops has a concentration of purely commercial spaces (shopfronts closely spaced, evidence of activity is seen in shopfronts/displays and signage) that prioritises pedestrian activity and amenity (wide footpaths that are mostly covered by an awning, various resting spots/seating, adjacent parking, service areas for shops separate to pedestrian areas/Highgate Lane).

However, the analytical context is not sufficiently developed to enable the importance of the Early Kingston Shops to be established under this criterion.

(e) importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics valued by the ACT community or a cultural group in the ACT

Does not meet criterion.

The Council has assessed Early Kingston Shops against criterion (e) and is not satisfied that the place meets this criterion.

The Early Kingston Shops has a distinct character and feel that is likely valued by many of the people who shop and work there, or have done so in the past. The particular aesthetic is a small scale, pedestrian friendly shopping area representative of the wider Australian shopping area vernacular with large awnings supporting underhung signs and small businesses. However, there is no evidence that there is a particular aesthetic that is valued by the wider ACT community or a cultural group as defined in the Council's *Heritage Assessment Policy*.

(f) importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement for a particular period

Does not meet criterion.

The Council has assessed Early Kingston Shops against criterion (f) and is/is not satisfied that the place meets this criterion.

The Early Kingston Shops were built by whoever purchased the various blocks and was then developed in a solid, albeit standard, method of construction in a very short time. This resulted in a fairly consistent façade treatment loosely following J. S. Murdoch's sketch design with well-built buildings that have matured into a pleasant shopping precinct with a distinctive character. However, the Early Kingston Shops is of a standard design for its time and is not considered to demonstrate a high degree of creative or technical achievement for its time.

(g) has a strong or special association with the ACT community, or a cultural group in the ACT for social, cultural or spiritual reasons

Does not meet criterion.

The Council has assessed Early Kingston Shops against criterion (g) and is not satisfied that the place meets this criterion.

In its heyday, the Early Kingston Shops would have been considered to have a strong and special association with the ACT community as the premier shopping destination, but as the city has expanded, the Early Kingston Shops and the larger precinct has been relegated to a smaller role servicing its local neighbourhood, as per the original planning intention and the later NCDC planning.

Some of the community having fond memories of the place, particularly J.B Young's but also other stores as opposed to the Early Kingston Shops as a whole, as evidenced in various social media comments with many noting nostalgia for shopping there, special moments or experiences, memories of their parents taking them, or various people working there. This seems to be representative of early residents remembering the place for special occasion shopping, or as a general meeting place due to the pedestrian friendly nature of the place and limited other shopping areas; however, there is no indication that this nostalgia translates to a wider current association with the ACT Community.

(h) has a special association with the life or work of a person, or people, important to the history of the ACT

Does not meet criterion.

The Council has assessed Early Kingston Shops against criterion (h) and is not satisfied that the place meets this criterion.

The Early Kingston Shops came about through actions of the FCC in the absence of the Chair, John Sulman. When he returned and learnt of the new shopping area, Sulman insisted that his objections be recorded in the minutes as he thought that it was contrary to [then] current planning principles. Subsequent planners have worked with the success of the Early Kingston Shops and later expansions, but all associated with this aspect of the place have done so as a part of their normal work and are not considered to have a special association with the place.

The J.B. Young store went to great effort to secure the largest site in Canberra's first shopping precinct to augment their Queanbeyan store as well as other stores across NSW after that. They paid the largest amount of all the lots that were up for auction and then quickly built a stores shed so that they could start trading out of the back before the main building had been completed. The general merchants sold a wide variety of goods from meat and produce to carpets, suits and firearms. They had a large and loyal staff and were known to have people work their entire careers in the store. J.B. Young was a supporter of local events, often sponsoring sporting days or other social events. While the store was an important contributor to the success of the Early Kingston Shops and holds nostalgia for some people in the community, there is no evidence of a special association of the store with this location, mindful of the historical context of the original Queanbeyan store and the more than twenty later stores such as in the City, Manuka, Jameson, other locations in the ACT or regionally in NSW.

A.J. Ryan's Radio and Electrical Store solved a lack of demand, due to no radio reception in early Canberra, by creating their own station, 2CA out the back of the store. From its beginnings in 1931, 2CA grew rapidly and by 1935 the transmitter had been moved out to Radio Hill near present day Fyshwick and, in 1937, it was boosted again with the transmitter being moved to its current position near the Barton Highway and the studio being relocated to new facilities in City and later into Mitchell. The story of 2CA is an important part of the ACT's history, and it began out the back of one of the original Kingston shops, however there is no remaining evidence of A.J. Ryan's Radio and Electrical Store and the former 2CA studio and transmitter left, so this criterion is not considered to be met due to a lack of integrity. However, the Council does encourage other ways of recognising and commemorating this important part of the ACT's history.

Much of the Early Kingston Shops' history has been associated with prominent Canberrans or businesses including, but not limited to Harry Notaras, Cusack's, Woolworths, S.O. Taylor's, Redpath Shoes, Ogilvie's Bakery, and many others. While these people and businesses are a part of the ACT's history, it has not been demonstrated that their connection to the Early Kingston Shops is strong or special and that they could be considered to be important to the cultural history of the ACT.