

Australian Capital Territory

# Heritage (Decision about Registration for Telopea Park School, Barton) Notice 2011

Notifiable Instrument NI 2011 - 110

made under the

***Heritage Act 2004* section 42 Notice of Decision about Registration**

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**1. Revocation**

This instrument replaces NI 2010 – 599

**2. Name of instrument**

This instrument is the Heritage (Decision about Registration for the Telopea Park School, Barton) Notice 2011 -

**3. Registration details of the place**

Registration details of the place are at Attachment A: Register entry for the Telopea park School, Barton.


**4. Reason for decision**

The ACT Heritage Council has decided that the Telopea Park School, Barton meets one or more of the heritage significance criteria at s 10 of the *Heritage Act 2004*. The register entry is at Attachment A.

**5. Date of Registration**

10 March 2011

Gerhard Zatschler  
Secretary  
ACT Heritage Council  
10 March 2011

 <p>ACT Heritage Council</p>	<p><b>AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY</b></p> <p><b>HERITAGE REGISTER</b> <b>(Registration Details)</b></p> <p><b>Place No:</b></p>
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*The following is mandatory:*

For the purposes of s. 41 of the *Heritage Act 2004*, an entry to the heritage register has been prepared by the ACT Heritage Council for the following place:

Telopea Park School, New South Wales Crescent, Barton, ACT  
Block 1, Section 29, Barton, Canberra Central

**DATE OF REGISTRATION**

Notified: 11 March 2011 2010/[Number]

Copies of the Register Entry are available for inspection at the ACT Heritage Unit. For further information please contact:

The Secretary  
ACT Heritage Council  
GPO Box 158, Canberra, ACT 2601

Telephone: 13 22 81 Facsimile: (02) 6207 2229

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## IDENTIFICATION OF THE PLACE

- Telopea Park School, New South Wales Crescent, Block 1, Section 29, Barton, Canberra Central.
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## STATEMENT OF HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

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

Telopea Park School is significant as one of the first public buildings undertaken by the Federal Capital Advisory Committee and as the first public school completed by the Commonwealth, in 1923, for the new capital city. The school has been the focus for the provision of a range of education services in the early years of Canberra including infant, primary, secondary, tertiary and adult education, and now offers a unique bilingual English-French education, characterising educational policy and programs since the establishment of the National Capital.

The school is also significant for the quality of its architectural design by then Commonwealth Architect, John Smith Murdoch. The 1920s buildings exhibit special design features in response to their function as a school, with the gable-ended tile-roofed block centred on Sydney Avenue, and an L-shaped, hipped roof pavilion on each side, with an ornate roof ventilator, and two-storey wings, with fine gabled sections with arched small-paned windows and decorative wrought iron balconies.

The school's design in its setting is significant, not only for the position of the 1920s buildings facing Griffin's axis along Sydney Avenue to Capitol Hill, but also for its setting within the broader Barton landscape. The school's landscaping is significant with its oval/s and perimeter tree plantings, in sympathy with the overall Griffin plan for this area of Canberra and Weston's plantings of adjacent Telopea Park and the Barton Garden City suburb.

The school is also of significance for its role in the education of later Prime Minister, Gough Whitlam, from 1928-1931.

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## FEATURES INTRINSIC TO THE HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PLACE

The features intrinsic to the heritage significance of Telopea Park School, Barton, which require conservation comprise:

- 1920s buildings' special design features in response to their function as a school, with the gable-ended tile-roofed block, and an L-shaped, hipped roof pavilion on each side, with an ornate roof ventilator, and two storey wings, with fine gabled sections with arched small-paned windows and decorative wrought-iron balconies.
  - Symmetry on axis, centred on the Griffin axis along Sydney Avenue of the 1920s buildings.
  - Landscape setting with ovals and tree plantings, within the broader Barton landscape.
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## APPLICABLE HERITAGE GUIDELINES

The Heritage Guidelines adopted under s27 of the *Heritage Act 2004* are applicable to the conservation of Telopea Park School, New South Wales Crescent, Barton.

The guiding conservation objective is that Telopea Park School, New South Wales Crescent, Barton, shall be conserved and appropriately managed in a manner respecting its heritage significance and the features intrinsic to that heritage significance, and consistent with a sympathetic and viable use or uses. Any works that have a potential impact on significant fabric (and / or other heritage values) shall be guided by a professionally documented assessment and conservation policy relevant to that area or component (i.e. a Statement of Heritage Effects – SHE).

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### REASON FOR REGISTRATION

Telopea Park School, New South Wales, Crescent, Barton has been assessed against the heritage significance criteria and been found to have heritage significance when assessed against four criteria under the *Heritage Act 2004*.

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### ASSESSMENT AGAINST THE HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA

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. Significance has been determined by research as accessed in the references below. Future research may alter the findings of this assessment.

- (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 place does not meet this criterion.

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

It is likely that the design and aesthetic qualities of the Telopea Park School are highly valued by the community. However, there is currently insufficient information to fully understand or determine these values.

- (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;**

Telopea Park School is important as evidence of a distinctive function of exceptional interest, as it demonstrates the progression of schooling in Canberra since its early days as the National Capital. Built as the first public school, it has provided a range of education services over time, from infants and primary, to secondary and briefly tertiary.

These roles and the school structures illustrate the successive educational policies and practices since the 1920s in NSW and the ACT.

A bilingual school since 1973, and the first and only Australian Kindergarten-Year 10 bilingual school since 1984, Telopea Park School reflects Canberra's international role as the National Capital.

The bilingual nature of the school demonstrates the high proportion of children of diplomatic and foreign affairs families, both Australian and foreign, in Canberra.

Telopea Park School is also of significance as one of the first substantial constructions of the Federal Capital Advisory Committee in the early 1920s, alongside the Hotel Canberra (1924). Constructed prior to Old Parliament House (1927) and the Albert Hall (1928) Telopea Park School is evidence of the original building blocks and early construction of the National Capital.

Telopea Park School meets this 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**

It is likely that Telopea Park School is highly valued by current and former students as an early and iconic school in the ACT, the earliest public school built in the National Capital and for its unique role as a bilingual school. However, there is currently insufficient information to fully understand or determine these values.

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

not applicable

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

Telopea Park School is a unique example of a school offering bilingual French-English curriculums in the ACT and in Australia from Kindergarten to Year 10. It was established by special agreement between the Australian and French Governments in 1983.

Telopea Park School meets this criterion.

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

The place does not meet this criterion.

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

The School has a strong association with the early development of Canberra, as the first public school constructed by the FCAC, and as one of the first public buildings within the FCT, constructed prior to the Hotel Canberra (1924), the Provisional Parliament House (1927) and Albert Hall (1928)..

Telopea Park School also has a special association with Gough Whitlam, later Prime Minister of Australia, having been his place of education from 1928-1931. He is the only Prime Minister to have undertaken some of his education in the ACT.

Telopea Park School meets this criterion.

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

Not applicable

**(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 place does not meet this criterion.

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

not applicable

**(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.**

Not applicable

*The place is assessed as not being significant in relation to the following criteria: a, e, g, i, j, k, and l.*

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**SUMMARY OF THE PLACE  
HISTORY AND PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION**

History

Telopea Park School was completed in 1923 and opened on 11 September of that year. The school was the first public school to be built by the Commonwealth for the new Territory.

It was designed in 1922 by John Smith Murdoch, Commonwealth Architect, for the Federal Capital Advisory Committee (FCAC) (Garnett & Hyndes 1992:91). While the building was constructed by the Commonwealth, the provision of education was administered by the New South Wales Department of Education until 1973.

From 1911 until 1922, schooling within the newly created Federal Capital Territory (FCT) was fairly ad hoc in its provision. The earliest school in the district dates from about 1843. In the 1870s at least five government schools were opened, with 13 schools operating in the Territory by 1923 (Power et al:1, 7).

In February 1921 the Federal Capital Advisory Committee (FCAC) endorsed the establishment of a large Primary School at 'Telopea Park', an area to the west of a planted axial reserve leading towards the Molonglo River from the newly created shopping centre at Manuka.

The FCAC deliberated at length on the planning and aesthetics of this first major school for the newly established FCT (Mitchell/Giurgola & Thorp Architects, 1995: 4).

Tenders were called for the construction of the main wing in 1922. The central portion cost £9263 and additional wings built in 1927 cost £3400 each (two wings).

The original school was designed to accommodate 200 students. The first of the building extensions was completed in 1926 and increased the capacity of the school to 500 students.

The school originally catered for students of all grades. With the increasing number of public servants being transferred to Canberra, additional school facilities were planned at Telopea Park and elsewhere.

In 1927 the then Ainslie Primary School was opened and in 1929 further extensions to Telopea Park were completed (Power et al:15). Telopea Park was declared a District School in 1927 and an Intermediate High School in 1928. Also in 1928 it was host to adult evening classes and in 1930 the Canberra University College. Links were also made with the Royal Military College at Duntroon. The school enjoyed

a growing population of students which continued to place pressure on the available accommodation. A new classroom block was completed in 1936 (Power et al:19).

In 1945 Telopea Park was classified a Central School, having primary and secondary schooling on the one site (Power et al:20). In 1950-52 the west wing was extended and the Bristol demountable building was erected. In 1952 the school had 1450 students and in 1955 it was classified as a High School. During the 1950s, primary students were relocated to new schools at Griffith (from 1955) and Forrest (from 1958).

Agricultural studies were introduced in 1956. Part of York Park was used for their experiments (Power et al:37). In 1958 new toilet blocks and change rooms were built at Telopea and the east wing was altered and extended. In 1959 the offices were altered and the existing entrance and foyer established. The assembly hall was completed in that year. In 1960 the school had 900 students. During the 1960s, changes in the curriculum were brought in. In 1967 the notion of six years of high school instead of five was introduced under the 'Wyndham Scheme'.

These changes led to the need for additional classrooms including the three storey wing, completed in 1967. The construction of this wing required the demolition of the old art block (date unknown). During the 1960s some students were relocated to new high schools at Narrabundah (1961) and Deakin (1966) (Power et al:39). Several relocatable classrooms were provided in the late 1960s and early 1970s and an agricultural laboratory was completed in 1969.

In 1973, the ACT Schools Authority was established, taking over responsibility for education from NSW. As a result, the new college system was introduced in 1976 for the final two years of high school, and Telopea Park High School now catered for Years 7-10 only.

In 1973, a French bilingual program (École-Bilingue) was established at the school, and in 1983 an agreement between the Government of Australia and the Government of the French Republic to establish a French-Australian School in Canberra (Telopea Park School) was signed in the Assembly Hall at Telopea Park High School. This commenced in 1984 as the first and, to date, only Kindergarten to Year 10 bilingual school in the ACT and Australia.

The school has continued since then as a Kindergarten to Year 6 bilingual primary school and a neighbourhood high school, where students can either continue their bilingual studies to Year 10 or study a normal ACT high school program. Students can continue to French Baccaureat level at Narrabundah College.

Former Australian Prime Minister Gough Whitlam attended high school at Telopea Park from 1928 to 1931 before completing his secondary schooling at Canberra Boys Grammar School.

### Description

Telopea Park School is located on a 5 hectare site in Barton bounded by New South Wales Crescent (originally Telopea Circuit), and Telopea Park West. The main axis of the site runs north-west to south-east. The west of the site is flat as is the playing-field at the eastern end, but there is a 4m drop between. (Mitchell/Giugula & Thorp 1995).

Its siting, particularly that of the first school building, recognises the axial planning intents of Walter Burley Griffin's 1918 Canberra Plan, faced onto NSW Crescent and bisected by the axis of Sydney Avenue which terminates at Capital Hill.

John Smith Murdoch, the Commonwealth architect who designed the school, had 'examined buildings erected by the New South Wales and Victorian Education Departments, and he had endeavoured to embody the best points of each in the plan' (FCAC 1922).

Today the school consists of a series of buildings built over the past 80 years. The buildings dating from 1923 to 1958 are generally constructed with a face brick plinth, rendered main wall areas and gabled tiled roofs. The later buildings are of a generally sympathetic character to the earlier buildings and have face brick walls, tiled roofs and some rendered finishes. Exceptions to this pattern were the metal clad 1950s Bristol building and other relocatable buildings. These were demolished in 1998.

Later constructions include the 1960 School Assembly Hall on the site where the 1958 toilet blocks previously stood and the 1970s library in the centre quadrangle. The Music Room and Gymnasium were completed in 1998, and the primary school library in 2005. Several of the additional buildings have affected the axial simplicity and formality of the 1920s buildings (Mitchel/Giurgola & Thorpe 1995:38).

The 1923 building designed by J S Murdoch has a gable-ended tile-roofed block centred on Sydney Avenue, and an L-shaped, hipped roof pavilion on each side, with an ornate roof ventilator (Charlton et al 2001:52). Murdoch's 1929 wings are two-storey, with fine gabled sections with arched small-paned windows and decorative wrought iron balconies.

The early buildings have been variously changed and extended over time. In particular the 1923 entrance and the 1923-25 verandah on either side of the entrance have been changed. The low, flat-roofed central entrance and linking covered ways is obscured by the glass-fronted entrance, but the original ridge vent still crowns the skyline (Garnett & Hyndes 1992:91; Charlton et al 2001:52).

The interiors include timber hardwood flooring arranged in a herringbone pattern, which appears to be original. Other areas are carpeted. There is brick paving along one of the major corridors of the 1927 wings. The other was carpeted in approximately 1984.

Hanging above a stairway in the 1947 building is a large painting with the Australian flag, in honour of immigration by Latvian artists, father and son, Werner (Verners) Linde and Gurt (Girt) Linde. This was prepared for the Arts and Crafts exhibition at the University College, then located in the Melbourne Building, West Row, Civic. The exhibition was associated with the first Australian Citizenship Convention held in the Albert Hall in January 1950 (Davies 2006; Gibbney 1988:239).

The school's landscape setting includes the oval to the south-east of the buildings and mature exotic trees which border the site and also the oval. Telopea Park extends along the eastern end across Telopea Park West. The perimeter of the school block is lined with double rows of English Oaks (*Quercus robur*) and there are also ill-maintained remnants of a holly hedge that was in keeping with the hedged garden frontages in the adjacent Barton Residential Precinct.

The surviving trees of a double ring circling the main playing field were mostly cut down in 2002 for safety reasons. They originally consisted of an inner ring of White Poplar (*Populus alba*) and outer ring of Black Locust (*Robinia pseudoacacia*). These two rings were renewed in 2009 by community effort with the inner ring White Poplar as before and the outer ring planting with Gleditsea ('shademaster').

The front of the school is planted with some individual trees with the remains of commemorative plaques, including an Atlas Cedar (*Cedrus atlantica*).

The war memorial, outside the front entrance, and facing Parliament House, was unveiled in 1953. Its inscription reads "To commemorate the services of those students of this school who served in the Second World War. 1939-1945". Ex-students killed in the war included Ernest Freeman, the first male student enrolled in the school in 1923. (personal communication, 2008, Jon Claoué-Long).

#### References

- Bailey, Jim 1994 Heritage Study: Telopea Park School, unpublished student project, University of Canberra.
- Charlton, Ken, Rodney Garnett and Shibu Dutta 2001 *Federal Capital Architecture Canberra 1911-1939*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, National Trust of Australia (ACT), Canberra.



- Davies, Esther V 2006 'The Mystery of the Telopea Park School Painting', *Telopea Topics*, Telopea Park School Newsletter 10:6, 16 June 2006.
- FCAC (Federal Capital Advisory Committee) 1922 Presentation by J S Murdoch, Commonwealth architect, regarding design of Telopea Park School, 27<sup>th</sup> FCAC meeting, February 1922.
- Garnett, Rodney, and Danielle Hyndes 1992 *The Heritage of the Australian Capital Territory*, National Trust of Australia (ACT), Canberra.
- Gibbney, Jim 1988 *Canberra 1913-1983*, AGPS, Canberra.
- Mitchell/Giugula & Thorp Architects 1995 *Master Plan and Cost Study Report – Telopea Park School*, prepared under direction from Construction & Maintenance Management Service on behalf of the ACT Department of Education and Training.
- Power, Kate, Lyall Gillespie and Alec McPherson n.d *A Pictorial History of Telopea Park School 1923-1983*, Telopea Park High School Parents and Citizens Association
- Esther Davies, 20 August 2010, Personal Communication, School Archivist.
- Jon Claoué-Long, May 2008, Personal Communication, President, School Board.

Site Plan



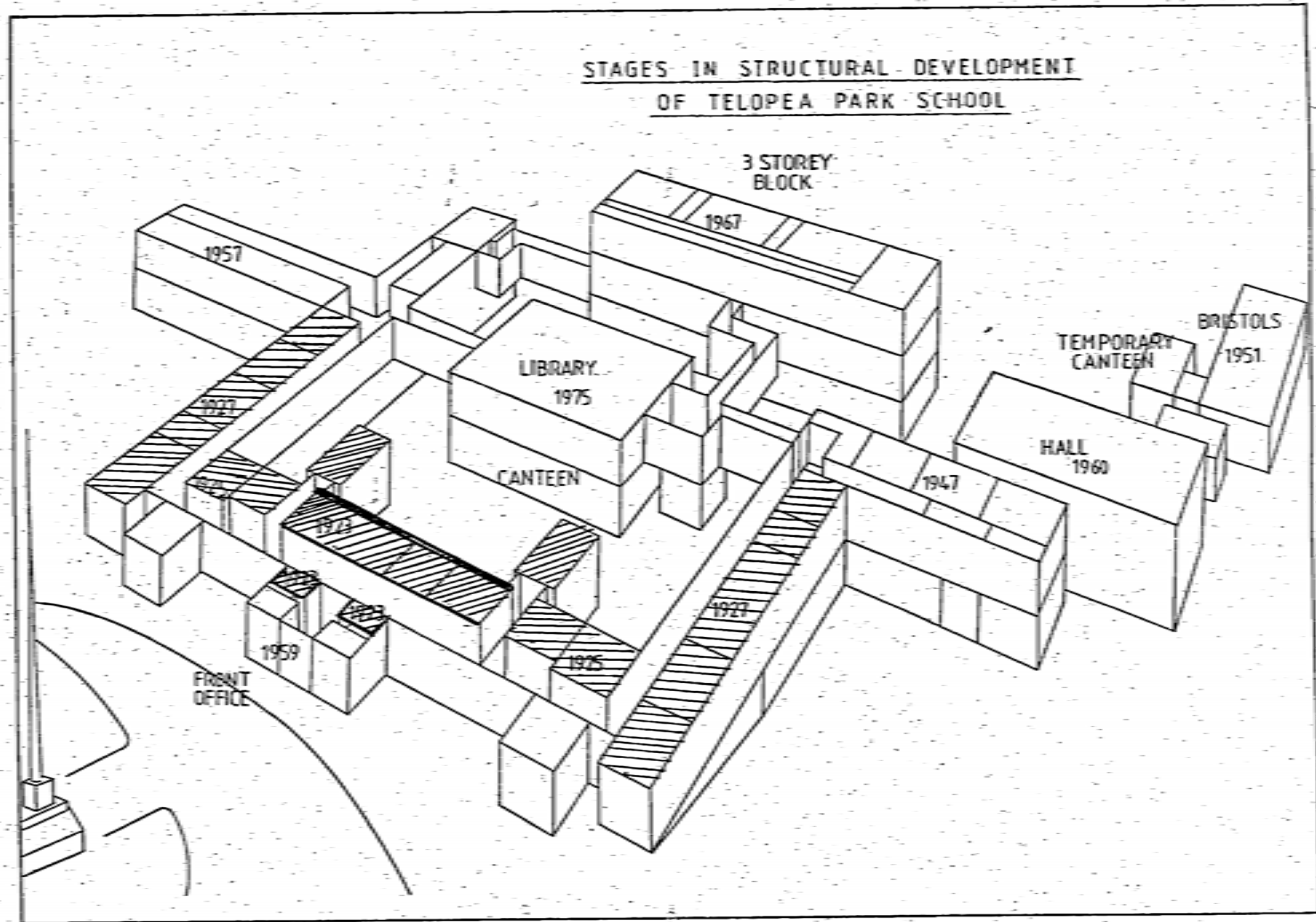
Block 1 Section 29, Barton, Canberra Central



Block 1 Section 29, Barton, Canberra Central

ATTACHMENT 2.7a.

REPRODUCED FROM 'A PICTORIAL HISTORY  
OF TELOPEA PARK SCHOOL.  
PUBLISHED BY TELOPEA PARK HIGH SCHOOL - 1983.



FINAL Registration Feb 2011



images taken 2008