

PART 5: ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

5.1 GENERAL APPROACH

Basis of Assessment

The general approach applied to the assessment of cultural heritage significance is set out in the fifth edition of *The Conservation Plan* (2000) by James Semple Kerr and relies on an understanding of:

- The fabric as evidence
- The associations of the place
- The physical qualities and relationships.

The nature of cultural significance is assessed under five themes described in the Burra Charter as historic, associative, aesthetic, technical/scientific and social significance

5.2 COMMONWEALTH HERITAGE LIST CRITERIA AND NATIONAL HERITAGE LIST CRITERIA

Earlier studies undertaken for the Artillery School have assessed the significance of the School of Artillery against the relevant Commonwealth heritage criteria, revising the earlier RNE assessment accordingly.

The comparative analysis undertaken in conjunction with the study for **Volume 1 - The Core Areas** has established that the site has significance above the threshold level of heritage value for recognition as a place of outstanding heritage significance, and is therefore assessed under the National Heritage List Criteria. This applies to the site as a total entity (the School of Artillery site including the core buildings and outer areas), rather than assessment of individual items, more emphatically so in the case of items located in the outer areas. Therefore the significance of the site as a whole is far greater than the sum of individual parts. The outer areas of the School of Artillery are the site for some of the most intact structures associated with Fortress Sydney, and played a pivotal role in the coastal defence of the city during World War 2. The outer areas also contain support and training facilities, essential to the functioning of the largest integrated artillery training facility in Australia.

Assessments of individual items vary from highly significant down to intrusive and in some cases, recommendations for removal. This in no way detracts from the assessment of the School of Artillery as a precinct of National Heritage Significance. The significance of the more conspicuous and imposing buildings of the central core group is enhanced and reaffirmed by the contribution of significant components of both the core and outer areas of the site.

The outer areas include some of the most intact and historic structures integral to the defence of Sydney during World War 2 as the North Fort Barracks. After the War, this area became established as the major operational components of the School of Artillery and provided essential training facilities, fundamental to the programs of the School until relocation from North Head to Puckapunyal in 1998.

5.3 ASSESSMENT UNDER NATIONAL HERITAGE LIST CRITERIA

The outer areas of the School of Artillery are assessed as integral components of the School of Artillery, under the National Heritage List Criteria:

Criterion A - Historic Value

The place has outstanding heritage value to the nation because of the place's importance in the course, or pattern, of Australia's natural or cultural history.
(NSW Criterion A)

The site is associated with three phases in the European occupation of North Head: the Quarantine Station (1833-1930); the public recreation phase (1929 – 1934); and the defence purposes phase (1934-1998). These associations are still evident through the remaining built fabric of the Quarantine Station Third Cemetery, the stone walls, the Avenue of Honour, and the pre-war, wartime and post-war structures.

The outer areas of the School of Artillery are important in illustrating the implementation of Defence policy in the inter-war years before the onset of the Second World War in 1939. Subsequently, North Fort Barracks and North Fort were strongly associated with the Coastal Defence of NSW from 1939 to 1945 as the First Heavy Brigade Headquarters, which established and ran the Sydney Fire Command, a chain of defensive coastal fortifications established to protect the port of Sydney.

Items associated with North Fort, including the plotting room, radio room, battery observation posts and shelters were important sites in the course of Australian history, in the development of coastal defences in NSW and Sydney during World War 2.

The outer areas were also important for its association with Australia's involvement in the Korean War and Vietnam War. Facilities were expanded greatly during the early 1960's, particularly for the Regimental Training Wing in the Gun Park (Building 41) and expansion of classroom facilities, and expansion of stores and workshops such as the Radar Sheds and Buildings 34, 34A and B for the Air Defence Wing.

Criterion B - Rarity

The place has outstanding heritage value to the nation because of the place's possession of uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of Australia's natural or cultural history. **(NSW Criterion F)**

Items associated with North Fort, including the plotting room, radio room, battery observation posts and shelters are rare examples of intact support buildings for the Sydney Fire Command. The plotting room is a unique and intact example in NSW of a Fortress Plotting Room and Battery Plotting Room, and are integral to understanding the operations of North Fort and the 9.2" gun battery.

The battery observation posts and supporting shelters are a rare combination of the range-finding facilities associated with a coastal defence fortress of the World War 2 era.

Criterion C – Scientific

The place has outstanding heritage value to the nation because of the place's potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of Australia's natural or cultural history.

(NSW Criterion E)

As the headquarters for the Sydney Fire Command, the site contained a large array of buildings, structures, radar positions, plotting rooms, observation posts, searchlights, bunkers etc that have the potential to yield information about the organisational structure of the command during WW2 as well as complex supporting technology that was employed at this time.

The site contains numerous places and items with archaeological potential including the underground Plotting Room, bunkers and tunnels, and sites of former buildings, structures, tracks and roads.

The site was the centrepiece of the defensive harbour network known as the Sydney Fire Command, formed to protect the Harbour during WW2. This Command had its headquarters at the site and employed a complex and highly specialized organizational structure, and utilized a wide range of types and sizes of artillery and supporting technology.

The site contains numerous places and items with archaeological potential including gun mountings, the close defence battery and counter bombardment observation posts. The sites of former buildings and structures include the barracks which provided accommodation to North Fort near the west gate and the former training and lecture rooms to the south of the present classroom group, Buildings 41, 40, and 42. Remnant tracks, roads stone kerbs, retaining walls and drainage systems are evidence of former uses of the outer areas.

The indigenous vegetation communities are also recognised as important representatives of their types with the Eastern Suburbs Banksia Scrub, in particular, listed as an Endangered Ecological Community under the NSW Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995 No 101.

North Head has not been subject to bushfire for many years and is therefore of scientific value in researching the ecological communities in the natural environment.

Criterion D – Representative

The place has outstanding heritage value to the nation because of the place's importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of:

- i. a class of Australia's natural or cultural places; or*
- ii. a class of Australia's natural or cultural environments*

(NSW Criterion G)

The wide range of types of artillery and supporting technology deployed on the site in support of Sydney Harbour defences during World War 2 are representative of structures of this period, including the Battery Observation Posts and shelters, the plotting room and artillery ranges.

The site is representative as an example of important natural environment set within an area of Eastern Suburbs Banksia Scrub.

Criterion E – Aesthetic

The place has outstanding heritage value to the nation because of the place's importance in exhibiting aesthetic characteristics and/ or a high degree of creative or technical achievement.

(NSW Criterion C)

The aesthetic quality of the outer areas of the site arises because of its natural attributes and unique location rather than the architectural quality of buildings and structures which are in the main, utilitarian in function and aesthetic character. Topographically the aesthetic and visual qualities of North Head are spectacular. The elevated position is set against a backdrop of scenic coastline to the east and distant views of the city and harbour to the south and west.

The formal geometry of the School of Artillery is set against a wild backdrop with the bushland encroaching around the perimeter. The overall qualities of the School of Artillery are of a formalized habitable space created in a natural environment. The contrast of vastness and detail: enclosure and intricate flora along bush tracks contrasts with grand vistas and open skies.

Criterion F - Creative/ Technical

The place has outstanding heritage value to the nation because of the place's importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period

(NSW Criterion E)

Many structures are also important because of their association with specific wartime military roles such as the plotting room, battery observation posts, and radio room. The training facilities are evidence of training in new military technologies including Radar, range finding, miniature ranges for target training of different armaments. The shift in emphasis from coastal artillery and heavy guns during the war to anti-aircraft defence up to the advent of the Hamel guns in the 1990's, is evident in the remnant structures in the outer areas of the site.

Various elements associated with post-war artillery training, including locating technology, miniature artillery ranges and Radar workshops were physical evidence of the evolutionary development in changing armaments and military technology. The development of the site may be readily interpreted through investigation of the layering and interface of remaining structures.

Criterion G – Social

The place has outstanding heritage value to the nation because the place has a special or strong association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons.

(NSW Criterion D)

North Fort and the School of Artillery were important to the many Defence personnel who were trained or stationed at the complex, and to military historians. This is demonstrated in the determination of former personnel of the AWAS, RAEME Defence Reserves and Regular Army to establish the Royal Australian Artillery (RAA) National Museum at North Fort in 1990.

The obstacle courses were evidence of the imperative for fitness instilled in the military training programs of the 1960's onwards. The oval was significant to the community as the venue for local and visiting sporting events.

North Head is important to the people of Sydney and Manly specifically, as a major tourist attraction, and as a complex with major scenic and historical qualities.

Criterion H - Associative

The place has outstanding heritage value to the nation because of the place's special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in Australia's natural or cultural history.
(NSW Criterion B)

No assessment under this criterion.

Criterion I – Indigenous

The place has outstanding heritage value to the nation because of the place's importance as part of indigenous tradition

Aboriginal heritage: North Head is a special place of ceremony, healing and burial, with sites of rock engravings, open camps and artifacts. It is a whole headland without institutional boundaries.

North Head is associated with significant early contact events between Aborigines and the First Fleeters.