

NATIONAL TRUST OF AUSTRALIA (W.A.)  
**HISTORIC PLACES ASSESSMENT FORM**  
BUILT ENVIRONMENT / LANDSCAPES AND CONSERVATION

**I. IDENTIFICATION / LOCATION**

**Current Name of Place** SUNSET HOSPITAL (from 1943)

**Former/Other Names** INVALID DEPOT (in 1872 prior to relocation to the present site) then the OLD MEN'S HOME

**Postal Address of Property** No. Birdwood Parade      **Street** DALKEITH      **District**

**Local Government Authority** City of Nedlands      **Title Details:** Reserve A1667

**Map References** 1:100,000 **Map Name**      **Grid References**  
**Latitude** 32° 0' 2 "S      **Longitude** 115° 48' 02"E

**Original Owner** Government of Western Australia

**Current Owner's Name** Health Department, Government of Western Australia

**Current Occupant** Health Department

**Architect/Designer** Hillson Beasley, Chief Architect, P W D      **Builder**

**Prominent Associated Person/s** Albert Rust, Administrator; Padbury family as benefactors.

**Construction Date** Commenced 1904, completed 1906. Transportable constructed circa 1896 probably relocated here after 1906.      **Alteration/Additions Date** Various

**Original Use** Old Men's Home      **Current Use** Old People's Home, Hostel for elderly people and the permanently incapacitated.

**Conservation Recommendations :** Initially an archaeological examination of the site and the surrounding lands as part of the study precinct is required, followed by a conservation plan containing a management plan, to address the existing fabric of the buildings, landscape and site functions. Contemplation of any change to the governance of this complex should trigger the above process as the very minimum requirement

**Heritage Integrity** (ie any subsequent changes which may have affected historic values)

**THE GROUNDS:** The evolution of management and work practices such as the transition from self sufficiency due to isolation have resulted in the development of aesthetic gardens in place of the original. In addition, the abandonment of reliance on river transport in favour of road access is a changes which may have contributed significant changes to the focus and use of the grounds. Elements within the site such as the Padbury lookout, significant trees and so on remain as important markers of the early development.

**THE BUILDINGS:** The buildings and facilities are generally in excellent condition considering the age of the complex. The heritage integrity is largely intact with the exception of some recent alterations to services and accommodation resulting from changes in practices and clientele accommodated by this institution. as well as upgrading some facilities The majority of the built complex is intact

**Extent of Assessment** (ie specific elements included in assessment)

**THE GROUNDS:** Including all of the area contained in the Reserve 1667 9547. The area to the south contained by a line extending the Iris Avenue boundary to the river alignment then eastwards some 370 metres and returned north to the original reservation contains the hot pool remnants and is the site of the original jetty and is considered to have significant associations with the site.

**THE BUILDINGS:** All buildings on site prior to 1910 are included in the assessment together with the hospital building dating from 1927. Of considerable significance is the "Bungalow".

**Type of Assessment** (ie a place, group, precinct, streetscape, conservation area etc)  
CONSERVATION AREA

## 2. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

### *\*architectural/ technical accomplishment*

The complex is a fine example of a 1904 residential institution designed to reflect the perceived needs of the inmates, manifest in the unity of the materials, in use the execution of the layout, the low scale profile of the complex, attention to natural ventilation through design regimes and placement of components. Seen as a transition from the former Mount Eliza Depot, the complex is not austere, but a characteristic accomplishment of the architect.

### *\*demonstration of a way of life, custom, process or function*

The complex provides a direct link to early forms of palliative care in Western Australia as well as to methods of dealing with the poor. It has evolved from a degree of self sufficiency into a hospital for the frail aged in the modern idiom.

### *\*historical significance of development of cultural phases; association with important figures*

The long association that this institution has had with the surrounding residential area, and the part it has played in the development of social health and welfare of the aged in regional and national terms for over a century is being recognised. The buildings and site are of significance.

### *\*environmental importance; townscape or landscape value; high degree of unity of setting*

#### THE SITE

The site is seen as a regionally significant component of the zone interface between the progressive estuarine landscape and the northern shoreline and cliff formation. The site is generally intact relevant to its original profile although the waterline of the river has been considerably modified, a factor which does not detract from the contemporary visual significance. The infusion of exotic species is seen as an harmonious supplement of the remnant natural landscape of the cliff-top environs from the riverine aspect. In terms of streetscape, the open pleasant verdant site melds comfortably into the suburban context as a significant open space.

#### THE BUILDINGS

The restrained use of vernacular wall materials in the original construction engenders considerable visual unity and integrity complemented by green iron roofing to the major elements linking verandahs by means of covered ways. The buildings on site meld into the suburban context in terms of sequential pattern and scale as a form of punctuation between the important residential assets to the east and west. The loss of this marker, or ill considered change could detrimentally affect the suburb.

### *\*scientific / archaeological importance*

It is considered that the site has the potential to yield considerable material through general research as well as archaeological scrutiny and is therefore of significance.

### *\*educational/research value*

The site contains historic elements, and associations of elements which display methods of survival and development of a community purposely removed from the mainstream of European culture in Perth at the beginning of the 20th Century. The planning, in a military vernacular, articulates a common institution of this type while its subsequent modifications illustrate the changing role of the land and use of the complex.

### *\*social significance*

The turn of the century was a turbulent period for Western Australia, following the influx of population for the gold boom, the bank crash and consequent social disruption. The need for the institution was demonstrated, and finance provided. The significance of this comprehensive facility in period context is most significant.

### *\*scarcity value; a particularly fine (or unique) example*

THE SITE: Whilst the site has clearly undergone a metamorphosis in terms of size and utilisation from the original concept, it serves as a rare form of marker to preserve a footprint of the early function carried out on site.

THE BUILDINGS: The buildings are a fine example of the early 20th Century concept for residential care resulting from community concern for the welfare of the poor, the aged and the infirm. There are few purpose designed complexes remaining, still utilised for basically the same function as originally envisaged.

The treed character of the site contrasts with a more urban landscape to its west, while blending with the natural skyline to the east. The main visual elements of this site seen from the more distant viewpoints are the dense and rounded canopy of the fig trees, the building rooflines, verandahs and covered ways, and the vertical contrast provided by the pines from which the blending of the predominantly green hues from the foliage, lawns and roofing create a well established and mature appearance.

The site is bordered by clumps of mature trees most of which are not particularly unusual, but have developed into excellent examples in cultivation. Sugar gums *Eucalyptus cladocalyx* are now substantial trees on this site and are located in significant stands along Birdwood Parade for example, and as isolated elements throughout the gardens.

The change in clientele and work practices has led to a general evolution of the site which developed from an isolated somewhat self-sufficient institution originally boasting modern buildings and services, into an established yet antiquated hospital, isolated from similar institutes in a primarily suburban precinct.

#### TYPE OF LANDFORM:

Coastal limestone and sand commonly named Tamala limestone, accompanied by Safety Bay Sands.

#### TYPE OF VEGETATION:

Jarrah / She-oak woodlands

#### SPECIAL FEATURES:

Steep cliff line along a foreshore that has been built out into the shallows of the Swan River.

#### THE BUILDINGS:

To the design of Hillson Beasley, buildings to house 400 inmates was commenced in 1904, basically of stone construction with corrugated galvanised iron roofing. Limestone for the construction was won from the nearby quarry at Point Resolution. As the river was still considered a viable means of transport, a 90m jetty and shelter (since demolished) was included. The two storey hospital building at the eastern end of the complex was added later.

Accommodation included three residential ward buildings each around a central ablution facility, administration, kitchen, dining, laundry, nurses home, superintendent's residence and mortuary. One of the three ward blocks was used as an hospital. The wards were heated by 'Little Giant' cast iron stoves.

The service buildings are of considerable interest as largely intact shells retaining a number of architectural elements typical of the time. Significant among these is the external and internal detail of the dining block, the mortuary (now perhaps unfortunately painted externally) and the laundry facility.

After the complex was completed, a timber framed weatherboard and iron building known as the 'bungalow' was removed from its original site at the foot of Mount Eliza. It was transported by horse and dray in sections to the new 22 acre location then known as "The Old Mens' Home". For many years the building housed the alcoholics and the rowdier inmates of the institution. The floor was added much later. The structure is still sound, and used as a craft centre. Research to verify its provenance should be commissioned.

For detailed information on the interim alterations and additions to the buildings, and the hospital, refer to the Appendix.

Of great significance at the time of inspection (1990) was the cinema projection facility in the dining room complete with fittings together with the upturned cup in saucer exactly as the projectionist had left it when the equipment was last used. It is understood that the cinema projection equipment has recently been removed for storage elsewhere.

Committee Recommendation    Classification    CEC, June 1991: L & C, May 1993

Council Recommendation    Date    5.10.1993.

Owner advised    Date    Local Authority advised    Date

Australian Heritage Commission Form completed and sent    Date

Interim Listing Date    Accepted on National Estate Register    Date

NOTE 1:

"The Municipal Inventory of the City of Nedlands Stage 1", May 1991 includes Sunset Old Mens Home including 'internal and external portions of buildings extant in 1991 from the original stone construction and including timber "Bungalow", stone administration/office, laundry, mortuary, kitchen, dining, (with later interior additions), nurses quarters, superintendent's residence and ward buildings A1-A4, B1-B4, C1-C4 and later hospital block, all landscaping, fencing, planting and not including later additions to wards.'

NOTE 2:

On 19th July 1972, as a result of a request by the L & C Committee the buildings of Sunset Hospital were inspected by some members of the Built Environment Committee (now the Cultural Environment Committee) of the National Trust, and the following note was recorded on the Trust Files:-

"It was agreed that the buildings were not equal in quality to the contemporary buildings of the former asylum, now Swanbourne Hospital. Most suffer from the unsympathetic additions for current use - eg. the red brick lavatory block in the centre of the verandah in front of the stone façade of most of the buildings. The two wards which are the least altered stand immediately behind the Padbury Look-out with its magnificent moreton bay fig trees.  
None of the buildings are recommended for classification by the BEC."

<b>Nominator/Assessment Team</b> (Name, addresses and contact no.)	<b>Date</b>
D Kelsall, 67 Riley Road, Dalkeith. 386 2655	June 1991
D Poulton, 22 Palmerston Street, Mosman Park. 383 4408	May 1993
J Viska and S Clegg.	

*\*aesthetic importance*

SITE: The grounds are an attractive setting for the institution, being well maintained and mature in appearance with a variety of mature trees, shrubs and expansive lawns assisting to bind the built form into a relaxed, well established institution that exudes a wholesome atmosphere. The appearance from early photos furthers this appreciation, suggesting not only contiguity with that concept, but that 'Sunset' has remained a small community exhibiting the clean well manicured appearance of a self-respecting town.

*\*recreational importance*

SITE: The grounds provide a large expanse of public space available to patients, while the foreshore originally part of the complex is well used by the public, and now reserved principally for that purpose.

*\*diversity of species and Community*

SITE: Remnant bushland in the vicinity of the cliff provides a strip of habitat that adjoins more substantial and virtually continuous reserves extending eastwards along the foreshore towards Perth, and westwards. The well established landscape throughout the complex is attractive to a variety of birds that nest in the area.

*\*naturalness*

SITE: The complex still appears to echo the perspective developed by Hillson Beasley, the landscape having matured to improve his concept even further.

*\*fragility*

SITE: The boundaries of the complex have been physically diminished over the years through various external developments such as local urban expansion and increased municipal administration of adjoining lands, concentrating the services provided by the Hospital to a point where further reduction may impose a heavy burden on its existing character. Furthermore, the changing nature of health care, and specialisation of other institutes in catering for public health has impinged on the need for institutions such as 'Sunset Hospital', redefining original services where appropriate, and / or replacing them with modern alternatives that may be available at other locations. Therefore while the original functions are essentially being continued, there is a series of amendments caused through numerous and varied changes which have increased the fragility of this complex

*\*position in an ecological or geographical unit*

SITE: The size of 'Sunset Hospital', and its proximity to the river, creates a significant part of both the local Dalkeith ecological and geographical environment, furthermore the mature landscape provides a valuable habitat in conjunction with adjacent areas.

### **3. CONSERVATION RECOMMENDATIONS**

See Conservation Recommendations above.

### **4. HISTORY**

#### **THE INSTITUTION**

Around 1870, the 14th Regiment vacated the "Depot" at the base of Mount Eliza near where the Kennedy Fountain is today. The buildings were fitted out as an asylum for old and incapable male paupers. It was called the Poorhouse. The Institution was run from 1869 - 1887 by Mr and Mrs Dewis. On Mrs Dewis' death John Price Wade became Master, his wife the cook, and Mrs Eliza Speers the Matron. Wade retired in 1909 to be succeeded by Albert Rust in 1910.

Assistance with running the establishment was undertaken by the 'Tuppenny Orderlies', the able bodied inmates. They worked in the kitchen and laundry, and with general nursing in the hospital. From the outset, the reward for these services was additional rations, and later by payment of 2d (Tuppence) per day. The last of the men to receive this remuneration died in May 1980.

One of the buildings added to the Depot in 1896 was constructed to a design for Portable Post Offices and erected at the Old Men's Depot. This information is annotated on a set of working drawings Folio 4437 on sheet 4091 held at the Batty Library.

At the end of 1904 there were 295 men in the old home and the average daily occupancy during the year was 315. In the Report for the year 1904 (V & P 1905 Vol 1, Paper No 4) of the Superintendent of Public Charities, it is stated that the Claremont buildings (in course of erection) would be ready by the end of 1905. Details of these first new buildings are given in the extract below from the PWD Report for 1904. (Source Batty Library).

1. Locality Plan 1904 (W R Lakey, Contractor) includes Wards A & B, Infirmary, Kitchens, Laundries etc. Also shows site of Point Resolution Quarries. P W D 10874 (c2405).\*
2. P W D 12172 - Block Plan shows use allocated to buildings in 1905.
3. P W D 13104 (c3203)\* Locality Plan, Site Plan etc. Contractor, W Atkins.  
\* Contract Numbers- copies of contracts are available in the Archives.  
(M Lukis 12/6/82)

#### THE ADMINISTRATORS OF SUNSET

1906 - 1909 John Price Wade was Master, his wife was the cook.

1910 - 1938 Albert Rust. See also the attached Appendix summarised from "Sunset Hospital, its history and function"

Rust eased the regimentation and formality of the institution, removed the gates, eased the rules on a variety of matters including the need for uniforms for the staff. He worked tirelessly for the institution raising funds for the new hospital, library books, radios, film projection booth, stage for concerts, and so on. In 1924 a broadcast listening station was officially opened at the home. Live concerts were encouraged.

Sources include "Sunset Hospital. Its History and Function", by Ann T Whyntie

## 5. DESCRIPTION

### THE SITE

The location is riverside land extending along the south east boundary of the suburb of Dalkeith, and includes gently undulating hills and limestone cliffs that fall towards the river adjacent to an area known as Armstrong Spit, adjoining Melville Waters to the south.

The site is now partially bounded by Birdwood Parade to the north, Iris Avenue to the west with bushland to the east. Beasley's original perspective sketch has a site plan indicating that the original reservation extended northwards to Beatrice Road along Iris Avenue (then Brown Road), and only as far as Success Road to the east. This original east boundary has since been extended at some stage considerably eastwards to provide land for the 1927 hospital addition. Success Road does not now exist. The same perspective shows a path and jetty in the river again indicating the extent of reclamation of the river in this vicinity.

Tree species remnant of the original vegetation are prevalent on this site, tending to be more common towards the north eastern sector. Some remnant bushland is still apparent on the slopes of the cliff now bounding the hospital on the river side, and features healthy examples of trees and shrubs common to the region such as tuart, marri, jarrah, with grass trees, wattles and acacia species dotted throughout the precinct.

Little remains of the original agricultural areas used to supply the complex with food, these having all been resumed as part of the now (aesthetically) landscaped site. Evidence exists however, to support the location of some areas that were cultivated, one such example being remnant fig trees from the orchard. There is a wealth of archaeological sites that could be studied in the area to determine past activities some of which are evident through the remains of built structures and modification of the landscape.

The site was fenced from the outset with pickets to restrain the inmates. Hot water was derived from a 3,000 metre deep artesian bore, the casing of which cracked in the 1920s. The Hot Pool was formed as a result. This was filled in around 1950.

Viewed from distant locations on the Swan River and its southern shores, the prominent clifftop hospital is dominated by large trees, particularly norfolk island pines *Araucaria heterophylla* and also a group of moreton bay figs *Ficus macrophylla*. Only a portion of the building complex is clearly visible from the river side. The word- SUNSET - constructed of white painted concrete laid on the embankment leading from the river to the hospital is a clear landmark that can be seen from across the river.