

Submission on the Assessment of a Place for the Commonwealth Heritage List - Lake Burley Griffin and Adjacent Lands

1. The place has significant heritage value because of the place's importance in the course, or pattern, of Australia's natural or cultural history.

Lake Burley Griffin and Adjacent Lands (LBG) has significant heritage value because it is central in the design and history of Australia's capital city.

In 1901 the Congress of Engineers, Architects, Surveyors and Others Interested in the Building of the Federal Capital of Australia, advocated that the Federal capital should have an abundant supply of water to allow the creation of lakes, gardens and fountains. The government surveyor Charles Scrivener, who played a major role in the selection of the Canberra site, gave as one of the reasons for selecting the current site was the opportunity for 'storing water for ornamental purposes at reasonable cost'. The international design competition launched in 1911 for planning the national capital city required entries to include ornamental water, parks and gardens.

Walter Burley Griffin and his wife Marion Mahoney submitted the winning entry with the lake and the adjacent land as the centre piece of their design.

The development of Canberra languished until the mid-50s when Prime Minister Robert Menzies decided it needed to expand. An important part of the transformation of Canberra from a small country town into a capital city that Australians could be proud of, was the construction of LBG.

Construction commenced in 1960 and was completed in September 1963. Prime Minister Menzies officially inaugurated the lake in April 1964.

The land surrounding the lake also encompass' much European and Indigenous history including the grand homesteads of early settlers including Yarralumla (now the Governor-General's official residence) and Duntroon (now the Officers' Mess at RMC) as well as their tenants' humbler dwellings like Blundell's Cottage.

It also includes many historical buildings associated with the Australian Government such as Old Parliament House, the Administration Building (now known as the John Gorton Building), West Block, East Block, the Treasury Building and the National library.

The lakeshore is also the setting for many of the newer national institutions and memorials such as the High Court, the Australian National Gallery, the National Portrait Gallery, the National Museum of Australia and the National Police Memorial.

The land was also home to many of the workers who built the early Canberra and traces still remain of the workers camps and cottages around Westlake in Yarralumla.

Stirling Park in Yarralumla, also known as Gurubang Dhaura (Stony Ground) to the Ngunnawal people and Yarramundi Peninsula has been long associated with the Ngunnawal people with evidence of traditional use that continues today.

2. The place has significant heritage value because of the place's possession of uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of Australia's natural or cultural history.

LBG has significant heritage value because it contains a wide variety and number of rare and endangered natural species and ecological communities.

Yarramundi Peninsula contains a natural temperate grasslands community which is listed as a critically endangered ecological community under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC Act). It is also habitat for the striped legless lizard, a listed vulnerable species under the EPBC Act and the Perunga grasshopper a vulnerable species under the ACT Nature Conservation Act. Remnant native grassland is also found at Attunga Point.

Stirling Park provides significant habitat for the Button Wrinklewort (*Rutidosis leptorrhynchoides*). It contains the largest population in the ACT of about 49,000 plants, and therefore contains one of the most viable populations of the species in Australia. Button Wrinklewort has been declared an endangered species under the EPBC Act.

Stirling Park also contains significant areas of White Box–Yellow Box–Blakely's Red Gum Grassy Woodland which is listed as a critically endangered ecological community under the EPBC Act.

LBG also has also become one of the most significant aquatic ecosystems in the ACT especially the Jerrabomberra Wetlands. It supports a wide variety of land and water birds including the Latham's Snipe which is listed as a Migratory Wetland species under the EPBC Act and the Japan-Australia Migratory Bird Agreement. The lake also provides habitat for the Murray cod which is listed as vulnerable under the EPBC Act.

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

There are several sites within LBG that have the potential to improve our understanding of Australia's natural and cultural history.

The rare and endangered species and ecological communities found in and around LBG provide opportunities for research into the risks and opportunities in respect of the protection and growth of the flora and fauna populations.

The settlement at Westlake has archaeological remains that have not been professionally surveyed that have the potential to shed light on the life and conditions of early Canberra workers and their families from the 1920s through to the 1960s.

Similarly, the Indigenous heritage at Stirling Park, Yarramundi Peninsula and Attunga Point offers considerable scope for research into the social and economic life of Indigenous people prior to European settlement.

Springbank, Snapper Island and the Old Police Cottage (c 1920s) on Alexandrina Drive, which was once part of a dairy, also offers potential information on the history of dairy farming on the banks of the Molonglo River.

4. The place has significant heritage value because of the place's importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of:

- 1. a class of Australia's natural or cultural places; or**
- 2. a class of Australia's natural or cultural environments.**

LGB has significant heritage value because of its role as the centre piece of a notable early example of a planned national capital city.

Griffin's plan for Canberra is a significant example of two major urban planning themes at the time - Garden City and City Beautiful – which incorporated water features, landscapes, axes, public parks classical style grand public buildings and tree lined streets.

5. The place has significant heritage values because of the place's importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics valued by a community or cultural group

LGB has significant heritage value because it is the key feature in displaying the characteristics of a designed landscape that has become known as the "Bush Capital".

In keeping with Griffin's plan, the vistas across the Lake to the Brindabella Hills and across to Lake to the City skyline are highly valued by local residents and visitors alike. The view from the lookout at Mt Ainslie and drawn by Marion Mahony as part of the winning entry to design Canberra in 1912, is one of the first places residents take their visitors. The similarities between the drawing and the actual view today are remarkable.

The landscaping surrounding the Lake with its mix of formal parks and gardens juxtaposed with the natural bush leading to the "borrowed" landscape of the Brindabellas, epitomises the "Bush Capital". Nowhere else can claim this title of which Canberrans are justly proud.

The beauty of the lake and its foreshores in the changing seasons is much admired and valued. Similarly, the positioning of imposing national buildings such as the Australian National Gallery and the High Court within the natural landscape of LGB creates an interesting contrast that has wide aesthetic appeal.

6. The place has significant heritage value because of the place's importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period.

LBG has significant heritage value because it was planned and constructed using the latest innovative technology and techniques at the time.

Much of the planning for the Lake was underpinned by scientific hydrology studies dating back to the 1920s. The lake itself was constructed during the time of the Snowy Mountain Scheme and the organisational arrangements, planning and engineering were heavily influenced by the expertise, personnel and experience from that world class project.

The construction was not without its challenges, which were dealt with both creatively and innovatively. For example, to overcome faults in the bedrock at the dam site efficiently and economically, the dam was constructed using post-tensioning techniques that had only recently been introduced. Controlling the height of the lake was also only possible using the recently developed "fish belly" crest gates. This solution had the added benefit of improving the aesthetics of the dam and allowed a road to run over it.

Commonwealth Avenue Bridge and Kings Avenue Bridge spanning the lake are also noteworthy and beautiful engineering accomplishments with a single geometric arc formed by a continuous prestressed concrete box girder.

7. The place has significant heritage value because of the place's strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons.

LBG has significant heritage value because it is a popular place for social, recreational, sporting celebratory and ceremonial occasions by Canberra residents and interstate and international visitors.

LBG is a well-recognised and valued symbol of Canberra as Australia's national capital. It has been an integral part of the social and cultural history of Canberra and its residents and is central to the history and development of Canberra as the Nation's Capital.

LBG as the heart of the "Bush Capital" plays a significant role in the identity and pride of Canberra residents. It even defines where residents' allegiances lie – north or south of the Lake.

LBG is Yarralumla's backyard and there is an extraordinarily strong community attachment by local residents who are quick to defend any threat to it. The wider Canberra community also takes great pride in the beauty and amenity offered by LBG including Weston Park, Commonwealth Park, Rond Terrace and Kings Park, all of which are immensely popular.

Since its construction, LBG has been the venue for a wide variety of social, sporting, recreational, celebratory and ceremonial events. It has long been used for activities such as rowing, sailing, running, walking, cycling, tourism and BBQs. It is a popular community gathering space for major public events such as Floriade, fireworks, light shows and

markets. It is also the venue for citizenship ceremonies, ceremonial tree plantings, fly-pasts and commemorative events.

8. The place has significant heritage value 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.

LBG has significant heritage value because its design and construction are linked to many famous individuals and prominent public sector organisations in the history of Australia.

LBG is most famously associated with Walter Burley Griffin and his wife Marion Mahoney (whose 150th birthday has just been celebrated).

However, many other notable Australians have been associated with LBG as urban planners, engineers and landscape architects. People such as Charles Scrivener, John Sulman, Charles Weston, Lindsay Prior, and John Overall.

Prime Minister Robert Menzies was a strong supporter of LBG and played a key role in making it a reality. He officially opened the lake in 1964.

Many Australian Government public service organisations and Parliamentary Committees have been involved with the design, planning and construction of LBG. Some have helped, some have hindered. They include the Department of Works, the Federal Capital Advisory Committee, the Federal Capital Commission, and the National Capital Development and Planning Commission. The National Capital Development Commission (NCDC) formed in 1957-58 was the lead authority responsible for the engineering, hydrology and landscaping that finally delivered what exists today.

9. The place has significant heritage value because of the place's importance as part of Indigenous tradition.

LBG has significant heritage value because there are a number of sites that were, and continue to be, used for traditional Indigenous purposes.

There are twelve recorded sites at Yarramundi Peninsula that have been formally recognised by the ACT Government as being of heritage significance. The sites consist of isolated finds and artefact scatters.

There is also a possible Indigenous scarred tree at Stirling Park/Gurubang Dhaura. Stirling Park also contains several other sites of historical and current importance to the Ngunnawal people including stone arrangements, a mourning tree and a Womans' area.

Yarralumla Residents Association
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