

NATIONAL TRUST REGISTER OF SIGNIFICANT PLACES

CITATION

NAME OF PLACE: CASEY HOUSE (or Australian Heritage Commission Headquarters)

LOCATION OF PLACE: Rhodes Place, Yarralumla, ACT 2600

Section and Block Suburb: Block 1, Section 44, Yarralumla

Area bounded by: All of Block 1 to include the garden surrounding the house.

FEATURES INTRINSIC TO THE HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PLACE:

The features intrinsic to the heritage significance of the place are:

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE:

Casey House is significant for its social and historical associations.

The residence was constructed specifically to ensure at least one Government Minister was resident in Canberra during the time when Government Administration was shared between Canberra and Melbourne.

RG Casey, as Treasurer with the Lyons Government became the resident Minister, and his occupancy was from September 1938 to April 1939. He was the only Government Minister to reside at Casey House.

The seemingly unpretentious building has non-standard narrow bricks, some Art Deco detail and was a controversial construction at the time of housing shortage and Financial stringency in Australia.

(Amended 8/11/89)

SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS:

The following requirements are identified as essential to the conservation of the heritage significance of this place. These requirements are prepared to implement the following conservation policy for the place:

1. Requirements Relating to the Building

1.1 Not applicable

1.2

2. Requirements Relating to the Setting

2.1

2.2

MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS:

In assessing this place for the interim Heritage Places Register, the Trust recommends that the following actions and activities should be undertaken which will enhance the heritage values of the place.

DOCUMENT HISTORY

1. date Draft citation considered by Council at Meeting (number)
2. 11.7.89 Classified .APPROVED
3. 20/3/90 Listed for nomination - to be entered in the Interim List

Lessee: Australian Heritage Commission

4. RELEVANT PRINCIPAL NATIONAL HISTORIC THEMES:

HISTORY ASSOCIATED WITH ANY OCCUPANT

Casey House was built for Richard Gardiner Casey and his family when Casey was Treasurer for the Lyons Government. The building was built specifically so that a Government Minister was permanently resident in Canberra. This was at a time when the Government Administration operated from both Melbourne and Canberra. Cabinet meetings, different cities and travel time lengthy. There was an expressed need for at least one Minister to be permanently resident in the National Capital and the Government decided to build a grand house for the Treasurer. The plans were for a grand mansion and there was both Parliamentary and public controversy and criticism that so much money was being spent on one house when there was a great shortage of houses and services for other public servants who were obliged to live in the National Capital.

Casey and his family took up residence on 25 September 1938. Their residency was short. In April 1939 Joseph Lyons died and Menzies became Prime Minister. Casey was moved to the Supply and Development portfolio and was then posted to Washington. Casey House was offered to the newly appointed Canadian High Commissioner, Mr C J Burchell, as a residence. He declined that particular offer but agreed to use the building as the offices of the Canadian High Commission. This use continued until 1973.

In 1979 Casey House became the headquarters of the Australian Heritage Commission.

5. ANALYSIS AGAINST THE CRITERIA SPECIFIED IN SCHEDULE 2 OF THE LAND (PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT) ACT 1991

Under Section 56 the criteria for the assessment of the heritage significance of places are:

- (i) a place which demonstrates a high degree of technical and/or creative achievement, by showing qualities of innovation or departure, or representing a new achievement of its time;**
- (ii): a place which exhibits outstanding design or aesthetic qualities valued by the community or a cultural group;**
- (iii) a place which demonstrates a distinctive way of life, taste, tradition, religion, land use, custom, process, design or function which is no longer practised, is in danger of being lost, or is of exceptional interest;**
- (iv): a place which is highly valued by the community or a cultural group for reasons of strong or special religious, spiritual, cultural, educational or social associations;**
- (v) a place which is the only known or only comparatively intact example of its type;**
- (vi) a place which is a notable example of a class of natural or cultural places or landscapes and which demonstrates the principal characteristics of that class;**
- (vii): a place which has strong or special associations with a person, group, event, development or cultural phase which played a significant part in local or national history;**
- (viii) a place which represents the evolution of a natural landscape, including significant geological features, landforms, biota or natural processes;**
- (ix) a place which is a significant habitat or locality for the life cycle of native species; for rare, endangered or uncommon species; for species at the limits of their natural range; or for district occurrences of species;**

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1. DESCRIPTION OF PLACE:

BUILDING

(a) CONSTRUCTION METHOD

A two storey red brick building, with a generally symmetrical form, facing a garden and having a formal entry court. It has regular fenestration and a tiled roof, indicating a Georgian Revival character, but there are Art Deco patterns in the doorways and some cornices. The house was originally comprised of 7 bedrooms, 3 full bathrooms, study, day nursery, drawing room, reception and dining room. The house had every modern convenience for that time.

b) ARCHITECT: E H Henderson

c) BUILDER: W J Perry

d) CONSTRUCTION HISTORY

Original sketches show that a grander residence than the present Casey House was planned. After various alterations in the choice of site and design of house, official approval for the building was granted in December 1937. Work began on site in January 1938 but the builder, W J Perry, was instructed to stop work almost immediately because of controversy over the extravagance of the plans and modified plans for the building were sought. Discussions followed where it was suggested that the Resident Minister's House and the Prime Minister's Lodge swap functions, because the Lodge was too small for Prime Minister Lyon's large family. There were also suggestions that Casey House be converted into flats to house more than one family and therefore ease the housing shortage in Canberra. None of these alternative ideas were put into effect and the building of Casey House went ahead to be completed on 21 September 1938 at a cost 6572 pounds. Special bricks from the Canberra Brickworks were commissioned for the building. These narrow bricks were rarely used in Canberra. Lady Maie Casey chose all the interior fittings, including the door furniture, mantles for the fireplaces, bathroom tiles and the original colour scheme.

e) RECOMMENDED CURTILAGE

All of Block 1 to include the garden surrounding the house.

f) CONDITION

The building is in good condition but with alterations to the east wing. Some interiors have been converted to office use. A temporary demountable office suite to house the Commission library has been added.

g) CONSERVATION REQUIRED

2. STATUS OF PLACE AT NOMINATION DATE:

HERITAGE STATUS Sent to AHC.

3. BACKGROUND:

Owner: Australian Property Group
Department of Administration Services
5-7 Torrens St, Braddon ACT 2600

- (x) **a place which exhibits unusual richness, diversity or significant transitions of flora, fauna or natural landscapes and their elements; or**
- (xi) **a place which demonstrates a likelihood of providing information which will contribute significantly to a wider understanding of natural or cultural history, by virtue of its use as a research site, teaching site, type locality or benchmark site.**

6. **REFERENCES:**

Author Title date publication

Documentation provided by the Australian Heritage Commission

