



Heritage Council of NSW

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## **AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE OF LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS (AILA)**

### **SUBMISSION**

North Beach Precinct, Cliff Road

(George Hanley Drive North Wollongong)

Address: Woolyungah - Wollongong NSW, 2500

Traditional custodians: Dharawal (Tarawal/ Thuruwal)

Public submission period closing date: 31 July 2023

Any questions or require further information, please do not hesitate to contact Stuart Read, Senior Heritage Officer, Heritage Programs, South at Heritage NSW on telephone (02) 9873 8554 or by email: [stuart.read@environment.nsw.gov.au](mailto:stuart.read@environment.nsw.gov.au)

Proposed nomination :

<https://apps.environment.nsw.gov.au/dpcheritageapp/ViewHeritageItemDetails.aspx?ID=5052983>

### **PREFACE**

AILA pays respect to, the Dharawal People, traditional owners of the land to which this proposal relates.

The Australian Institute of Landscape Architects (AILA) is the peak national body for Landscape Architecture. The Australian Institute of Landscape Architects (AILA) leads a dynamic and respected profession: creating great places to support healthy communities and a sustainable planet.

A central purpose of the AILA (NSW) Landscape Heritage Committee is to inform, inspire and enrich the culture of the discipline of Landscape Architecture in Australia and particularly the identification and understanding of both natural and cultural landscapes in NSW together with the role of such knowledge in the processes of planning and design.



## STATEMENT

AILA supports the extension of the North Beach Precinct, as currently proposed, noting recent and future extensive development in Wollongong with mainly residential high rise. The area proposed for inclusion is important for recreational and other reasons, as nominated in the extension of the listing. Current Landscape Master Planning for Crown Land Reserve, Stuart Park, immediately to the north of the subject site does not seem to address any history nor heritage concepts. Stuart Park is highly significant because of its association with Frederick Franklin, the original designer. A coordinated approach to the whole landscape catchment, that addresses landscape heritage, is needed.



*Figure 1a.:* View of the coast at North Beach SLSC, promenade.



*Figure 1b.* looking north to Stuart Park from the from Stuart Park south.



*Figure 2.* The existing curtilage ends south of the fig tree, excluding this public space and kiosk verandah.



Figure 2. Grand Pacific Drive, Stuart Park and Fairy Creek and the lagoons depicted in Mirage local independent news article, 13 July 2023. Subject site, top left.

## BACKGROUND

AILA notes the nomination findings:

- Owner organisation: Land and Property Management Authority (LPMA) (State Government) and Wollongong City Council (Local Government). Crown Land to the north, refer appendix 1
- The nomination<sup>1</sup> as proposed:  
<https://apps.environment.nsw.gov.au/dpcheritageapp/ViewHeritageItemDetails.aspx?ID=5052983>
- *"The North Beach Precinct, Wollongong is of State significance for demonstrating the recreational role played by surfing and beach culture during the twentieth century, particularly the interwar era, in coastal NSW in conjunction with important remnants of the industrial heritage of Wollongong. The North Beach Bathing Pavilion and Kiosk, Wollongong are good and relatively intact examples of the Interwar Functionalist style of architecture. The Bathing Pavilion and Kiosk have a strong aesthetic relationship to each other, as well as to the greatly altered North Wollongong Surf Life Saving Club (SLSC) clubhouse, also dating from the 1930s. The three buildings have research potential for demonstrating aspects of the management and social uses of beaches in New South Wales throughout the 20th century. North Wollongong SLSC clubhouse may also have state historic significance for feminist history, as several women members received bronze medals and Instructors' Certificates during World War 1, the only such medals and certificates awarded to women for many years.*
  - *North Beach Precinct has potential State social significance, given Wollongong's historic recreational and tourist reputation as 'Brighton of the South'. North Beach was an integral part of major events, having hosted state Surf Life-Saving-related*

<sup>1</sup> SHR proposed curtilage extension under consideration:

<https://apps.environment.nsw.gov.au/dpcheritageapp/ViewHeritageItemDetails>



championships titles in 1950, 1952, 1966 and 1990 - and National Titles Championships in 1952 and 1989. The clubhouse demonstrates long continuous use and associations of beach culture and recreation.

- o The tramway cutting is a significant reminder of the days when coal was transported from Mount Pleasant through North Beach to Wollongong Harbour, while the archaeological site of Puckey's Salt Works offers research potential concerning the history of salt manufacture in New South Wales.
- It is rare to find this conjunction of seaside architecture and industrial remnants and archaeology in such close proximity. Comparison with other beach architecture built in the 1930s in New South Wales indicates that this architectural style is rare in this genre, that separating the functions of pavilion / kiosk and Surf Life Saving Club into separate buildings is a rare arrangement of beach architecture and that intact Interwar seaside architecture is increasingly rare in New South Wales. North Wollongong SLSC clubhouse may be rare at state level as part of this group of three buildings."



Map 1 : Draft Curtilage Extension supplied by Heritage NSW.



Figure 3: Photograph of extension looking north to Stuart Park, taken from the limit of the existing curtilage.



Figure 4: Bruce Mackenzie's 2009 photograph from Mount Kiera described as "an exuberant landscape"

- AILA has considered the landscape context, open space, parkland and cultural aspects with the understanding that the significance of the site should begin with landscape and Connection with Country.
- The North Wollongong coastal plain on which the existing listing sits, extending from Stanwell Park to the Shoalhaven River, is defined by the southeast scarp of the Moss Vale Plateau. A pattern of creeklines flowing generally east through the escarpment foothills has deposited Cenozoic alluvium of clastic sediments. The catchment draining from the Illawarra Escarpment edge, marked by the extent of Clive Bissel Drive and to Mount Keira, forms a scenic amphitheatre of scarp slopes. This catchment contains the University of Wollongong main campus and the gently sloping 'meadow' plains of Cabbage Tree Creek and Fairy Creek meeting at North Wollongong Lagoon, flowing into the South Pacific Ocean 500m north of the curtilage under review.
- The presence of Aboriginal heritage and cultural connection of the Dharawal, and also Wodi Wodi and Gundungurra to the place, also known as woolyungah, of must be interrogated, as an important part of assessing the significance of the place. AILA understands D'harawal have been consulted.
- The cliffs of Wollongong Head, immediately to the south of the current curtilage are characterised by late Permian Broughton Formation Sandstone overlying Berry siltstone and the Illawarra Coal Measures, forming a scenic backdrop, to Holocene dunal sands and anthropogenic built environment that developed rapidly after Mt Pleasant Colliery railway line, was opened along the coast from 1887 and connecting with Sydney in 1888.
- The designed landscape comprises;
  - The traces of the Mt Pleasant Colliery railway line. The railway alignment is since then picked up by paths and the planting of Norfolk Island Pines along the coastline, uniting North Wollongong Beach with the Park.
  - Stuart Park, extending from the subject site to the Lagoon, gazetted in 1885, designed by Frederick Augustus Franklin (b.1834 - d.1909). Franklin was an experienced engineer on British railways in India and Australia in the 1860s and designer of Centennial Park in 1886, (though he struggled to be paid and recognised for the design) noted for preferring Australian plants.

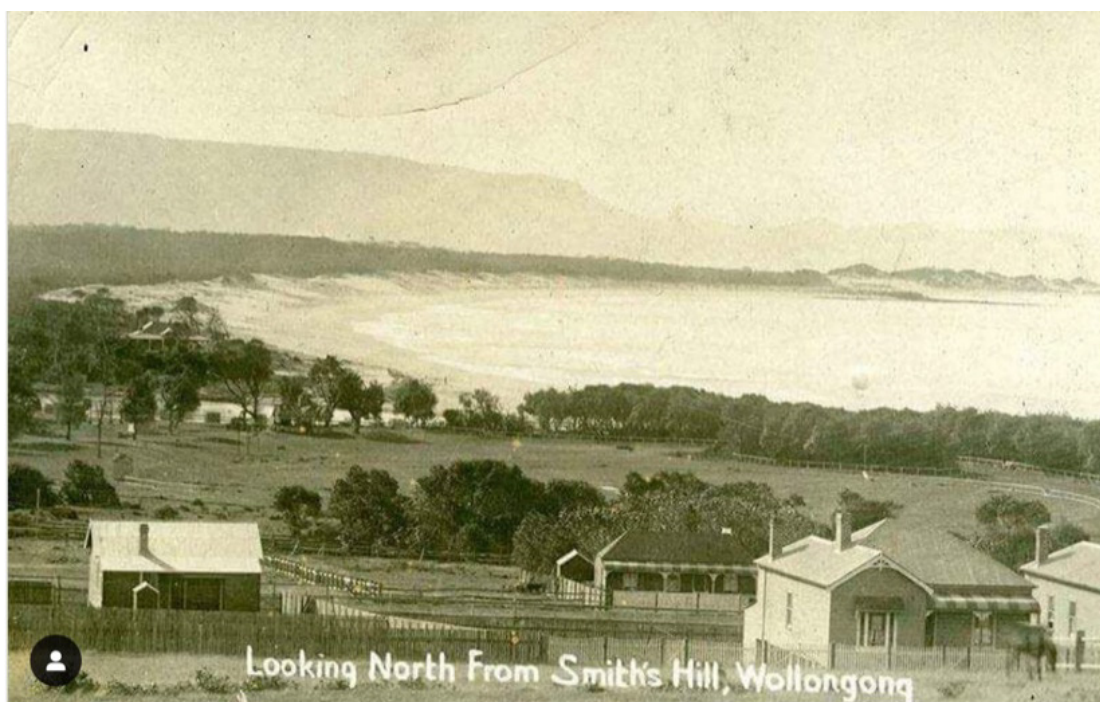


Figure 5. Stuart Park from Smiths Hill, Wollongong City Library

- the Grand Pacific Drive and its Norfolk Island Pines *Araucaria heterophylla* added along the coastline in 1893.
- rows of Maritime Pine or Cluster Pine *P. pinaster* to link the North Beach with Stuart Park, also added in 1893,
- paths, seawalls, terraced open space, civic buildings and landscape architecturally designed promenade.



Figure 6. North Beach Wollongong 1963 WCLibrary



Figure 7. Fairy Creek Lagoon Stuart Park, copy supplied by CB

- Its development for open space recreation as a coastal parkland includes the design of seawalls affording informal grassed areas behind the beach, and, with formal sporting grounds behind the dunes, changerooms, kiosks and surf clubs, paths and access roads. The parkland and promenade are dominated by the iconic and distinctive Norfolk Island pine plantation. The open space under review is vegetated by pines, palms, coastal banksia *Banksia integrifolia* and a Port Jackson Fig *Ficus rubiginosa* which provide shade, some shelter and a visual buffer to the built-up urban form lining Cliff Road.

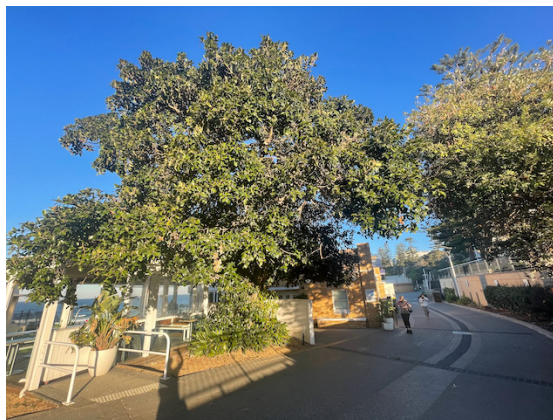


Figure 8. The fig tree, lower promenade and the existing north extension to the kiosk building.



*Figure 9. Pines, banksias and a fig tree provide shade, shelter and buffer to the urban form.*

The major built item in the vicinity, the North Beach Hotel has been there for about 25 years.

### **Preliminary assessment of significance**

- It is important that the nominated area and curtilage of the surf club, open space and other items are reinforced.
- It is highly significant for its association with Frederick Augustus Franklin, experienced engineer and designer of Centennial Park. In the 1850s he had worked on the Crystal Palace, Sydenham under Paxton. It is noted that Franklin was interested only in Australian plants and found a sympathiser in James Jones. Both Jones and Franklin were fired by Charles Moore possibly for this reason. Jones went on to design the planting for NSW railway stations and Franklin was an experienced engineer on British railways and in India, and Australia in the 1860s. Franklin went on to work in the Hunter Valley and eventually designed the ornamental arches for the Federation Celebrations in Sydney which included the opening of Centennial Park and the Federation celebrations in Snake Valley. Frederick Augustus Franklin was an important figure in government administration and a leader, being an Alderman on Wollongong Council 1882 –





3 and Mayor; 1883 – 4 with links also to Sir John Young. Franklin's Park design experience in Australia began with Stuart Park.

- Stuart Park was Frederick Augustus Franklin's first design in Australia which championed naturalism by using indigenous plant species together with his skill of the manipulation of water bodies and drainage systems. He may have unwittingly designed the first public car park when the vehicles were horse and buggies!



*Figure 10. Line of pines marking the coastal promenade.*

- Stuart Park commemorates the Hon Alexander Stuart a local member of Parliament in the NSW Legislative Assembly and a former Premier of NSW.
- Comparative analysis of New South Wales' parks, landscape designs of Frederick Augustus Franklin, New South Wales coastal drives and their Norfolk Island Pine plantations, shelter, pavilion and surf club sittings, and spatial relationships between open space and planting or built form, in addition to the design of built structure(s), could inform the current listing, protection and future interpretation of the coast. Craig Burton may be contacted for further information about the Franklin plans for Stuart Park and Centennial Park



Figure 11 Original Plan for Stuart Park, 1885, Frederick Augustus Franklin with horse and carriage parking lower right Copy supplied by CB



Figure 12 a, b & c. Stuart Park main pavilion. Copies supplied by CB

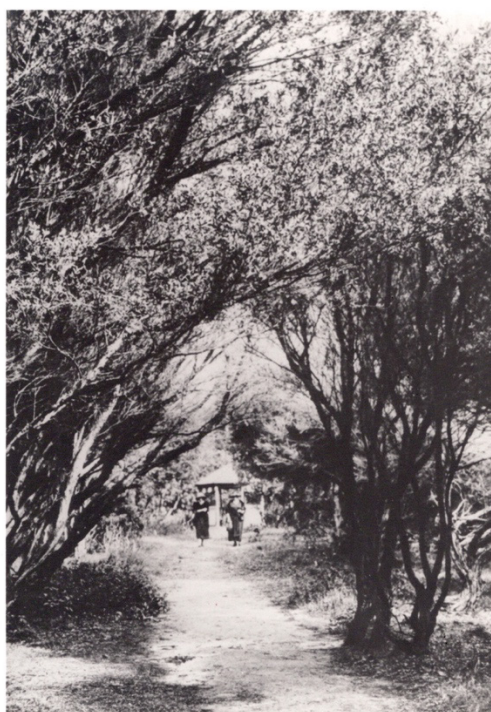


Figure 13 a & b. Lovers Walk, Stuart Park, copies supplied by CB



- The former Mt Pleasant Colliery railway line was a significant element in the landscape and the original naturalism of the Park design was in contrast with the industrial functions of Wollongong and the popularity of the Park was also much to the North Wollongong Beach as a popular swimming and surfing place. The Lovers Walk in the park was also very popular as an informal linear element following the coastline up to Fairy Creek; a curving sandy path lined with native trees which met overhead and provided a sense of natural beauty in opposition to the railway line adjacent to the beach. The design elements of linear paths/alignments has been picked up with the planting of Norfolk Island Pines along the coastline uniting the North Wollongong Beach with the Park. A strong sense of memory of the former railway line.

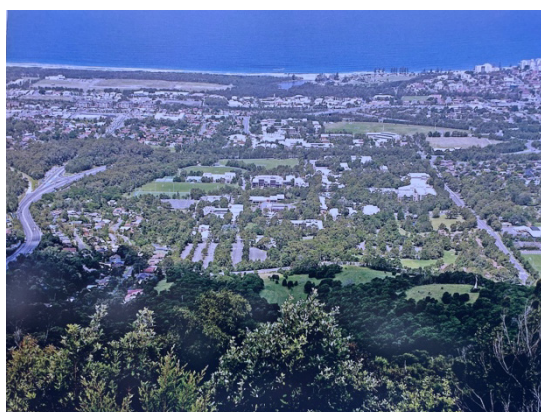


Figure 14. images of Stuart Park today taken near the Surf Club

- Both planned and incremental urban development of the Fairy Meadow landscape, as depicted in photographs from Mount Kiera over time, are impacting the scenic qualities of the place. In 2010, Bruce Mackenzie reviewed the sensitivity of development around University of Wollongong in his monograph, *Design with Landscape* (copies available from AILA NSW) .



*Figure 13* 1963 photograph of the Fairy Meadow Coastal Plain depicting dominant open space and modest planning development envelope. University of Wollongong Collection, as reprinted in *Design with Landscape*



*Figure 14.* 2010 photograph of the Fairy Meadow Coastal Plain. Bruce Mackenzie & Associates commenting on the diminishing open space.

However, more recently, the potential threats are cause for even greater concern.

The Property Council of Australia election manifesto, 'Building NSW', recognises the threat of destruction of landscape character and civic space and recommends actions to prevent it. It states that 'the distinctive landscape character' of the Illawarra Shoalhaven, at risk of destruction by economic drivers, could be protected by;

- Transformative inter-regional City Partnerships
- Business cases and master plans for sports and entertainment precincts
- Long -term improvements and upgrades to key freight and commuter road infrastructure
- Detailed network plan and business case for rail links and a Fast Rail Strategy across the Greater Six Cities Region. Targeted delivery of affordable and diverse housing close to economic, retail and transport centres with a focus on key workers<sup>2</sup>.

AILA has recently called for a proactive approach to protecting the landscape heritage of New South Wales;

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<sup>2</sup> Property-Council-of-Australia-2023-NSW-Election-Platform Building NSW : Homes, Jobs and Our future p 38



*"Further study into the values, held in the community, of social open spaces, cultural landscapes, recreation grounds and existing trees is needed. This wider and deeper understanding may inform decisions by owners, users and neighbours, and guide the appropriate care of open space for future generations."<sup>3</sup>*

AILA understands the significance of this landscape lies primarily in its openness, as part of a network of contiguous public and private open space recreation facilities developed as the coastal recreational land was planned, retained and, grassed or paved.



*Figure 15a and b. North Wollongong SLSC & adjacent view to lighthouse through the open space of the proposed curtilage extension, from the Stuart Park carpark opposite*

The significance of the built structures is important, yet secondary to the landscape significance. Figure 8 illustrates how the vegetation of fig, palm and pine dominates the skyline when viewed from the seawall. This space is understood in section as a contiguous coastal public space from open ocean beach and terraced hind-dune parkland and footpaths, scenic drive and the edge of urban commercial and residential development.

At Blacket Street, views to the lighthouse and broad ocean horizon from the relatively modest urban residential streetscape of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century remain intact, Figure 4, 6b. It

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<sup>3</sup> AILA submission on Sydney Croquet Club, Rose Bay, NSW.



should remain as open space and views from the road and promenade to the lighthouse and ocean from the parkland and streets must be identified, assessed and protected in future planning.



Figure 16. View of the fig, banksias, palms and pines, and proposed additional curtilage open space from the existing seawall

*AILA is concerned that the proposed curtilage does not adequately include the confluence of Fairy Creek and Cabbage Tree Creek, the lagoon and the entire Mount Pleasant Colliery railway line - Stuart Park - Grand Pacific Drive ensemble designed by Frederick Augustus Franklin, encompassing the surf club, pavilion and kiosk complex to the southern headland.*

## RECOMMENDATIONS

AILA recommend the listing include reference to the magnitude of significance of the place to D'harawal in accordance with the GANSW Connecting with Country Framework. Local Elders and CwC co-author Daniele Hromek could be invited to review, or refer to others for review, and contribute, if not already invited.

AILA advises this listing of landscape heritage strongly describe the landscape design as part of a larger system of highly significant designed landscape, linked together from the lagoon to the southern headland, associated with the designer of Centennial Park, Frederick Augustus Franklin. This design responds to the 'exuberant' landscape of the Illawarra Coast context, forming naturalistic spaces for sheltered enjoyment of the beauty of the coastal environment linked to paths and planting of formal linearity and prospect relating to the Mount Pleasant Colliery railway line. The design represents the development of the coast for recreation in contrast with its industry.

The landscape to which this listing refers must be conserved as open space, and not be allowed to be incrementally developed nor urbanised. AILA recommends that the proposed curtilage be extended as proposed and future extension be considered.



AILA recommends that further study to address the history, such as a Conservation Management Plan (CMP) be landscape-led and start with landscape, by engaging a suitably qualified and experienced landscape architect to lead the team to produce the CMP. This step must be carried out prior to the Property Council recommended Master Planning, and in addition to any existing Council Master Plan.

Further study could be supported by the Heritage Council, the Wollongong Council as owner, and other partners, to understand the significance of parks in New South Wales, and the work of Frederick Augustus Franklin, in order to understand the historic landscape context of the North Beach Surf Club, pavilion and kiosk complex. It is important to appreciate the qualities of the original Park design's naturalism, providing and informal natural beauty, shelter and access for swimming, surfing and boating, in contrast with the formal elements, linear railway and colliery context. This study could guide the coordinated management of the coastal landscape, to conserve the region's distinctive landscape and creatively respond to the needs of future generations.



Figure 17. Stuart Park from Fairy Creek Lagoon, 1917 supplied by CB

## CONCLUSION

AILA commends the listing of landscape heritage in New South Wales and welcomes further dialogue on the proactive listing and conservation management planning of landscapes as an important part of the process of identifying, understanding, and caring for landscapes of heritage significance.

Sincerely yours,

AILA NSW President  
David Moir





## REFERENCES

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