

## PROPOSED REFENCING

OF

## THE REG BARTLEY OVAL, RUSHCUTTERS BAY, NSW

## HERITAGE ASSESSMENT



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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 THE BRIEF

The following report has been prepared to provide a heritage assessment of the proposal to replace the timber fencing at the Reg Bartley Oval, Rushcutters Bay, NSW. The report has been prepared on behalf of the City of Sydney, the trustees for the Park. The proposal was first mooted in 2012 but has been the subject of comment from Council's heritage section that has advised on a revised detail for the replacement fence. This report addresses the revised design.

### 1.2 THE STUDY AREA

The study area is the Reg Bartley Oval and the Rushcutters Bay Park at Rushcutters Bay, NSW being Lots 1 and 2 in DP 554114 (Figure 1.1).



Figure 1.1 The Study Area

Source: Google Maps

### 1.3 LIMITATIONS AND TERMS

The terms *fabric*, *conservation*, *maintenance*, *preservation*, *restoration*, *reconstruction*, *adaptation*, *compatible use* and *cultural significance* used in this report are as defined in the Australia ICOMOS *Burra Charter*.

### 1.4 METHODOLOGY

This report was prepared in accordance with the *NSW Heritage Manual* "Statements of Heritage Impact", "Assessing Heritage Significance Guidelines" and the City of Sydney Council guidelines for the preparation of heritage impact statements. The philosophy adopted is that guided by the Australia ICOMOS *Burra Charter* 1999.

### 1.5 AUTHORS AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This report, including all diagrams and photographs, was prepared by John Oultram and John Oultram Heritage & Design, unless otherwise noted. John Oultram Heritage & Design was established in 1998 and is on the NSW Heritage Office list of heritage consultants.

## 1.6 PREVIOUS REPORTS

There are previous reports and studies on the place:

Edaw, *Rushcutters Bay Park Plan of Management*, dated November 1999 and prepared for South Sydney Council

Rod Howard & Associates, *Grandstand at Reg Bartley Oval Conservation Management Plan*, dated 2004

The latter document has not been sighted.

## 2.0 HISTORICAL SUMMARY

### 2.1 ABORIGINAL SETTLEMENT

The "Eora people" was the name given to the coastal Aborigines around Sydney. Central Sydney is therefore often referred to as "Eora Country". Within the City of Sydney local government area, the traditional owners are the Cadigal and Wangal bands of the Eora.

With European occupation of the Sydney region from 1788, the Cadigal and Wangal people were largely decimated but there are descendants still living in Sydney today.

### 2.2 EARLY DEVELOPMENT

The area close to the park was originally a rush-covered marsh with a stream running through the centre. Early settlers cut the rushes for a type of thatch roofing and the area was named *Rush Cutting Bay*. In 1810 seventy one acres of land running from the bay to Oxford Street was granted to Thomas West who built a house and water mill there that he named *Barcom Glen*<sup>1</sup>.

### 2.3 REG BARTLEY OVAL

In November 1875 a deputation to the Minister for Lands requested that marsh and the head of the bay be reclaimed and used for public recreation. In 1878 an Act was passed providing for the reclamation of the bay and six acres were set aside for a park. Work commenced in the same year and was completed in 1883. The work included a sandstone channel for the stream<sup>2</sup>.

It only took about three years after Rushcutters Bay Park was proclaimed in 1885 for a fenced cricket ground (later to become the Reg Bartley Oval) to be established. By 1894, paths around the southern side of the cricket ground were also fenced and a grandstand had been constructed. Initially, Rushcutters Bay Park fell under the jurisdiction of trustees, but during 1909 came under the control of the Municipal Council of Sydney.

In November 1926, Council approved the demolition of the old structure and erection of the new stand on the western side but this work appears not to have proceeded.

In 1897 a fountain was erected at the south western side of the oval to commemorate the Jubilee of Queen Victoria. In 1899 the Department of Public Works erected a sewerage pumping station to the south east of the oval.

The oval was used for cricket and football and in the early 1900s croquet lawns were laid close to the grandstand. These were converted to tennis courts in 1923 and other courts were added in 1929.

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<sup>1</sup> Edaw, *Rushcutters Bay Park Plan of Management*, November 1999 for South Sydney Council

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*

Towards the end of 1934 schemes were drawn up within Council for a block containing male and female toilets, to be constructed adjacent to the south western corner of the Grandstand. These were demolished in 2010 to make way for new amenities buildings.

The perceived threat of attack from hostile forces during the early years of World War II led to the construction of an air raid shelter in the vicinity of the Grandstand.

It was reported that on 12 May 1957:

*Fire last nigh destroyed two dressing-rooms in a condemned wooden grandstand at Rushcutter [sic] Bay Oval.*

Following the fire the building was rebuilt to the form seen today.

The oval was renamed the Reg Bartley Oval in May 1959 in recognition of Reginald James Bartley's service to the City. He had served as an alderman for eighteen years and as mayor for five yearly periods during the 1940s.

The Grandstand was substantially renovated during 1992 to the design of the architectural firm of McNamara & Associates.

The park has recently been upgraded to the design of architects Lacoste & Stevenson with the works including:

- Relocation of the cafe from the south side of Waratah Street to the north of the Oval
- Extension of the southern tennis courts
- New paths
- Reconstruction of the northern tennis courts
- Re-landscaping
- Conservation and refurbishment of the grandstand
- Construction of a raised terrace to the front of the grandstand.

The park and oval are a much used and popular venue for sports and recreation and occasional concerts and functions.



Figure 2.1 Aerial view to the oval in 1949

Source: City of Sydney Archives



Figure 2.2 View to the grandstand in 1910 from the croquet lawns

Source: Dunbar Rovers Website

### 3.0 PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

An inspection of the Park and oval was carried out by John Oultram in July 2012.

Rushcutters Bay Park and the Reg Bartley Oval is a large area of parkland bounded by the stormwater channel to the east, Waratah Street and the stone sea wall along Rushcutters Bay. There are tennis courts to the south side of Waratah Street. The site is level and generally laid to lawn with dispersed tree planting and low shrubs. The park is dominated by the oval and the associated timber grandstand to the west. There are concrete paths throughout the park and an area of stone paving between the grandstand and the café.

Major built elements include:

- The timber grandstand and changing rooms
- Timber amenities buildings to the rear of the grandstand
- Timber café
- Tennis courts with steel framed mesh fencing
- Brick pumping station

There is a timber bridge over the stormwater channel to the eastern section of the park (that is under the control of Woollahra Council) and a smaller, concrete bridge to the south.

The area is highly developed with many Inter War and Post War, multi-storey apartment buildings along Waratah Street and Evans Road.

The oval is fenced with timber pickets with decorated tops supported on square timber rails fixed to timber posts. The posts are either set into the ground or fixed to steel plates with stirrups fixed into the ground or in a concrete plinth. There are decorated timber posts at the entrance gates. There are steel and timber sightscreens at the north and south ends of the oval. Part of the fence has been replaced with steel pickets and posts set into a concrete plinth.

Figures 3.1-3.12





Figure 3.1 Reg Bartley Oval, Rushcutters Bay  
View looking east



Figure 3.2 Reg Bartley Oval, Rushcutters Bay  
View looking north west



Figure 3.3 Reg Bartley Oval, Rushcutters Bay  
Gate detail





Figure 3.4 Reg Bartley Oval, Rushcutters Bay

Junction of new and current pickets. The new pickets are on the right



Figure 3.5 Reg Bartley Oval, Rushcutters Bay

Junction of new and current pickets. The new pickets are on the left. The larger timber posts mark gates



Figure 3.6 Reg Bartley Oval, Rushcutters Bay

Timber picket damage with the upper rail showing signs of rot



Figure 3.7 Reg Bartley Oval, Rushcutters Bay  
Picket detail showing a lean to the fence post



Figure 3.8 Reg Bartley Oval, Rushcutters Bay  
Typical fixing detail of the timber posts on steel stanchions



Figure 3.9 Reg Bartley Oval, Rushcutters Bay  
Grandstand





Figure 3.10 Reg Bartley Oval, Rushcutters Bay  
View to the path to the front of the grandstand



Figure 3.11 Reg Bartley Oval, Rushcutters Bay  
Café and tennis office



Figure 3.12 Reg Bartley Oval, Rushcutters Bay  
New amenities blocks at the rear of the grandstand

## 4.0 HERITAGE CONTROLS

### 4.1 NATIONAL TRUST

The park and oval are not classified on the Register of the National Trust of Australia (NSW).

### 4.2 HERITAGE BRANCH OF THE NSW DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING

#### State Heritage Register

Under the Heritage Act 1977 (amended 1998), the Heritage Branch of the NSW Department of Planning (formerly the NSW Heritage Office) administers and maintains the State Heritage Register (SHR), a register of items and places that are considered to have heritage significance at a state level. The subject property is not listed on the State Heritage Register.

#### State Heritage Inventory

The Heritage Branch also compiles the State Heritage Inventory, a collated database of all places listed on statutory heritage lists, including Local Environmental Plans. The subject property is listed on the Inventory (No. 2421400).

Listing on the Database has no statutory implications for development at the place but reflects the listing of the property on the LEP.

### 4.3 LOCAL AUTHORITY

The local authority for the area is the City of Sydney. The property listed as a heritage item in Schedule 5 Part 1 of the *Sydney Local Environmental Plan 2012 (as amended) (SLEP)* and is within the Elizabeth and Rushcutters Bay Heritage Conservation Area (C20). The item is noted as:

REF	ADDRESS	ITEM	RANKING
I403	Waratah Street	Rushcutters Bay park and pumping station including grandstand, Reg Bartley Oval and picket fence, seawall and landscaping	State

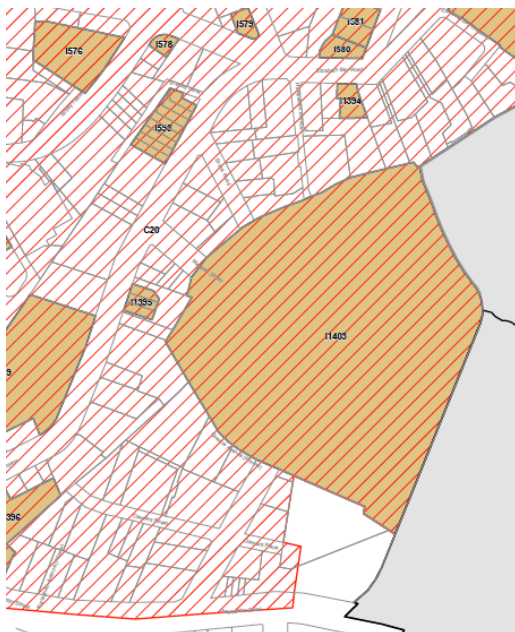


Figure 4.1 Sydney Local Environmental Plan 2013 Heritage Map\_022

The heritage provisions in the SLEP relating to the development of a heritage in a conservation area would apply.

Development at the site would also be the subject of the *Sydney Development Control Plan 2012* (SDCP) that contains detailed objectives and controls for development in conservation areas.

A Plan of Management for the Park was prepared by Edaw for the South Sydney Council in November 1999 that contained management guidelines for development at the park.

## 5.0 ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The listing sheet for the property (SHI 2421400) contains a detailed assessment of significance using the criteria developed by The Heritage Office of New South Wales:

<i>Criterion (a)</i>	<i>An item is important in the course, or pattern, of NSW's cultural or natural history (or the cultural or natural history of the local area)</i>
	The Grandstand has been an important early recreational facility and built component of Rushcutters Bay Park since 1894
	The Grandstand has limited historical interest because of its use in the motion pictures Babe and The Sum of Us, both of which are highly regarded recent Australian movies
<i>Criterion (b)</i>	<i>An item has strong or special associations with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in NSW's cultural or natural history (or the cultural or natural history of the local area)</i>
	The 1939 Public Toilet Block provides evidence of the high standard of design achieved by Council's architectural staff, particularly Albert Smillie
<i>Criterion (c)</i>	<i>An item is important in demonstrating aesthetic characteristics and/or a high degree of creative or technical achievement in NSW (or the local area)</i>
	The architectural form of the Grandstand generally demonstrates the aesthetic characteristics of this type of building in a clear manner, and it has retained what appears to be original timber joinery along the eastern side of the building. However, the physical fabric of the building has undergone a relatively high degree of change. This has taken place as a result of historical factors such as the fires that took place in 1956 and 1957, routine maintenance, repairs resulting from termite infestation and substantial refurbishment at ground floor level during the early 1990s. Such works indicate the ongoing viability of the building over the years
	The Public Toilet Block is considered to have aesthetic significance because of the relatively high quality of its external and internal design and because of its high level of intact original fabric, which is, however, deteriorating
<i>Criterion (d)</i>	<i>The item has strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group in NSW (or the local area) for social or spiritual reasons</i>
	The community research carried out as part of the Rushcutters Bay Park Plan of Management indicates that the Grandstand is held in esteem by the local community
<i>Criterion (e)</i>	<i>An item has the potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of NSW's cultural or natural history (or the cultural or natural history of the local area)</i>
	The Grandstand provides evidence of the evolution of the grandstand as a building type at the end of the nineteenth century
<i>Criterion (f)</i>	<i>An item possesses uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of NSW's cultural or natural history (or the cultural or natural history of the local area)</i>
	The Grandstand is believed to be a rare surviving example of a late nineteenth century grandstand associated with a suburban park;
	Although Grandstands such as the one associated with Reg Bartley Oval are relatively common in other parts of metropolitan Sydney, the Grandstand is rare within the City of Sydney Local Government Area. It should also be noted that similar extant grandstands were generally built at a later period of time;
	The former air raid shelter, although adapted and modified for subsequent reuse, is believed to be a rare purpose designed air raid shelter within the City of Sydney.
<i>Criterion (g)</i>	<i>An item is important in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of NSW's or a class of the local area's Cultural or natural places; or Cultural or natural environments</i>
	The overall architectural form and detailing of the Grandstand is understood to be representative of grandstands associated with suburban sporting facilities that were built between the 1890s and the 1930s.

We would concur with this assessment but would note that the public toilet block has been demolished. The listing sheet also contains a statement of significance.

## 5.1 STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

*Rushcutters Bay Park is a significant harbour foreshore park, situated in the north-eastern corner of the local government area. It forms part of a series of linked parklands that provide a valuable open space resource for the communities of Potts Point, Elizabeth Bay and Rushcutters Bay, which are considered the highest population densities in Australia.*

*The Grandstand at the Reg Bartley Oval, Rushcutters Bay Park has been an important built component and recreational facility within Rushcutters Bay Park since 1894. The architectural form of the Grandstand generally demonstrates the aesthetic characteristics of this type of building in a clear manner, although cycles of maintenance, repair and adaptive change have eroded original fabric. The Grandstand is believed to be a rare surviving example of a late nineteenth century grandstand associated with a suburban park generally and, more specifically, within the City of Sydney Local Government Area. Its overall architectural form and detailing is believed to be representative of grandstands associated with suburban sporting facilities that were built between the 1890s and the 1930s. There is evidence to suggest that the building is held in high esteem by the local community.*

*The former air raid shelter, although adapted and modified for subsequent reuse, is believed to be a rare example of a purpose designed air raid shelter within the City of Sydney.*

*The Public Toilet Block, designed as women's conveniences in 1939, is considered to have aesthetic significance because of the relatively high quality of its external and internal design and because of its high level of intact original fabric, which is, however, deteriorating*

We would concur with this assessment, but would note that the toilet block has been demolished.



## 6.0 PROPOSED FENCING

### 6.1 DEMOLITION PROPOSAL

The City of Sydney would like to replace the timber picket fencing with new timber pickets on stainless steel rails and posts. The proposal are shown on Drawings Nos. 0212 4088 LD CD 01, 02, 03, 04, 05, 06, and 07 (all revision 02) dated March 2014 and prepared by the City of Sydney. The proposal include:

- Demolition of the current fence and concrete footings
- New fence, posts and rails
- New concrete footings

The pickets will be in timber to match the current detail fixed to stainless steel rails fixed to stainless steel posts set in new concrete footings. There will be a concrete hob or mowing strip around the oval and the area to both sides of the fence will be made good with falls to assist drainage.

The current gates will be replaced in a similar manner with new timber posts to match the existing. Any elements requiring to be removed to complete the works (e.g. signage) will be refixed on completion.

The intent of the works is to provide a sturdier fence that will require less maintenance (painting and repair) and be more robust in terms of vandalism.

### 6.2 ASSESSMENT OF THE IMPACT OF THE PROPOSED WORKS

The Rushcutters Bay Park, Reg Bartley Oval and the grandstand are of considerable significance and have been in operation since 1894. They are a popular and well-used sport and recreational facility.

The original fencing to the oval would have been in timber but the current fencing around the oval is relatively modern as demonstrated by its use of steel stanchions to support the fence posts. There is extensive evidence of damage to the pickets and rot to the support rails and posts.

The proposed fencing is a sympathetic replacement with a timber picket and gate posts but with a more robust support detail in stainless steel. The works will considerably lessen the economic burden on Council in maintaining the fencing and will provide a long-term support system. The new picket is similar in height and detail to current timber pickets and the existing aluminium pickets will also be replaced to allow for a consistent detail. Visually the change will have little effect on the appearance of the oval.

We consider that, in heritage terms, the proposed replacement is acceptable.

### 6.3 RUSHCUTTERS BAY PARK PLAN OF MANAGEMENT

The Plan of Management contains detailed guidelines for the park many of which have been implemented in the recent works. The Plan was developed in consultation with the local community.

The Plan is relatively mute on the treatment of the oval fencing apart from a recommendation that it be maintained (Plan p.51). The proposed fencing is an appropriate detail that will maintain the appearance of a timber picket fence.

## 6.4 RUSHCUTTERS BAY PARK SHI MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES

The SHI listing sheet for the Park (SHI No. 2421400) includes management guidelines:

*All works in relation to the to the conservation of the park and any future development that may be proposed is to be in accordance with the Conservation Management Plan for the Park and for the Grandstand, and apart from maintenance is to be supported by a heritage impact statement. Any replacement of the existing fencing to the oval is to be with timber pickets in keeping with the original.*

The proposal is for a replacement fence using timber pickets to match the existing and complies with the management guidelines.

## 6.5 ELIZABETH BAY CONSERVATION AREA

The listing sheet for the conservation area contains management guidelines for the area but is mute on the treatment of the oval.

The proposed works will retain a picket fence around the oval maintaining its sense of enclosure and its general appearance when viewed from the street or park. We consider that the works will have a no impact on the conservation area.

## 6.6 CITY OF SYDNEY DEVELOPMENT CONTROL PLAN 2012 (SDCP)

Section 3.9 of the SDCP contains specific guidelines for the treatment of heritage items and in conservation areas and the works are assessed against the relevant guidelines below.

<b>3.9.5</b>	Heritage items	
(1)	Development affecting a heritage item is to:	
(a)	minimise the extent of change to significant fabric;	The timber fence has a maintenance life and it is to be expected that it would be replaced in stages or wholesale
		The works will maintain the appearance of the fence and use a suitable picket material while providing for a long term support system
(b)	use traditional techniques and materials unless contemporary techniques and materials will result in a better conservation outcome;	The proposal will lead to a long term conservation outcome
	not reduce or obscure the heritage significance of the item; and	The works will maintain the significance of the item
	be reversible where necessary so new work can be removed with minimal damage, or impact to significant building fabric.	The works are a long term replacement to a sympathetic detail
<b>3.9.11</b>	Conservation of public domain features in heritage conservation areas	
(1)	The following elements of streets, lanes, parks and other areas of the public domain are to be retained if they contribute to the heritage significance of the heritage conservation area:	
(i)	fences	The fence will be retained to its current appearance
(3)	If significant public domain features are to be removed, they are to be replaced in one of the following ways:	
(b)	a contemporary interpretation of traditional elements.	The metal structure is a contemporary interpretation of the original detail

We consider that the proposal meets the objectives and controls of the SDCP.

## **7.0 SUMMARY**

### 7.1 SUMMARY

We consider that the proposed fencing is an appropriate replacement for the timber picket fence to the oval. It will ensure the longevity of the fencing and maintains its sense of enclosure. It will have no impact on the significance of the place or the setting of the nearby grandstand. It will also have no impact on the surrounding conservation area.

JOHN OULTRAM