



Abbey Church, Benedictine Monastery, New Norcia

Benedictine Monastery Precinct, New Norcia

The Heritage Council of Western Australia has determined that *Benedictine Monastery Precinct, New Norcia* has cultural heritage significance at the State level and that stakeholders should be consulted in a proposal to enter the place in the State Register of Heritage Places. This fact sheet provides information on the proposed registration.

Warning: The following content may be distressing to some readers.

What is the State Register of Heritage Places and the Heritage Council's role in registration?

The State Register is a statutory list of places of State cultural heritage significance. This list helps tell the story of Western Australia's history and development since European contact. The Register acknowledges the value and importance of a place and promotes its conservation.

The Heritage Council of Western Australia is the State Government's advisory body on heritage matters. It is vested with functions and powers under the *Heritage Act 2018*. The Heritage Council is charged with the compilation of the State's Register of Heritage Places. The Minister for Heritage makes the final decision on whether a place is entered in the State Register.

The Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage provides administrative support to the Heritage Council.

What is the heritage significance of *Benedictine Monastery Precinct, New Norcia*?

Benedictine Monastery Precinct, New Norcia is a substantial monastic town founded in 1846 on the banks of the Moore River as a predominantly Spanish settlement of the Benedictine Order. As a self-contained Roman Catholic community in a rural agricultural landscape, the Precinct is a rare example of a Western Australian town demonstrating strong Spanish religious, social and cultural links from the nineteenth century to the present.

The Precinct is an iconic tourist destination and social landmark located on the former Great Northern Highway and comprises a range of striking and finely crafted buildings of a variety of architectural styles, which were deliberately chosen to reflect the main tenets of the Benedictine Order. The unusually large complex of hand-crafted stone and brick buildings, as well as the community's facilities to undertake its own shoemaking, tailoring, bookbinding and printing throughout its operation, also reflects the commitment to self-sufficiency that supports the distinctive way of life of the Benedictine community.

Benedictine Monastery Precinct, New Norcia was established as a bush mission to the local Yued Noongar population. The intent to provide education and care for Aboriginal children rather than non-Aboriginal children was unprecedented in Western Australia at the time and demonstrated a rare aspirational plan for the Yued Noongar people on behalf of Dom Salvado. As the site of systemic physical and sexual abuse of Aboriginal students during the 1950s to 1970s, as documented in the 2017 Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, the place demonstrates a pattern of behaviour of institutionalisation and abuse of Aboriginal children in Western Australia. The 2022 sale of property to fund redress to survivors of abuse and the 2020 installation of the Rock of Remembrance reflects actions undertaken by the Community to offer acknowledgement and apology.

What does entry in the State Register mean for *Benedictine Monastery Precinct, New Norcia*?

Entry in the Register will recognise and celebrate the distinctive heritage values of *Benedictine Monastery Precinct, New Norcia* and will offer protection under the *Heritage Act 2018*, ensuring any major changes proposed for the place are in keeping with its cultural heritage significance.

Can development and other changes still be made if *Benedictine Monastery Precinct, New Norcia* is entered in the State Register?

Yes. The entry of a place in the State Register does not prevent an owner from making changes to their property. The Benedictine Community would discuss their project ideas and apply to the relevant local government authority (LGA) for approval for any development proposal, as required under the Local



St Gertrudes College, New Norcia

Planning Scheme. The LGA will refer the relevant proposals to the Heritage Council for advice as part of its normal referral process. The Heritage Council will advise the LGA on the heritage aspects of the proposal in light of the heritage values of the place.

The Heritage Council promotes the appropriate use of places on the State Register to ensure they meet contemporary needs. Its role is to ensure that any new development continues to reflect and enhance the existing heritage values.

Referrals to the Heritage Council are handled within the LGA's normal time frame so there is no delay in decisions on development applications. Owners can also discuss their projects with the Department's Development team should they wish to seek advice when preparing plans.

Does Registration affect ownership/public access?

No. Registration does not change existing ownership or leases. Nor does it allow the public any more access than is currently permitted.

What are the benefits of registration?

Registration recognises the place and its significance to Western Australia's story and ensures the story can continue to be recognised into the future. Registration also provides the opportunity to apply to the Heritage Grants Program to provide funding for any physical conservation works or preparation of conservation management planning documents.

How can I comment on the proposed registration of *Benedictine Monastery Precinct, New Norcia*?

Comments on registration can be made online through the Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage's **Consultation Hub**

**The comment period closes
Friday 14 October 2022.**

What happens next?

Once the comment period has closed, the Heritage Council will consider whether to recommend registration to the Minister for Heritage, who will make the final decision on whether a place is entered in the State Register. Both the Heritage Council and the Minister take into account submissions as part of the decision-making process.

The Heritage Council recognises the diversity of the Aboriginal peoples of Western Australia and acknowledges the Traditional Owners and custodians and their connection to this land and its waterways. We pay our respect to Elders past and present and those who will follow in their footsteps.

Disclaimer

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