



Western
Australian
Planning
Commission



HERITAGE
COUNCIL

FAST FACTS



WADJEMUP / ROTTNEST ISLAND THOMSON BAY SETTLEMENT AND OLIVER HILL BATTERY – FINALISATION OF REGISTRATION

What is the State Register?

The State Register is a list of places that help tell the story of Western Australia's history and development. Entry in the Register is reserved for places the Heritage Council has assessed as being of cultural heritage significance at a State level, rather than a regional or local level.

The primary focus of the Register is places from Colonial settlement onwards and includes places to which both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians have a connection. Being on the Register acknowledges the value and importance of a place and helps promote its conservation into the future.

There are currently 1,382 places in the State Register.

Who decides what should be entered in the State Register?

The Heritage Council of Western Australia is the State Government's expert advisory body on historic heritage matters and is established under the *Heritage Act 2018*. Its role is to determine the State cultural heritage value of a place and make recommendations to the Minister for Heritage. The Minister makes the final decision on whether a place is entered in the State Register.

The Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage supports the Heritage Council and the Minister for Heritage.

What is the heritage significance of Thomson Bay Settlement and Oliver Hill Battery?

Wadjemup/Rottnest Island has had continuous spiritual and cultural significance for Aboriginal Western Australians for at least 20,000 years.

The more recent built structures and archaeological evidence on the island reflect significant periods in the State's history including pre-colonial sea exploration, Colonial settlement, the island's brutal era as an Aboriginal prison, its use as a site of strategic importance during the World Wars and, more recently, as the focus of Western Australian tourism. Wadjemup/Rottnest Island was the only purpose-built Aboriginal prison constructed anywhere in Australia.



ABOVE: H1 Tunnel, Oliver Hill Battery

THOMSON BAY SETTLEMENT

Thomson Bay Settlement is unique in Western Australia because so many significant cultural elements are concentrated in a single place. As well as being the main entrance point for most people arriving on the island, the area includes important buildings, roads, paths, walls, engineering structures, plantings, jetties and archaeological sites, as well as a portion of Garden Lake. These elements date from periods when the island had a number of significant uses including: Aboriginal Prison (1838–1902), Seafaring (1848–1903), Boys Reformatory for delinquent boys of ‘European descent’ (1881–1901), Governor’s Summer Residence (1848–1913), Fremantle Prison Annex (1903–1931), Recreation (1902 to the present), and Military use (1914–1915; 1934–1945).

During the Aboriginal Prison era the place was used as an actual and symbolic means to defeat Aboriginal resistance to colonisation. As the site of exile and often

death for Aboriginal men and boys from 1838–1931, the Aboriginal Burial Ground and the Quod (prison) have significance for Aboriginal people of Western Australia.

Thomson Bay Settlement has an important place in Western Australians’ sense of identity. It is highly valued for the social and recreational role it plays as a key part of what is an iconic holiday destination for local, national and international visitors.

OLIVER HILL BATTERY

Oliver Hill Battery is a popular tourist location for visitors to learn more about the role of Wadjemup/ Rottnest Island during World War II.

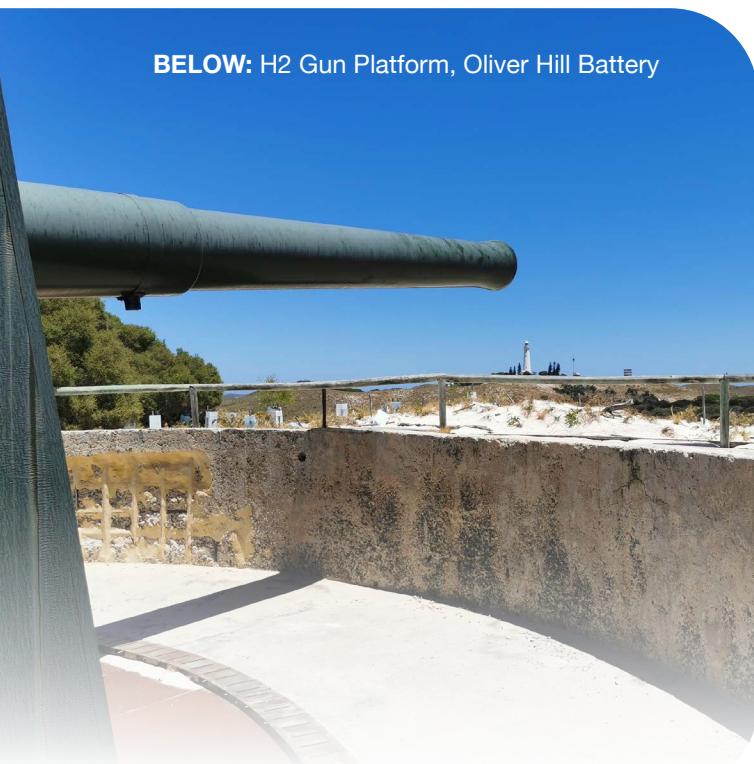
The place was a site of strategic importance in Australia’s coastal defences during World War II. It contains numerous elements associated with its operation as a gun battery from 1936 to 1944 including two intact 9.2 inch breech loading guns and emplacements, various underground facilities including tunnels, and engine and plotting rooms, as well as a range of important archaeological features.

The two 9.2 inch guns, manufactured in 1901 and 1902, are the last of this type remaining in position in Australia, and the place is one of only five locations anywhere in the world where these guns remain in position.

Aren’t they already on the State Register?

Yes. *Thomson Bay Settlement* and *Oliver Hill Battery* were both added to the State Register on an interim basis in 1992 under the former *Heritage Act of Western Australia 1990*. The current process will finalise

BELOW: H2 Gun Platform, Oliver Hill Battery



registration and ensure they continue to be recognised under the new *Heritage Act 2018*.

There are another three places on Wadjemup/Rottnest Island that are already permanently entered in the State Register: *Rottnest Island Light Station* (also known as Wadjemup Lighthouse), *Bathurst Lighthouse & Quarters*, and *Kingstown Barracks* including Bickley Battery.

What does finalising entry in the State Register mean?

As *Thomson Bay Settlement* and *Oliver Hill Battery* are already on the State Register, nothing will change once registration has been finalised. One of the important roles the Heritage Council plays is to provide advice to the relevant decision maker on any development that may impact the cultural heritage significance of a place on the State Register. The decision maker for Wadjemup/Rottnest Island is the Rottnest Island Authority. The Heritage Council will continue to be consulted, as it has been since 1992, on proposed development and works to ensure that they are in keeping with the cultural heritage significance of these two important places.

As part of finalising registration, the heritage assessments for both places have been brought up to date to ensure they meet current standards and reflect more recent evidence and research. They now tell the story of why these places make an important contribution to understanding the history of Western Australia, much better than before.

Finalising registration is also an opportunity to recognise, celebrate and commemorate the significant heritage values of these places.

Is the “dark history” of Thomson Bay Settlement acknowledged?

Yes. The updated heritage assessment for *Thomson Bay Settlement* acknowledges the past injustices relating to the incarceration and, in many cases, the eventual death of Aboriginal men and elders, and recognises the significance of the location of the Quod and the Burial Ground that commemorate these events.

This part of the island’s history was not adequately recognised in the interim registration. Recognising the “dark history” of *Thomson Bay Settlement* and the terrible treatment of Aboriginal people from across Western Australia who were brought to Wadjemup/Rottnest Island, and the ongoing impact of that history on the culture of Western Australian Aboriginal people, is an important part of truth-telling.



ABOVE: Salt Store, Thomson Bay Settlement

Why isn't the whole island proposed for entry in the Register?

The Heritage Council understands that Wadjemup/Rottnest Island is important to many Western Australians, and the island as a whole has been identified as warranting consideration for the Register.

The current priority, however, is to finalise the registration of *Thomson Bay Settlement* and *Oliver Hill Battery* as the Heritage Act requires that a decision on finalisation is made by 30 June 2021.

Are there Aboriginal heritage sites in these areas as well?

Yes. There are currently nine registered and six lodged Aboriginal heritage sites on Wadjemup/Rottnest Island which are protected by the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 1972*, two of which are located within *Thomson Bay Settlement*. None are located within *Oliver Hill Battery*. The updated heritage assessment for *Thomson Bay Settlement* acknowledges these places. It also acknowledges the significance of the place to the Whadjuk people, both past and present, who are the Traditional Owners of Wadjemup/Rottnest Island, as well its significance for Aboriginal people across Western Australia.

Finalising the registration of *Thomson Bay Settlement* will not impact on the status or administration of Aboriginal sites under the Aboriginal Heritage Act. If a proposed development might impact an Aboriginal site, the processes set out in the Act will still need to be followed. Protection of these Aboriginal heritage sites will remain under the proposed *Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Bill 2020*.

What is the Wadjemup Project and how does it relate to finalising registration?

The Department of Premier and Cabinet is currently partnering with Whadjuk Traditional Owners and the Rottnest Island Authority to develop a Cultural Authority Framework. This framework will facilitate a Statewide consultation process to inform the memorialisation of the burial ground, and future use of the former prison known as the Quod. Aboriginal men and boys from around the State were segregated and incarcerated at Wadjemup; many of whom died and are buried on the island.

Wadjemup/Rottnest Island has a long history, and not all of the details can or should be included in the assessment documents for *Thomson Bay Settlement* and *Oliver Hill Battery*. The Wadjemup Project is intended to be the way for Aboriginal stories relating to the pre-colonial, prison and post-prison eras to be gathered and told appropriately.



ABOVE: Thomson Bay Settlement

Can development and other changes still be made?

Yes. The entry of a place or a precinct, such as *Thomson Bay Settlement*, in the State Register does not prevent changes to that place or to individual properties within a precinct. Tenants and business operators will continue to apply to the Rottnest Island Authority for development approval in *Thomson Bay Settlement* or at *Oliver Hill Battery*. As it has done over the last 29 years, the Rottnest Island Authority will refer proposals to the Heritage Council for advice on the heritage aspects of the proposal in light of the cultural heritage values of *Thomson Bay Settlement* and *Oliver Hill Battery*'s State.

B BELOW: H1 Crew Shelter and Gun Store



Will tourism accommodation and recreational activities be adversely impacted by final registration?

No. In fact, the opposite will be the case. Both the updated *Thomson Bay Settlement* and *Oliver Hill Battery* assessments recognise the importance of the provision of tourist accommodation and recreational activities on the island.

The Rottnest Island Authority will continue to refer any proposed new development to *Thomson Bay Settlement* and *Oliver Hill Battery* to the Heritage Council for advice.

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, which are key to making both places what they are today.

What does the proposed final registration NOT do?

The Heritage Council's remit is quite specific and relates to the provision of advice to ensure State heritage values are not adversely impacted.

Issues that fall outside the scope of the *Heritage Act 2018*, such as fishing restrictions and boating regulations, will continue to be dealt with by the Rottnest Island Authority without needing referral to the Heritage Council.

Will finalising registration affect leases, tenancies or public access?

No. Registration does not in any way change existing leases or tenancies. It also does not allow the public any more access than is currently permitted.

How are comments on registration taken into consideration in making a final decision?

In the event the Heritage Council recommends that the registration of one or both of *Thomson Bay Settlement* and *Oliver Hill Battery* should be finalised, the Minister for Heritage makes the final decision. Both the Heritage Council and the Minister take into account submissions as part of their decision-making processes.

BELOW: Hotel Rottnest, Thomson Bay Settlement



How can I comment on the proposal to finalise registration of Thomson Bay Settlement and/or Oliver Hill Battery?

Comments on the proposal to finalise registration of *Thomson Bay Settlement* and *Oliver Hill Battery* are invited, and the revised assessment documents, and can be made online through the [Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage's Consultation Hub](#) or by email to HCWRegistration@dplh.wa.gov.au.

The comment period closes
Monday 17 May 2021.

What happens next?

Once the comment period has closed, the Heritage Council will consider whether to recommend finalising registration to the Minister for Heritage, who will make the final decision on whether a place is entered in the State Register.