

Heritage Citation



Queensland Housing Commission Residence (former)

Key details

Addresses	At 1 Millen Street, Enoggera, Queensland 4051
Type of place	Cottage, House
Period	Postwar 1945-1960
Style	Queenslander
Lot plan	L2_SP139422
Key dates	Local Heritage Place Since — 1 January 2005 Date of Citation — February 2011
Construction	Roof: Ribbed metal; Walls: Face brick

People/associations T.J. Larking (Builder);
The Commonwealth Reconstruction Training Scheme (Association)

Criterion for listing (A) Historical; (A) Historical; (B) Rarity; (D) Representative; (F) Technical; (H) Historical association

This house is one of two brick Housing Commission cottages remaining from one of the first estates built immediately after World War Two to address housing shortages. The estate contained brick cottages of varying designs that addressed community concerns about 'sameness' and provided training for returned servicemen for future employment. The brick cottages were designed around a central open space incorporating the philosophies of the 'garden city movement' in providing the infrastructure for good communities.

History

This brick housing precinct provides material evidence of the early operations of the Queensland Housing Commission and the way its policies and practices were shaped by the particular conditions and philosophies of the immediate post-war era. The houses were built by T.J Larking in conjunction with returned servicemen training to be bricklayers under the Commonwealth Reconstruction Training Scheme. The planning of the estate addressed community concerns about 'sameness' and incorporated elements of the garden city movement in a developing neighbourhood.

The houses were constructed on land that was originally subdivided into blocks of just under two roods (2,000m²) and marketed as The Hurdcotte Estate in the mid 1880s. Four allotments were purchased by Louisa Price in November 1885, and the rest of this part of the estate was purchased in April and May 1886. Between 1908 and 1913 the allotments were brought by Fredrick and Mary Rose who, apart from selling two subdivisions in 1917, sold the entire estate to the Co-ordinator – General Public Works in June 1945. The other two subdivisions were acquired by the Co-ordinator – General at the same time. Following the passing of the State Housing Act of 1945, the land was vested in the Queensland Housing Commission in April 1946 and portions of the subdivisions dedicated for road in May 1946.

Housing shortages which were evident during the depression became critical during the war years. Traditional Queensland State Housing authorities secured abandoned building sites on individual basis for the construction of state assisted dwellings. The government intended to follow this piecemeal approach when housing became a top priority for the state and the Commonwealth governments towards the end of the war. It was argued that pre-existing blocks offered ready access to water, power and transport. A Commonwealth government investigation however, showed that this approach delayed construction work, and recommended large scale estates. Consequently the Queensland Co-ordinator – General acquired four tracts of land on Brisbane's northside. The smallest of these was the 32 blocks bounded by Hurdcotte and Pickering Streets at Enoggera. Acting Premier Hanlon, announcing the purchase, indicated that the government had chosen a site which fulfilled every criteria- Enoggera has "good access, and (was) handy to school and shopping facilities". This estate is thus one of the first planned housing estates developed by the Queensland Housing Commission.

The design of the estate and its housing was influenced by a number of factors – the availability of material and

skilled labour, Commonwealth concerns with economy and uniformity, and post-war reconstruction philosophies emphasising community development.

Post-war shortages in the supply of timber and roofing iron encouraged the use of the alternative building materials. Bricks, fibro cement, terra-cotta and concrete were used. As this was one of the first estates, brick was used before less traditional materials. It was not long however before bricks became scarce as increased demand outstripped even the increased output made possible by mechanisation and industry expansion.

Shortages of skilled labour also hindered large scale construction of housing. Despite 11,000 building tradesmen being released from the Civil Constructions Corps between 1944 and 1945, only 3,000 were involved in domestic construction. To boost the numbers of tradesmen, the Commonwealth established a Reconstruction Training Scheme which provided accelerated training and subsidised wages for return servicemen. The Queensland Housing Commission provided the land, plans, materials and specialist services for trainees. Once the trainees had developed a proficiency level of 40% under the Department of Public Instruction, on-site training was provided by the Queensland Housing Commission. Mainly carpenters, but also plumber, painters, plasterers and bricklayers were trained in this manner. While most trades were easy to provide training for, bricklayers were more difficult to accommodate as this method of residential construction was then uncommon in Queensland. The QHC established a special trainee pool of bricklayers to supply government and industry. The first of these men were trained constructing the houses on this estate at Enoggera. In November 1946 it was reported that this special pool of trainee bricklayers had built 33 houses for the QHC. This estate is significant for its association with the Commonwealth Reconstruction Training Scheme and the specialised training of bricklayers.

For this type of scheme to be successful, the QHC relied on competent tradesmen tendering for the construction of their houses. The QHC cultivated relationships with some builders in anticipation of a continuing relationship. The builder of this estate, T.J Larking, is one such case. After the completion of these houses, a late tender by him was considered separately because his work was 'well known' to the Commission.

While acceding to Commonwealth Government recommendations in many regards, the Queensland Housing Commission also developed a measure of independence in the matter of the styles of housing it provided. The Housing Minister (Mr Bruce) was reluctant to follow the New South Wales example of erecting blocks of flats, commenting early in 1946 that Queenslanders preferred individual houses on blocks of land where they could engage in gardening. Thus, while adopting the common standards laid down by the Commonwealth in relation to maximum floor standards, Queensland authorities resisted the pressure for uniformity and 'utmost economy'. There was a groundswell of popular concerns with the same 'sameness' of mass produced housing, and the Lord Mayor of Brisbane, Chandler, stressed the need to avoid standardisation and called for variety in the design of housing. This estate displays the material attempt to address these concerns – it contains a variety of design to avoid the appearance of 'sameness' and individual houses have space for gardens.

As well as addressing popular concerns with uniformity, the type of planning displayed in this estate draws on the 'the garden city movement' then predominant in planning and architectural circles. It displays what has been described as the 'quintessential garden city environment' – 'a pleasant residential scene with the accent on space, greenness and community'. Although the QHC only once introduced the total planned community championed by garden city purists, it did attempt to provide space for parks and playgrounds. While these often were left as vacant neglected spaces due to disputes between local councils and the QHC as to who was responsible for developing and maintaining them, the early estates at Stafford and Enoggera are the only housing Commission developments to have houses situated around a central reserve.

Statement of significance

Relevant assessment criteria

This is a place of local heritage significance and meets one or more of the local heritage criteria under the Heritage planning scheme policy of the *Brisbane City Plan 2014*. It is significant because:

Historical

CRITERION A

The place is important in demonstrating the evolution or pattern of the city's or local area's history

as a house from one of the first planned housing estates developed by the QHC to address the critical shortage of housing in the post-war era.

Historical

CRITERION A

The place is important in demonstrating the evolution or pattern of the city's or local area's history

for the evidence it provides of the development of the suburb.

Rarity

CRITERION B

The place demonstrates rare, uncommon or endangered aspects of the city's or local area's cultural heritage

for demonstrating the early use of non-traditional building materials in Queensland.

Representative

CRITERION D

The place is important in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a particular class or classes of cultural places

as one of a pair of remnant brick houses demonstrating an attempt to produce mass housing that addressed community concerns about 'sameness' through a variety of designs.

Technical

CRITERION F

The place is important in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technological achievement at a particular period

for demonstrating the application of the type of planning espoused by the 'garden city movement'.

Historical association

CRITERION H

The place has a special association with the life or work of a particular person, group or organization of importance in the city's or local area's history

for its association with the Commonwealth Reconstruction Training Scheme, particularly in training.

References

1. Brisbane City Council Water Supply and Sewerage Detail Plans
2. Brisbane City Council Four chain cadastre. maps
3. Brisbane City Council, 1946 aerial photographs.
4. Department of Natural Resources, Queensland Certificates of Title and other records
5. Hollander, Robyn, Housing Under Labour: The Queensland Housing Commission, 1945-57, Phd Thesis, Griffith University, 1996.

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Note: This citation has been prepared on the basis of evidence available at the time including an external examination of the building. The statement of significance is a summary of the most culturally important aspects of the property based on the available evidence, and may be re-assessed if further information becomes available. The purpose of this citation is to provide an informed evaluation for heritage registration and information. This does not negate the necessity for a thorough conservation study by a qualified practitioner, before any action is taken which may affect its heritage significance.

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