



POSITION PAPER

National Art School / Old Darlinghurst Gaol

BACKGROUND

The National Trust listed the 'East Sydney Technical College' including walls and gates, cellblocks and other buildings on the National Trust Register in December, 1976.

The National Art School / Old Darlinghurst Gaol has historical significance -

- as the largest surviving early gaol complex in Australia (construction commenced in 1822 of the sandstone walls),
- as a military internment camp during the 1914-18 war and up to mid 1921, as East Sydney Technical College from 1922, well known and remembered with affection in the community as a place of education, training, exhibitions and social events, and
- as the National Art School, established on the ESTC site from 1922 as the Art department which evolved into NAS, with independence as an art academy from 1996.

It has aesthetic significance -

- in its external form, it is a fine example of the radial planning of the 1830s promoted by the Society for the Improvement of Prison Discipline and the Reformation of Juvenile Offenders;
- it reflects, in the evidence of its fabric and almost continuous construction programme during the 19th Century, the various approaches to penal discipline tried in NSW during the 19th century;
- it is a precinct of distinctive and homogeneous architectural quality deriving from:
 - The relationship of the forms of the circular central Chapel, the apsidal-nosed radial wings and the Governor's House;
 - The sense of enclosure and the unusual spaces created by the above;
 - The general use of ashlar dressed, unpainted sandstone walling, and conical and hipped slate roofs;
 - The consistent design, detailing and contribution of individual buildings to a unified complex;
 - The major trees and landscape character of the campus.
- the underground and under-floor remnants of walls, foundations, drains and the 1850s cistern, and other evidence of the past, found in the hidden footprint of the complex.
- it has individual buildings of unusual interest and quality, some with surviving original interior elements such as cantilevered stone staircases and timber roof framing;

It has significance through its setting and urban form -

- its setting, which owes much to its 1820s siting on the Woolloomooloo ridge, adjacent to the South Head Road, and its relationship with its immediate neighbour, Darlinghurst Courthouse;
- the consistent building form and fabric;
- its landscape, and its adjacent tree-lined streets to east and west, which contribute to its distinctive character;
- views and vistas to and from the complex of buildings, walls, gardens and landscaped garden spaces.
- the precinct of public spaces and buildings, some providing views over the elegant slate-clad roofscape of the campus.

In July, 2016, the location of the National Art School in the Old Darlinghurst Gaol remained uncertain with proposals that the NAS may be merged with other institutions.

The National Art School / Old Darlinghurst Gaol has not been listed on the State Heritage Register.

NATIONAL TRUST POSITION

- The National Trust will urge that the National Art School / Old Darlinghurst Gaol must remain in public ownership.
- The Trust will prepare a nomination for State Heritage Register Listing of the National Art School / Old Darlinghurst Gaol in collaboration with the National Art School.
- The Trust will publicise the significance of this site and the excellent adaptive re-use of the place for initially the East Sydney Technical College and then the National Art School and the fact that the place has been a teaching facility longer than it was a gaol.

ACTION TO PROMOTE THE TRUST'S POSITION

The Trust will promote its views on this issue in the media, and with the State Government.