

2. LOCATION, DESCRIPTION AND ASSOCIATED PLACES

2.1 LOCATION AND BOUNDARIES

Parkes Place is a parkland area located in the central part of Canberra, adjacent to Old Parliament House.

The boundaries are King George Terrace, King Edward Terrace, and Parkes Place East and West.

The immediate contextual boundaries or setting for Parkes Place includes:

- the landscape of the Parliamentary Zone; and
- the Land Axis.

The implications of this setting are discussed later in this report.

The blocks and sections included are Block 4, Section 34, Block 1, Section 58 and Block 1, Section 59, Parkes. The two road reserves within Parkes Place are also included.

Figure 2. Block and Section Plan of Parkes Place

Source: NCA



Figure 3. Aerial view of Parkes Place

Source: Google Earth



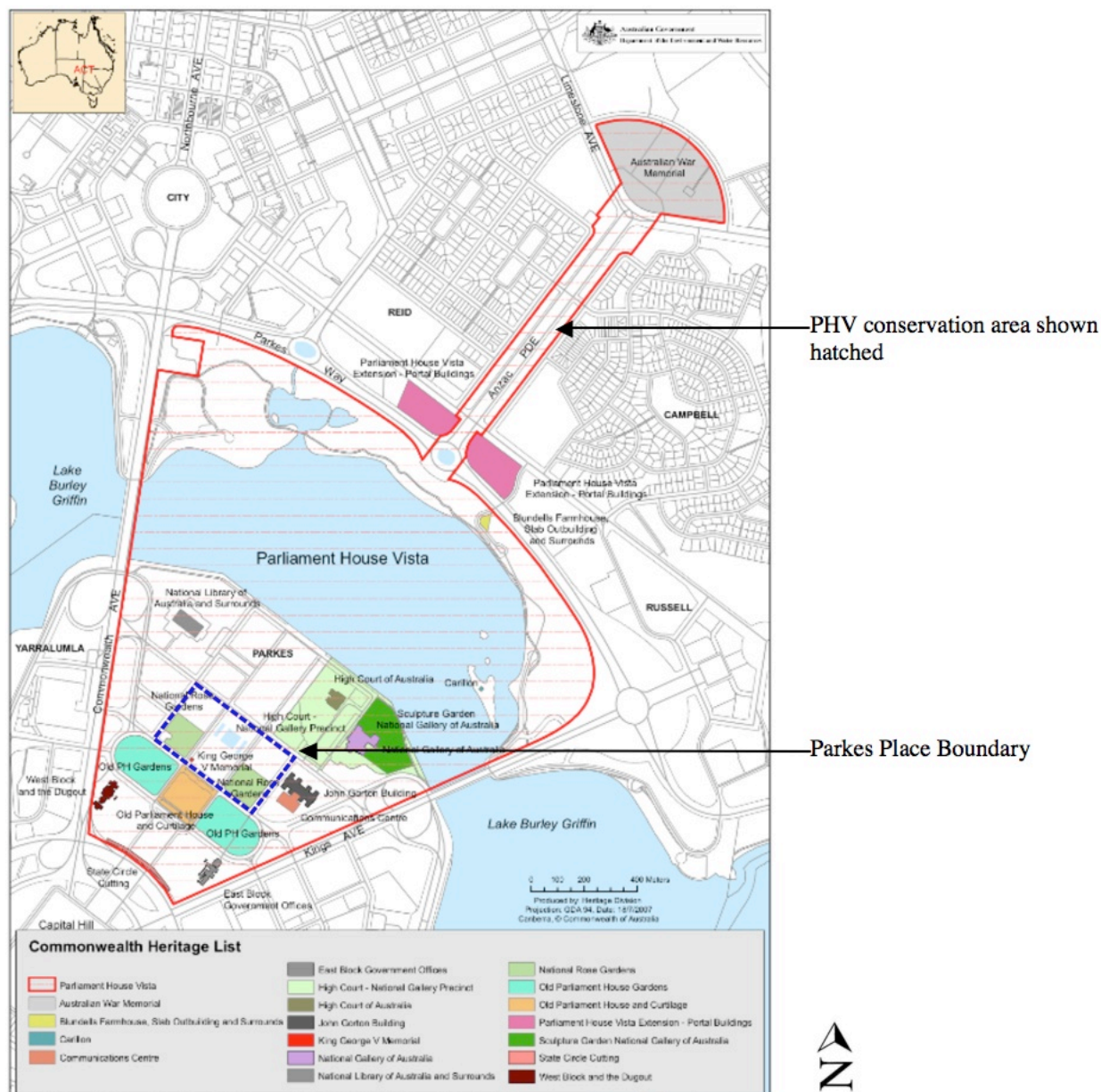
Figure 4. Aerial view of Parliamentary Zone

Source: Google Earth



Figure 5. Plan showing the Parkes Place and Parliament House Vista conservation area

Source: Base plan from the Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities



2.2 DESCRIPTION AND CONDITION

This section begins with an overview of Parkes Place and the landscape surrounding the area, and it then provides brief information about Indigenous heritage, the landscape and built components.

Overview of Parkes Place

Parkes Place is a gently north-sloping parkland area with extensive lawn areas, mature trees and large plantings of roses. It is divided by a symmetrical grid of roads and paths delineated by mature trees to create a range of publically accessible spaces and garden rooms.

The National Rose Gardens are located in two garden rooms on the southeast and southwest of Parkes Place separated by the Land Axis corridor. The central space between the gardens contains the King George V Memorial and Aboriginal Tent Embassy, with a restaurant and café at the southwestern corner of the western rose garden.

Two important axes cross through Parkes Place – the broad grassed Land Axis from northwest to southeast, and the narrower grassed cross axis between the Treasury Building and John Gorton Building. At this crossing point of the axes are reflection ponds and fountains. Both axes are edged by tree-lined walkways.

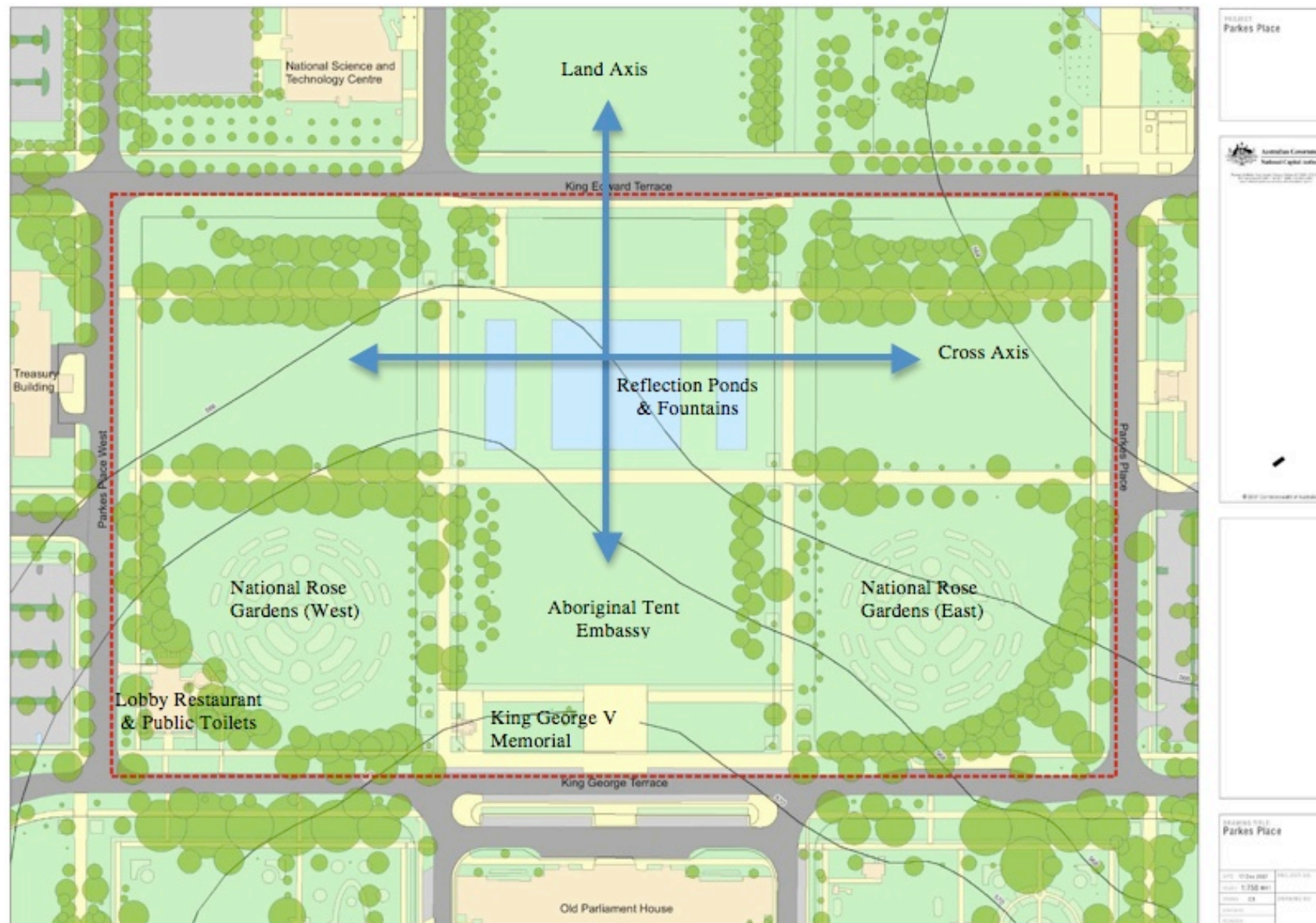


Figure 6. Parkes Place and Old Parliament House from northwest

Source: NCA

Figure 7. Site Plan of Parkes Place showing Major Features

Source: Base plan from NCA



Landscape surrounding Parkes Place – the Parliamentary Zone and Parliament House Vista

Parkes Place sits in the centre of the Parliamentary Zone, being the triangle of land bounded by Commonwealth Avenue, Kings Avenue and the southern lakeshore. The Parliamentary Zone is the setting for major government buildings and national institutions. The zone is structured by the road pattern and mature evergreen and deciduous treescape. The Land Axis is a dominant feature bisecting the zone. Within this framework are a series of landscape and garden spaces with a mixture of native and exotic, formal and informal plantings, as well as some remnant native vegetation. There are extensive irrigated grass areas, some unirrigated grasslands, and large carparks generally screened by hedges.



Figure 8. Aerial view of the Parliament House Vista looking north with Mount Ainslie at top right

Source: NCA

Parkes Place, as part of the Parliamentary Zone, also sits within the Parliament House Vista conservation area, which in turn sits within a larger landscape area or setting which is an important context for both. As noted in the previous section, the immediate contextual boundaries or setting for Parkes Place includes:

- the landscape of the Parliamentary Zone; and
- the Land Axis.

Indigenous Heritage

The Indigenous heritage of Parkes Place was studied as part of the Parliament House Vista heritage management plan (Marshall and others 2009). That report noted:

- Aboriginal artefacts were previously discovered in the Old Parliament House Senate Gardens, which are adjacent to Parkes Place;
- the Parliament House Vista study area has sustained significant modification and disturbance since the European settlement of the Limestone Plains;
- the development of the Parliament House Vista study area has also resulted in changes to the natural landform with extensive development of terraces, buildings and other structures, roads, carparks, utilities and services;
- as a result, the possibility of undisturbed Aboriginal archaeological sites being present within the Parliament House Vista study area is likely to be restricted to the less developed portions of the study area on the northern shores of the lake, and in the now submerged slope terminations and terraces above the original course of the Molonglo River;
- in the contemporary context, many of the landforms likely to have been used by Aboriginal people in or near the Parliament House Vista study area have been inundated by the damming of the Molonglo River to form Lake Burley Griffin. The discovery of small

scatters of flaked stone artefacts on the lower slopes of Black Mountain introduces the possibility that there may be similar sites on the southern banks of the Molonglo within what is now the Parliament House Vista. Given the past history of land use and the degree of disturbance associated with the development of this landscape, if such sites are present it is likely that they will be found in the least disturbed contexts, possibly associated with the areas identified as possessing remnant native vegetation; and

- Parkes Place includes the Aboriginal Tent Embassy, a protest site dating originally from 1972 and re-established in the 1990s, which is one focus for continuing and broader Indigenous association within the Parliament House Vista and Parkes Place.

Landscape

The landscape composition of Parkes Place is formal and simple. It comprises a symmetrical arrangement of the following components.

Garden Rooms

The two quadrant shaped tree-enclosed spaces of the National Rose Gardens are symmetrically located on either side of Parkes Place and separated by a wide grassed terrace that is part of the Land Axis vista. The rose beds are laid out in a radiating circle pattern that is divided into quarters. An additional circular bed has been inserted in the north eastern corner of the eastern garden.

The garden rooms are enclosed to the south by several arcs of regularly planted large bright-green deciduous species inter-planted with grey-green conifers (*Quercus palustris*, *Platanus acerifolia* and *Cedrus atlantica*); to the north by a single line of grey-green conifers (*Cedrus atlantica*); and along the central edge by fastigiate species (ie. species having branches sloping upward, more or less parallel to the main stem) of dark-green conifers and bright-green deciduous species (*Cupressus sempervirens*, *Cupressus arizonica* and *Populus nigra* 'Italica'). An additional line of deciduous species (*Quercus palustris*) has intruded into the Rose Garden space. Low branches have been removed to allow access and to enable views into and out of the spaces. Rose beds have no formal edging, are mulched with wood chip and irrigated grass is maintained between the beds.

Vista - Land Axis



Figure 9. Land Axis vista from adjacent to the central reflecting pond, looking north

Source: Dianne Firth

The vista is bordered by two rows of eucalypts (*Eucalyptus elata*) in front of the row of original plantings (*Cupressus sempervirens*, *Cupressus arizonica* and *Populus nigra* 'Italica'). A few additional eucalypts have been randomly planted in the area of the Aboriginal Tent Embassy.

The vista is enhanced by the broad sweep of the grassed surface, only some of which is irrigated. Adjacent to the roadway of King George Terrace is a terrace paved with concrete in the central area with grass at the sides. The concrete retaining wall of this terrace accommodates a planting bed with low shrubs.

Access to the lower unirrigated grassed terrace is by broad concrete steps at the centre with additional steps at each side accessing the north-south walkways. Further north the Land Axis bisects the cross axis vista with a paved terrace and ornamental ponds. Towards the King Edward Terrace roadway the vista is bordered with eucalypts and Casuarinas (*Casuarina cunninghamiana*), and the grass is irrigated.

Vista - Cross Axis

The vista between the Treasury Building and John Gorton Building is maintained by a broad sweep of irrigated grass, the low profile of the central terrace and ornamental ponds, and the strength and visual integrity of the deciduous and evergreen bordering trees (*Quercus palustris*, *Platanus acerifolia* and *Cedrus atlantica*).



Figure 10. Cross Axis vista looking towards the John Gorton Building

Source: Duncan Marshall

Ponds

The intersection of the two vistas is marked by a formal terrace containing a large square reflecting pond with rectangular ponds each side, each containing 2 gushing (wedding cake) fountains. The terrace surrounding the ponds is patterned with a large square motif formed by bluestone slabs inset to exposed aggregate paving.



Figure 11. Side reflecting pond with 'wedding cake' fountain. Treasury Building in background.

Source: Duncan Marshall

Walkway - North-South

The two north-south stabilised red gravel walkways edging the Land Axis vista and the Rose Gardens present an unfolding sequence of views under and between mature dark-green evergreen conifers (*Cupressus sempervirens* and *Cupressus arizonica*), light-green deciduous trees (*Quercus palustris*), and fine-leaved, grey-green eucalypts. Fastigate deciduous trees (*Populus nigra* 'Italica') planted in square at-ground planting boxes mark the intersection with other walkways and access points. Many of the trees are mature and reflect the various periods of plantings that have occurred. The plantings discontinue across the vista space and then continue again.



Figure 12. North-south walkway, eastern side of Land Axis, looking south

Source: Dianne Firth

Walkway - Cross Axis

Two east-west walkways edge the Cross Axis. The southern walkway is edged by a single row of large mature grey-green conifers (*Cedrus atlantica*) on both sides of the stabilised red gravel walkway. The plantings discontinue across the vista space and then continue again. The northern walkway is edged with one line of conifers to the south (*Cedrus atlantica*) and two lines of deciduous species to the north (*Quercus palustris* and *Platanus acerifolia*). Fastigate deciduous *Populus nigra* 'Italica' mark the intersection of pathways.



Figure 13. Cross Axis walkway, southern walkway looking west

Source: Dianne Firth



Figure 14. Cross Axis walkway, northern walkway looking west

Source: Dianne Firth

Nodes

Fastigate deciduous trees (*Populus nigra* ‘Italica’) are planted in square at-ground planting boxes edged with granite sets. Some are formally planted with trimmed low shrubs (*Buxus sempervirens*), others are unplanted. They mark intersections with other walkways and access points, and occur in groupings of two and four.



Figure 15. Poplar node plantings without shrubs

Source: Dianne Firth



Figure 16. Poplar node plantings with shrubs

Source: Dianne Firth

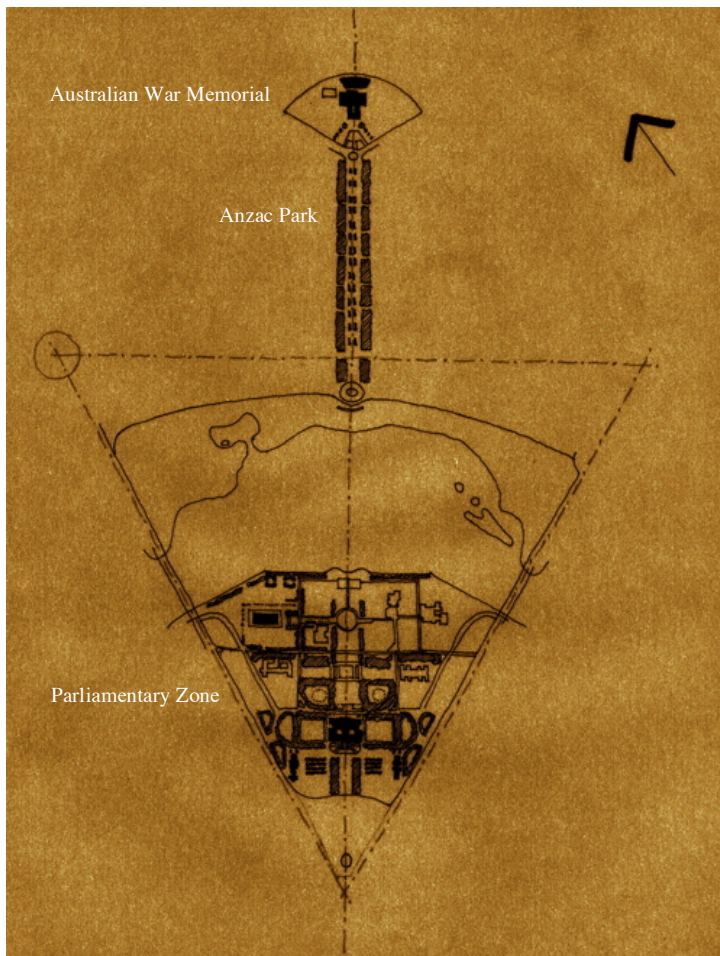


Figure 17. Study Area Formal Landscape Elements

Source: Craig Burton

Notes: Major landscape elements/ plantings include:

- the plantation plantings and planting beds in Anzac Parade;
- southern lakeshore plantings; and
- street, Land Axis and other boundary plantings in the Parliamentary Zone.

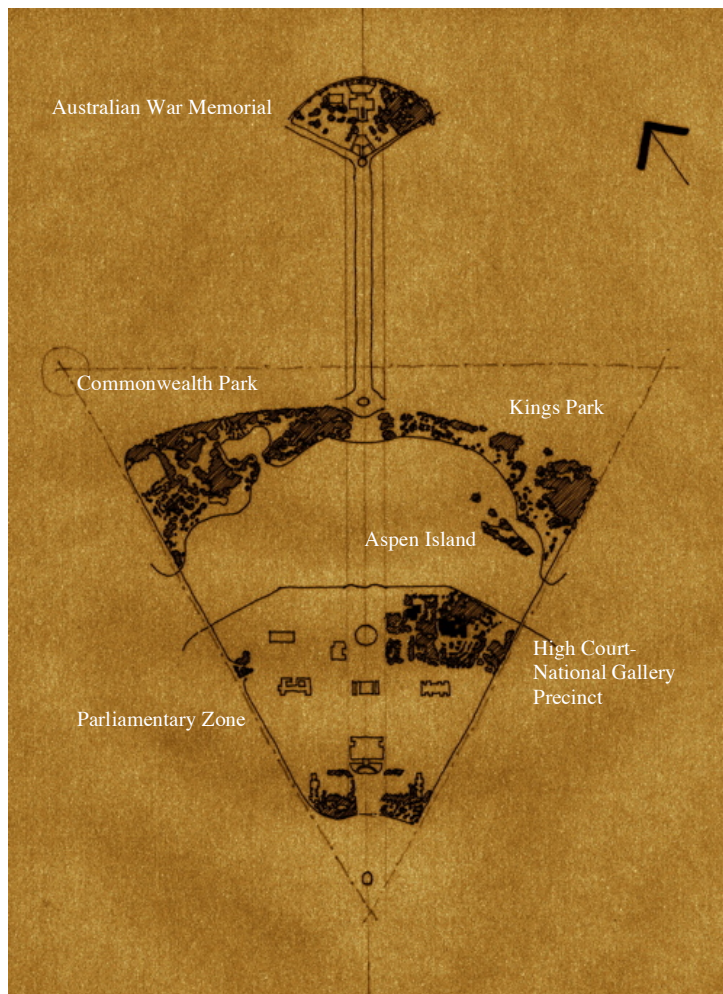


Figure 18. Study Area Informal Landscape Elements

Source: Craig Burton

Notes: Major landscape elements/ plantings include:

- plantings around the Australian War Memorial, especially to the east;
- Commonwealth and Kings Parks, including Aspen Island; and
- some plantings in the Parliamentary Zone, notably the High Court of Australia-National Gallery of Australia Precinct, and adjacent to East and West Blocks.

Important Trees

In general terms, the entire treescape of Parkes Place is important, especially as part of the Parliament House Vista. The following list of trees and tree groups highlights trees which are of some individual significance in addition to their contribution to the overall area:

- three surviving Roman cypresses planted adjacent to the western north-south path by the Empire Parliamentary Association in 1926, including four surviving original plaques (two adjacent to the stumps of dead trees) (Gray 1997);
- Roman cypress planted 1927 by the Young Australia League (Gray 1997);
- street, path and Land Axis plantings, especially those from the 1920s, 1940s and 1960s (such as the *Calocedrus sp.* near King Edward Terrace); and
- the original Lombardy poplars (*Populus nigra* 'Italica') that were planted as nodal/sentinel markers.

In addition to/overlapping with the above, a 1998 survey of the Parliamentary Zone identified 33 individually significant trees. Relevant data from this survey is presented in the following table and figure. To some extent, the 1998 survey data overlaps with the list above. However, in one case a tree has died, and in another case, the tree is partly dead, as noted.

Table 1. Significant Trees in Parkes Place extracted from the 1998 Survey

Tree No.	Species	Common Name	Design Intention	Significance
1001261	Cupressus sempervirens var. stricta	Italian Cypress	Avenue	Historical
1001263	Cupressus sempervirens var. stricta	Italian Cypress	Avenue	Historical
1001264	Populus nigra 'Italica'	Lombardy Poplar	Specimen	Historical
1001265	Cupressus sempervirens var. stricta	Italian Cypress	Avenue	Historical
1001266	Cupressus sempervirens var. stricta	Italian Cypress	Avenue	Historical
1001267	Cupressus sempervirens var. stricta	Italian Cypress	Avenue	Historical
1001279	Cupressus sempervirens var. stricta	Italian Cypress	Avenue	Historical
1001281	Populus nigra 'Italica'	Lombardy Poplar	Specimen	Historical
1001287	Cupressus arizonica	Rough-barked Cypress	Avenue	Historical
1001332	Populus nigra 'Italica'	Lombardy Poplar	Specimen	Historical
1001343	Ulmus americana	American Elm	Avenue	Rarity
1001352	Cupressus arizonica	Rough-barked Cypress	Avenue	Historical
1001356	Ulmus americana	American Elm	Specimen	Rarity
1001360	Cupressus arizonica	Rough-barked Cypress	Avenue	Historical
1001369	Ulmus americana	American Elm	Avenue	Rarity
1001371	Ulmus americana *	American Elm	Avenue	Rarity
1001857	Cupressus arizonica	Rough-barked Cypress	Specimen	Size
1001874	Quercus palustris	Pin Oak	Specimen	Size
1001877	Cedrus atlantica	Atlas Cedar	Avenue	Size
1001880	Cedrus atlantica	Atlas Cedar	Avenue	Size
1001881	Cedrus atlantica	Atlas Cedar	Avenue	Size
1001906	Cupressus arizonica	Rough-barked Cypress	Avenue	Size
1001907	Cupressus arizonica	Rough-barked Cypress	Avenue	Size
1001911	Cupressus arizonica	Rough-barked Cypress	Avenue	Size
1001912	Cupressus sempervirens var. stricta	Italian Cypress	Specimen	Historical
1001939	Cupressus arizonica	Rough-barked Cypress	Specimen	Size
1001995	Populus nigra 'Italica'	Lombardy Poplar	Specimen	Size
1001996	Populus nigra 'Italica'	Lombardy Poplar	Specimen	Size
1002023	Cupressus sempervirens var. stricta	Italian Cypress	Specimen	Historical
1002025	Cupressus sempervirens var. stricta **	Italian Cypress	Specimen	Historical
1002041	Cupressus sempervirens var. stricta	Italian Cypress	Specimen	Historical
1002522	Cupressus arizonica	Rough-barked Cypress	Avenue	Historical
1002524	Cupressus arizonica	Rough-barked Cypress	Avenue	Historical

Note: * = dead ** = partly dead

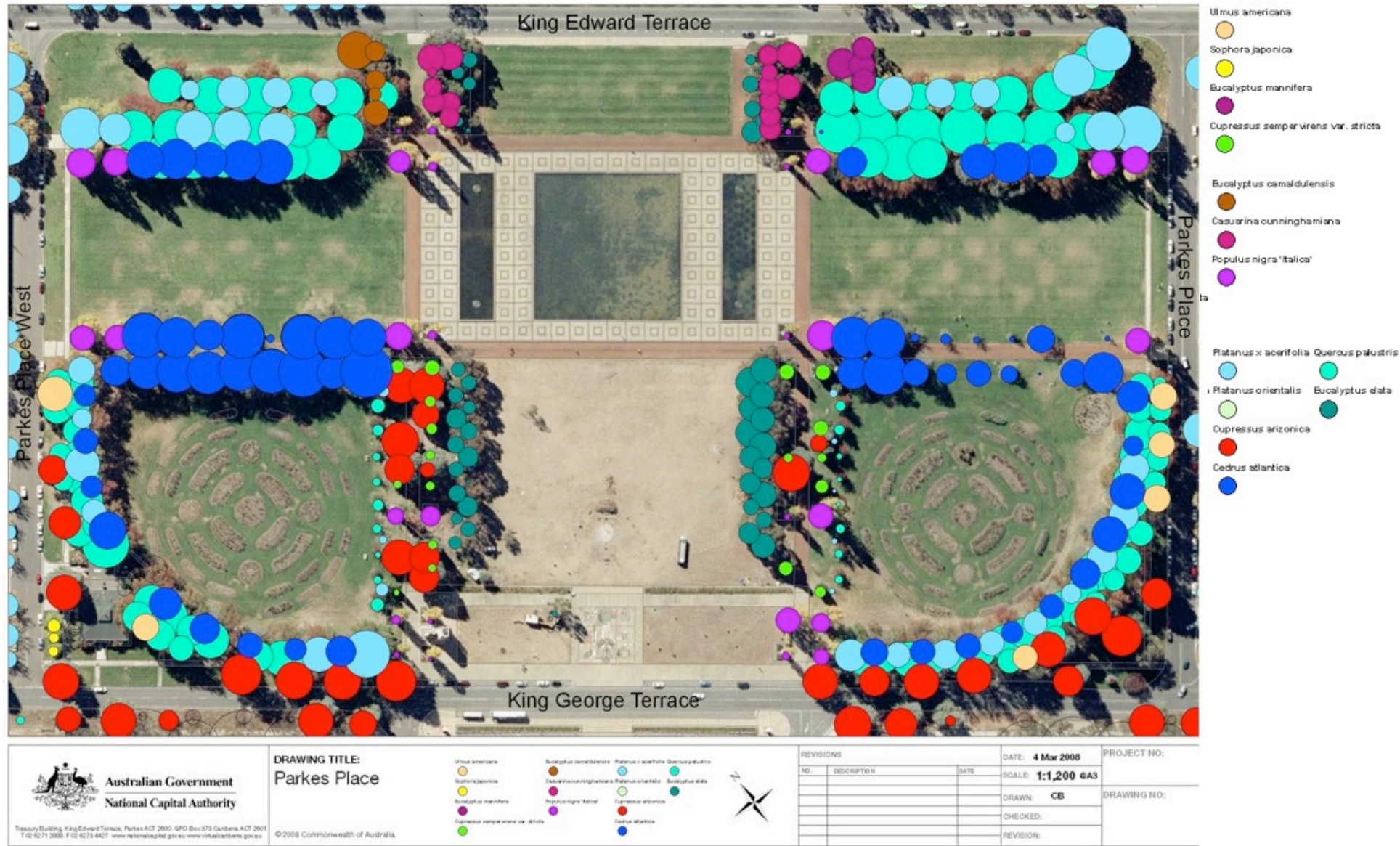
Figure 19. Location of Significant Trees identified in the 1998 Survey

Source: NCA



Figure 20. Tree Types in Parkes Place

Source: NCA





National Rose Gardens

The gardens are in two parts, set symmetrically either side of the grassed and paved terrace in front of Old Parliament House. The design of the two gardens is similar in plan, but each displays an individual character. The site slopes gently to the north (approximately 1.5% slope) and covers an area of approximately 4.5 hectares. The general character of the gardens is of a spacious formal parterre enclosed by mature trees. The gardens have three basic components: the rose beds themselves, perimeter plantings of trees and the lawn.



Figure 21. National Rose Gardens

Source: Duncan Marshall

The rose beds in each garden are laid out in plan to symbolise the petals of a fully-opened rose. This consists of a central circular bed enclosed by punctuated annulus beds in a formal quartered configuration. The original colour pattern has not been maintained. The replacement of ageing roses with new varieties occurs regularly.

A number of the rose beds have a commemorative association.



Figure 22. National Rose Gardens

Source: Duncan Marshall

Each garden is enclosed by a perimeter of large mature trees of a variety of non-native species, evergreen and deciduous, and arranged in a regular order. The species used (basically cedar, oak, pine, plane and poplar) provide for a range of seasonal visual effects as well as wind protection and space definition. Pruning of low limbs has provided unimpeded pedestrian access. The avenue of cypress trees (*Cupressus sempervirens*) which separates the rose gardens and the central grassed terrace is a memorial planting. Planted by visiting dignitaries on the occasion of the meeting of the delegates of the Empire Parliamentary Association in 1926, some of the trees still have a memorial plaque at their base. Also along this avenue are mature poplar

trees (*Populus nigra*) which were intended as markers, because of their strong vertical form and vivid yellow autumn colour, to key entry points within the Parliamentary Zone. Both the poplars and cypresses are remnants of the original plan and, in some cases plantings made by T C G Weston. Weston was Officer-in-Charge, Afforestation Branch, Federal Capital Territory, and other positions, from 1913-26 and was responsible for plantings in Canberra, especially in the study area from 1925.

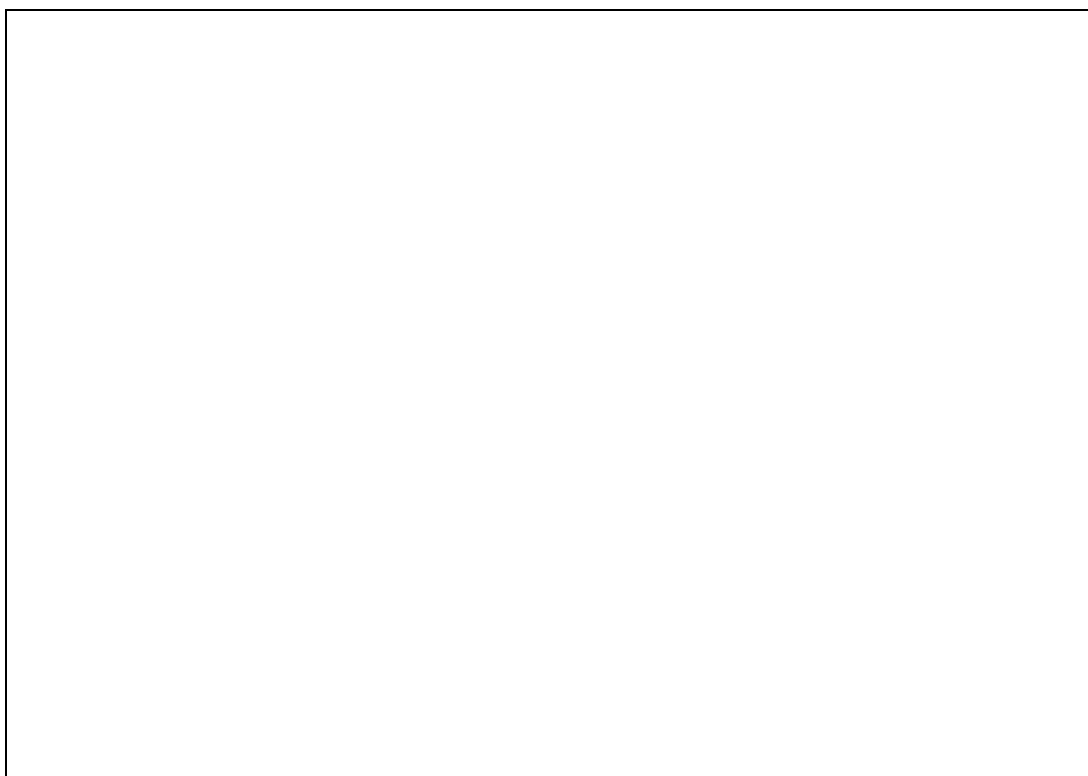
Apart from the beds and the main edge pathways, all other surfaces are irrigated grass. This provides a bright green uniform ground plane which highlights the patterns created by light and shade, and allows a smooth transition of views into adjacent spaces.

The eastern garden is showing a well worn track between the beds indicating high pedestrian use between the John Gorton Building and Old Parliament House.

A detailed assessment of the rose gardens is provided in Appendix J.

Figure 23. Layout of the National Rose Gardens – Eastern Part

Source: NCA



Note: An original circular rose bed in the northeastern corner of the garden is not shown.

Figure 24. Layout of the National Rose Gardens – Western Part

Source: NCA



Figure 25. Mixed border tree planting to the eastern rose garden

Source: Dianne Firth

Built Elements

Parkes Place contains a range of built elements ranging from modest buildings and a large sculpture, down to footpaths, light posts and park seating. The categories of built elements are briefly summarised in the following table along with examples.

Table 2. Built Elements	
Category	Examples
Minor Buildings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aboriginal Tent Embassy, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a Sacred Fire for Peace and Justice; a lightweight portable building housing a small display and information about the Aboriginal Tent Embassy; flag, a number of metal barrels along the northern edge of the site; an art mural on the ground at the southern end of the site closest to Old Parliament House; and an array of tents, campsites and camp infrastructure and vehicles. (Note: These features differ from those noted in the Australian Heritage Database citation because of changes over time.) Lobby Restaurant and public toilets: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> is a design based on a square plan with steel support columns. A set of four steel internal columns support the clerestory. The glazed walls on the front and two side faces are full height and regularly patterned. The remaining wall and toilet section are face brick. The building style has clearly expressed horizontal planes of the external building platform, eaves, and a clerestory window. A small central spire provides a feature similar to the Late Twentieth-Century Ecclesiastical style. The building has good quality finishes with its roofing, fascia and spire clad in copper. The timber lined eaves extend into the building. the public toilet section is contiguous with the restaurant building. the café section has an original timber framed and clad structure which has been enclosed by a large temporary glass, metal, panelled and plastic sail structure. Bus shelters – round painted concrete structures
Memorials, Commemorative Features & Artworks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> King George V Memorial: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> monumental sandstone faced pylon, sandstone sculpture and bronze sculpture Aboriginal Tent Embassy (as above) Commemorative tree plantings (noting these are not actually built elements but are included here because of their commemorative role): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Empire Parliamentary Association 1926, three surviving Roman cypresses, two with plaques, and two stumps with plaques Young Australia League 1927, one Roman cypress
Roads	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are a series of red coloured bitumen paved access roads
Footpaths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Concrete footpaths
Paved areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adjacent to King George Terrace and around the reflection ponds Exposed aggregate concrete and bluestone in a geometric pattern
Walls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exposed aggregate retaining walls below the paved area near King George Terrace, near the King George V Memorial, and around the outer reflection ponds
Ponds and fountains	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Land Axis reflection ponds and fountains
Lightposts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Concrete post top lights Metal pole street lights
Seating	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Painted/stained timber and metal park bench seats
Flagpoles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One bush flagpole as part of the Aboriginal Tent Embassy
Signage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Street name, traffic and tourism direction signage Metal commemorative plaques and rose plaques

Table 2. Built Elements	
Category	Examples
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stone and concrete edging to poplar plantings • Various types of fixed and mobile rubbish bins, of various ages • Metal drink fountains • Irrigation and pumping equipment • Painted metal utility cabinets



Figure 26. Aboriginal Tent Embassy adjacent to the King George V Memorial

Source: Duncan Marshall



Figure 27. Aboriginal Tent Embassy mural on paving

Source: Duncan Marshall

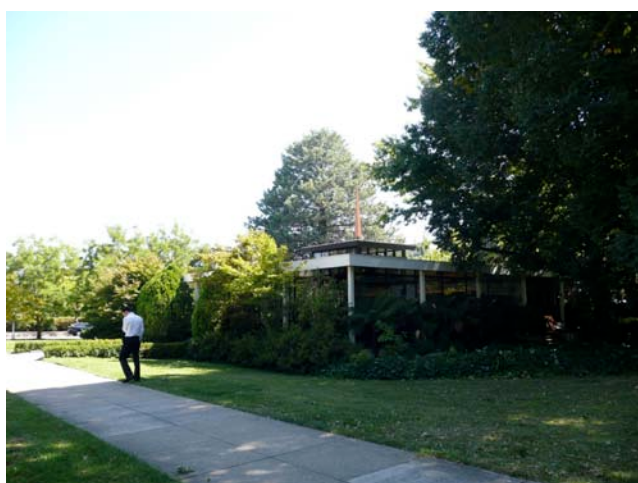


Figure 28. Lobby Restaurant

Source: Duncan Marshall



Figure 29. Lobby Restaurant – temporary extension to café section

Source: Duncan Marshall



Figure 30. King George V Memorial

Source: Duncan Marshall



Figure 31. Empire Parliamentary Association Cypress Tree of 1926, with plaque (to left)

Source: Duncan Marshall



Figure 32. Empire Parliamentary Association Cypress Tree stump of 1926, with plaque
Source: Duncan Marshall



Figure 33. Land Axis reflection ponds and fountains, and decorative paving
Source: Duncan Marshall



Figure 34. Visitor Signage
Source: Duncan Marshall

2.3 ASSOCIATED PLACES

There are five main associated places related to Parkes Place. To some extent these places overlap.

Parkes Place is an important element within the Parliament House Vista conservation area. It is also adjacent to, and has strong visual relationships with Old Parliament House and the adjacent former parliamentary gardens (see Figure 5). Finally, Parkes Place has a strong relationship with the Treasury Building and John Gorton Building, these being at either end of the cross-axis which runs through Parkes Places.



Figure 35. Old Parliament House viewed from Parkes Place

Source: Duncan Marshall



Figure 36. The John Gorton Building viewed from within the cross-axis in Parkes Place

Source: Duncan Marshall