

6. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

6.1 STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Separate statements are provided below for Parkes Place and the National Rose Gardens because of the separate Commonwealth Heritage listing for the latter.

References to criteria in the following section relate to the National and Commonwealth Heritage Criteria (reproduced at Appendix D). The references are provided after the relevant text.



Parkes Place

Parkes Place is an integral part of the Parliament House Vista conservation area, and the Vista is of outstanding heritage value to the nation. It is a central and highly visible part of the Vista, is associated with the history of the development of Canberra as Australia's national capital, and is integral with the central national landscape of the capital.

Parkes Place, including the National Rose Gardens, has a range of values related to its history, design, aesthetic qualities, creative achievement, social value, and strong and special associations.

Parkes Place is part of a layered landscape developed through time, and various attempts at the interpretation of the Griffins' vision for Canberra as the nation's capital, as well as departures from it. The initial layers were those plantings undertaken by Weston, Bruce and Pryor, and this was followed by the designs of the NCDC. This complex, evolving design is an important part of the story of the national capital and the Parliament House Vista in particular. Parkes Place is part of this story.

The Parliament House Vista was intended to be and has become the focus of Commonwealth parliamentary and governmental activity as well as, to some extent, national cultural life. It is the symbolic heart of Canberra and its development is strongly linked to perceptions of Canberra as the nation's capital. Parkes Place again contributes to and is part of these developments, being a central and highly visible part of the Vista. Parkes Place and the National Rose Gardens have important associations with Old Parliament House, being the public garden setting for the Parliament since the 1920s.

Parkes Place has been associated since the 1930s with the development of Australian national identity through the creation and use of the various component places or areas including the National Rose Gardens, King George V Memorial, the Aboriginal Tent Embassy and the central terrace as a protest space. The formal arrangements of native trees also reflects the evolving national interest in using Australian plants, and may be seen as another expression of an evolving national identity. Parkes Place is also associated with the development and life of Canberra through recreational use of the parklands.

Parkes Place and the National Rose Gardens also contribute to the record provided by the Parliament House Vista of different approaches to landscape design, management and maintenance throughout the 20th century.



In addition to the broad landscape area of Parkes Place, the parklands contain a range of individual sites with some measure of historic value. These sites are the:

- commemorative tree plantings;
- National Rose Gardens (individually significant);
- The Lobby (individually significant – not discussed further because of separate heritage listing);
- King George V Memorial (individually significant – not discussed further because of separate heritage listing);
- Aboriginal Tent Embassy (not discussed further because of pending National Heritage assessment); and
- the central terrace area which is associated with political protest.

The surviving commemorative tree plantings by the Empire Parliamentary Association in 1926 and the Young Australia League in 1927 are significant being amongst the earliest known commemorative tree plantings associated with the national capital.

The National Rose Gardens, conceived in 1926 and opened in 1933, are significant as Australia's first national gardening project and were planned as a physical expression of the principle of cooperation between the Commonwealth and the States. In the development of the gardens, roses were initially contributed by all States in Australia. The gardens were intended to provide an interest for all Australians in developing Canberra, the national capital, as a Garden City. The gardens have been the longest continuously operating public rose gardens in Australia.

The central terrace area within Parkes Place, also within the Land Axis adjacent to King George Terrace, is significant as it has been and continues to be an important space for political protest. This was most evident when Old Parliament House accommodated the Commonwealth Parliament up until 1988. Examples include the Aboriginal Tent Embassy of 1972 and land rights demonstrations, anti-Vietnam War protests, and the farmers' protest in 1985. While the use of the terrace as a gathering place for protest has declined since 1988, it occasionally continues in this role.

(Criterion (a))

Parkes Place substantially contributes to the Parliament House Vista which is unique within Australia as a designed national place, or indeed as a series of component national places, evolving over time and contributing to this larger national landscape. Its physical evolution has allowed a tradition of landscape architecture and horticulture to be developed which is unparalleled in any other Australian city. The Vista is arguably of outstanding heritage value.

The National Rose Gardens provide a unique connection with rose-loving communities throughout Australia, as well as physical spaces of repose, beauty and seasonal delight. The gardens have provided rose lovers throughout Australia with the opportunity to contribute to a national project. The gardens are also significant for demonstrating a distinctive design in the formal style and although the circle motif was not unusual for the layout of rose gardens at the time, its symmetrical separation and placement, as well as the consideration of colour and plant form were unusual.

(Criterion (b))

Parkes Place is significant to the local Canberra community as an integral part of the larger landscape of the Parliamentary Zone and Parliament House Vista, with which it shares values as

an outstanding piece of landscaping and landscape planning. This value relates particularly to the aesthetic appreciation by local Canberrans of the role of Parkes Place in the design and vision of the Griffins' plan for the national capital, and how it demonstrates, through its monumental open spaces, the axial views and the vista, the power and symbolism of Canberra's planning.

(Criterion (e))

Parkes Place is significant for its creative achievement. The formal arrangement of spaces in Parkes Place, and the protection and enhancement of significant vistas has respected the Griffins' design for the Parliamentary Zone. The selection and use of large trees, including exotic and native, evergreen and deciduous, broadleaf and coniferous, to establish structure, frame vistas, enclose spaces and reflect the seasons, is a major horticultural achievement.

(Criterion (f))

Parkes Place is strongly valued by the local Canberra community as a symbolic place, for its direct links to Australia's social, cultural, and political history and important events that have defined Australia's progression towards nationhood, as well as with those events which have defined the social and cultural lives of Canberrans.

As part of the wider landscape of the Parliament House Vista and Parliamentary Zone, Parkes Place is also valued by the local community as a symbol and place of democracy, as well as a place of national conscience, national memory, and, to a lesser degree, commemoration. In this context, Parkes Place, as the forecourt setting for Old Parliament House, provides a focus for these values and the events critical to the symbolic values of the place.

Parkes Place is valued by the local community for its physical characteristics, such as the monumental open spaces, the vista, the cross axes, the two main avenue plantings—which retain the ability to evoke the design vision of the Griffins' plan and a sense of the democratic role of Parkes Place in Australia's social, cultural, and political history. For Canberrans, Parkes Place is also highly important for the values it shares with the wider landscape of the Parliament House Vista for its design, beauty, and sense of history, as a place for the people, and as a place of order, commemoration and monuments. These values are inseparable from the values Parkes Place shares with the wider Parliament House Vista landscape.

The Canberra community values the contrasting monumental space of Parkes Place with the more intimate spaces which provide peaceful and tranquil spaces for leisure and recreation, for contemplation and personal memory, as well as a venue for social recreation, relaxation, having lunch, sharing with visitors, or just passing through.

The Canberra community also strongly values Parkes Place for its use as a continuing place for meeting and gathering, for protest, for formal public assemblies, for social and cultural activities, for active and passive social recreation, for its public accessibility, as a democratic space at the level of the everyday, and of national symbolic importance.

The potential for Parkes Place to hold different meanings for different people and cultural groups is also of significant value to the Canberra community.

(Criterion (g))

Parkes Place has significant heritage value for its special associations with Charles Weston. Weston is an important figure in the cultural history of Australia, being responsible for the early

detailed plantings which are a major feature of the national capital, Canberra. Parkes Place, as part of the Parliamentary Zone, shares a special association with Weston because it is arguably one of his most important plantings.

As part of the Parliament House Vista, Parkes Place also has outstanding value to the nation through sharing a special association with Walter Burley Griffin, and significant heritage value for a special association with Marion Mahony Griffin. The Griffins are important in Australia's history as the designers of the national capital, and the Vista is part of the core of the design for Canberra, which is probably the major part of the design which has actually been realised.

(Criterion (h))

National Rose Gardens

The National Rose Gardens, conceived in 1926 and opened in 1933, are significant as Australia's first national gardening project and were planned as a physical expression of the principle of cooperation between the Commonwealth and the States. In the development of the gardens, roses were initially contributed by all States in Australia. The gardens were intended to provide an interest for all Australians in developing Canberra, the national capital, as a Garden City. The gardens have been the longest continuously operating public rose gardens in Australia.

(Criterion (a))

The National Rose Gardens provide a unique connection with rose-loving communities throughout Australia, as well as physical spaces of repose, beauty and seasonal delight. The gardens have provided rose lovers throughout Australia with the opportunity to contribute to a national project. The gardens are also significant for demonstrating a distinctive design in the formal style and although the circle motif was not unusual for the layout of rose gardens at the time, its symmetrical separation and placement, as well as the consideration of colour and plant form were unusual.

(Criterion (b))

Contributory Significance of Certain Components

A number of components within or adjacent to Parkes Place have previously been identified as having heritage value. Such value has been expressed either through formal heritage listings or through conservation management plans. In some cases the value is contained to just the particular component, and in other cases the component makes a contribution to the study area. The following section provides a summary of such component values or features where they relate to the study area. This summary draws on existing listings or studies, and no new analysis has been undertaken.

John Gorton Building:

- The former Administrative Building is part of the significant cultural landscape of the Parliamentary triangle. It occupies a prominent and strategic location flanking the Land Axis in accordance with the 1916 Griffin plan. Together with the later Treasury Building balancing its mass across the central lawns of the Land Axis and Parkes Place, the former Administrative Building contributes to the planned aesthetic qualities of the Parliamentary triangle (Commonwealth Heritage List citation).

King George V Memorial:

- The memorial is a significant feature of the Parliament House Vista landscape and frames one side of the Land Axis corridor (Commonwealth Heritage List citation).

Old Parliament House:

- The front façade of Old Parliament House and the immediate grassed area to its north have been the scene of numerous events, gatherings, protests and demonstrations.
- Old Parliament House and its curtilage also forms the central feature of a precinct. This precinct includes the two Secretariat buildings (East and West Blocks), the Old Parliament House Gardens, Constitutional and Magna Carta Places and the National Rose Gardens. This precinct reflects a period when there was an increase in Commonwealth Government power and an increase in the public's interest in Canberra.
- Old Parliament House is an iconic national landmark that has a major role in the symbolic physical representation of democracy in the Parliamentary Triangle. This landmark importance has been strengthened by the siting and design of the new Parliament House building. These two buildings are read together as part of the Land Axis vista and they are also a part of the planned aesthetic qualities of the Parliamentary Triangle.
- Old Parliament House is a major component of public and familiar views of Canberra. In particular, Old Parliament House is appreciated for its crisp lines, stark white colour, pronounced vertical patterns and classical form. It makes a major contribution as a viewpoint towards the Australian War Memorial and in the other direction to new Parliament House.
- Old Parliament House is a significant landmark in Canberra. It is a major component of Walter Burley Griffin's designed landscape of the Parliamentary Triangle.
- The success of Old Parliament House as a landmark is also due in part to its modest scale and aesthetic qualities, and the open landscaping and gardens between the building and the lake. (National Heritage List citation)

Treasury Building:

- important for its location within the Parliamentary Zone and its design and siting relationship to the John Gorton Building (Philip Cox, Richardson, Taylor and Partners 1992, p. 58).

6.2 ATTRIBUTES RELATED TO SIGNIFICANCE

The following list of attributes are features that express or embody the heritage values detailed above, and these are useful in ensuring protection for the values.

While some attributes are noted below with regard to the recognised individually significant places within Parkes Place, such as the King George V Memorial, these are only those attributes relevant to note in a broader landscape context. Reference should be made to the specific heritage studies for these places for the complete range of heritage values and attributes.

Table 5. Attributes related to Significance	
Criteria	Attributes
Attributes of Parkes Place	
Criterion (a)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parkes Place • Layered landscape, with various phases of plantings • High visibility within the Parliament House Vista • Associations with Old Parliament House • National Rose Gardens • The Lobby • King George V Memorial • Aboriginal Tent Embassy • Central terrace • Formal arrangement of native trees either side of the Land Axis • Commemorative tree plantings by the Empire Parliamentary Association in 1926 and the Young Australia League in 1927
Criterion (b)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parkes Place • National Rose Gardens including formal style, symmetrical separation and placement, colour arrangement and plant form
Criterion (e)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The design function of Parkes Place in the larger design for and landscape of the national capital • The monumental spaces and open framed vistas which contribute to the broader Parliament House Vista landscape • Parkes Place as the landscape setting for Old Parliament House • The monumental spaces (the central Land Axis and cross axis) • The contrast between the monumental spaces (the central Land Axis and cross axis) and intimate spaces (the National Rose Gardens, the avenues of trees) • The tree collection as a whole for its variety, for the mature old trees, in particular the Roman Cypress (<i>Cupressus sempervirens</i>), for the trunk textures of the mature trees, the seasonal effects of the mature exotic tree collection, the variety of deciduous, evergreen, and native species, the patterns of the trees (avenues, rows and clumping, framing the vistas) • The colour, fragrance, and beauty of the roses in the National Rose Gardens as a whole • The birdlife • The peace and tranquillity of Parkes Place
Criterion (f)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formal arrangement of spaces • Vistas, including the contribution of extensive lawn areas and ornamental ponds • Large trees, including exotic and native, evergreen and deciduous, broadleaf and coniferous, to establish structure (including the garden rooms for the rose gardens and to mark nodes), frame vistas, enclose spaces and reflect the seasons
Criterion (g)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The symbolic values of Parkes Place which it shares with the wider Parliament House Vista and Parliamentary Zone landscapes • The ability to participate in and observe the place enlivened by people through a variety of uses, public events, social and cultural activities, for meeting and gathering in large and small groups, from major symbolic and nation-defining events to everyday enjoyment by

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Criteria	Attributes
	<p>local Canberra people, tourists and visiting school children</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feelings of connection to the layers of Australia’s political, cultural, and social history, enacted and continuing within the monumental spaces of Parkes Place in the foreground of Old Parliament House • Public accessibility • It is possible there are particular roses having social value to the local community and this should be tested in the event of proposed changes to the current rose collection
Criterion (h)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plantings associated with Weston
Attributes of the National Rose Gardens	
Criterion (a)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Rose Gardens • Rose use • Public access
Criterion (b)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Rose Gardens • Distinctive circular design in the formal style, its symmetrical separation and placement, as well as the colour and plant form
Attributes related to the John Gorton Building	
Various	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prominent and strategic location flanking the Land Axis • Its balancing mass with the Treasury Building, across the central lawns of the Land Axis and Parkes Place • Contribution to the planned aesthetic qualities of the Parliamentary Zone
Attributes related to the King George V Memorial	
Various	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contribution as a framing element on one side of the Land Axis corridor
Attributes related to Old Parliament House	
Various	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Front façade of Old Parliament House and the immediate grassed area to its north in Parkes Place • The curtilage of OPH forming the central feature of a precinct which includes the National Rose Gardens • Old Parliament House as an iconic national landmark, read as part of the Land Axis vista and as part of the planned aesthetic qualities of the Parliamentary Zone • Old Parliament House as a major component of public and familiar views of Canberra, including those from within and across Parkes Place • Contribution as a viewpoint towards the Australian War Memorial and in the other direction towards new Parliament House, being views from within and across Parkes Place • The modest scale and aesthetic qualities of OPH, and the open landscaping and gardens between the building and the lake, including Parkes Place
Attributes related to the Treasury Building	
Various	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Location within the Parliamentary Zone • Design and siting relationship to the John Gorton Building