

Figure 11 - Proposed new building - Wells Street Bridge, Eveleigh Station, c1891. Source: State Rail Archives, State Records

3.5 Housing the Workforce – Subdivision of the Eveleigh Estate

Subdivision of the Eveleigh Estate (east of Abercrombie Street) coincided with the opening of the Eveleigh Railway Workshops and opening of the Eveleigh Railway present Redfern) Station. During the 1880s Redfern and Darlington underwent major residential development to provide housing for workers at the railway workshops and local industry. The characteristic architecture of this period comprised two storey brick houses in rows of terraces. By 1890 the Darlington and Redfern area was mostly developed and built upon and occupied by a large number of family members working at the Workshops. The built streetscape in the vicinity of the present 'The Block' was established in this period (see Figures 12 and 13).



Figure 12 - Sydney Metropolitan Detail Series Redfern Sheet 21?, 1888. This portion shows rows of housing on the eastern side of Eveleigh Street adjoining the railway lines.

Source: State Library of New South Wales

Intensive residential development of Hutchinson's land grant was accompanied by the growth of a shopping centre in Redfern and Regent Streets east of the railway station in close proximity to the Post Office, Police Station and Court House. By the turn of the twentieth century, the Redfern/Darlington area had become a densely populated working class suburb with some middle class enclaves, and was virtually built out. A network of corner stores shops had been created and its public institutions were in place.

3.6 Between the Wars

In the interwar years, the Eveleigh Railway Workshops remained large but became assembly and holding areas. The decline of the railway operations at Eveleigh (the loco service depot closed in 1986, and the rest of the complex two years later), the abandonment of brick making and footwear manufacture and the diminution of small scale production, signalled the end of the industrial role of Redfern and Darlington. Industrial decline had a profound impact on the working class character of the area.

As the earlier population declined, it was augmented by people moving into the suburb. A number of European migrant groups took up occupation in the area in the late 1950s. Later migrant waves also had some impact. Virtually unique to Redfern and Darlington, was the entry of the large numbers of Aboriginal people, some who had been there since the early twentieth century and others who came following changes in legislation regulating their movement in the 1900s.

Aboriginal people from rural areas started moving into Redfern and the surrounding area during the 1920s because it was located centrally and rents were cheap. In addition, the workshops in Redfern and nearby Chippendale offered the possibility of regular work. During the Great Depression of the 1930s, many Aboriginal people sought refuge with relatives in the Redfern area as work in rural areas became scarce. The Eveleigh Railway Workshops was the largest employer of Redfern's residents. The Great Depression resulted in high unemployment among the Aboriginal population of the area. Landlords evicted many tenants of rental properties in the area, with a large number of Aboriginal people moving to shanty towns at the La Perouse Aboriginal Community.

A period of rent control began with the Fair Rents Act 1915 and lasted in NSW into the 1950s (NSW was the last State to relax rent control). Throughout the Depression years, anti-eviction campaigns were conducted by the Unemployed Workers Movement, and the Lang government passed ejection postponement legislation in an attempt to alleviate some of the problems faced by tenant.⁹

In 1937, the Federal government adopted a new official policy towards Aboriginal people. Under this policy of assimilation Aboriginal people of mixed descent were to be assimilated into white society whether they wanted to be or not. Those not living tribally were to be educated. All others were to stay on reserves. The following year, New South Wales followed suit by changing their official policy from 'protection' to 'assimilation'.

9



Figure 13 - 1943 aerial of Redfern, Eveleigh and Darlington illustrating the densely populated nature of the area and the location of various factory buildings.

Source: Six Viewer, NSW Land & Property Management Authority

3.7 Aboriginal Self-determination and Identity

After World War II, there was a large Aboriginal population shift back into Redfern seeking refuge with relatives concentrated in and around 'The Block'. This followed moves by Randwick Council to close the shanty towns at La Perouse.

By the early 1960s, the Aboriginal population of Redfern was estimated at over 12,000 people. During the decade, an emerging social crisis arose in the community, involving alcohol, drugs and crime. This was coupled with discrimination and high unemployment among the Aboriginal community. Living conditions for local Aboriginal people declined rapidly over the course of the next two decades as people were at the mercy of disreputable and/or absentee landlords. The housing stock, predominantly cheap rental accommodation built in the 19th century, became run down and fell into disrepair. This led to growing criticism of Redfern as a "slum" area.

The Aboriginal population of Redfern swelled in the wake of the 1967 National Referendum on Aborigines, reaching more than 35,000. This in turn led to further overcrowding and shortage of accommodation with resulting discrimination on the part of landlords and owners. There followed calls from South Sydney Council and State Government to relocate the Aboriginal population away from the inner city. The NSW Department of Housing commenced resettlement of Aboriginal people west of the city of suburbs such as Mt Druitt and Campbelltown.

The lack of affordable housing for Redfern's increasing Aboriginal population [resulted in] a group of Aborigines squatting in empty terraces in Louis Street Redfern, in the latter months of 1972. In November that year, police arrested 15 (goomies) alcoholics who were squatting in the empty houses. They were released in the care of Father Ted Kennedy at St Vincent's Church in Redfern. Fr Kennedy housed the goomies in the church hall, but when the number of homeless people living in the church grew to over 50 South Sydney Council exerted great pressure on Fr Kennedy to evict them.

On 2 December 1972, the new ALP Gough Whitlam federal government was elected. Whitlam's team had been toying with the idea of Aboriginal land rights, especially since 26 January 1972, when Aboriginal activists opened the "tent embassy" outside Canberra's old parliament building. Whitlam's Aboriginal Affairs minister Gordon Bryant was keen to help the Redfern Aborigines.

Fr Ted Kennedy teamed up with Aboriginal leaders including judge Bob Bellear and his brother Sol. The Builder Labourers Federation imposed a green ban on the Louis Street site prohibiting the owner from demolishing and redeveloping the houses. Fr Kennedy and Co. leased some of the vacant houses in Louis St. These dilapidated terrace houses were 80-100 years old and were largely shabby and ramped, tiny 12 feet wide double story properties. Under a 'blind-eye' agreement with the owner-developer, the squatters organised themselves and formed a company.¹⁰

3.8 Aboriginal Housing Company

The resulting Aboriginal Housing Company (AHC) was the first community housing collective in Australia. Incorporated in 1973 the Company was formed in direct response to the widespread discrimination the Aboriginal people experienced in the private rental market. The AHC subsequently acquired 27 derelict houses on 'The Block' bounded by Vine, Eveleigh, Caroline and Louis Streets. The properties were renovated with Aboriginal employment and training by the AHC, though not without obstacles placed in their path by the South Sydney Council. The AHC offices are located in the former Railway View Hotel (Figure 14) at the corner of Lawson and Eveleigh Streets.

¹⁰ Aboriginal Housing Company History. <http://www.ahc.org.au/>



Figure 14 – Drinkers outside the Railway View Hotel with view to Eveleigh Street.
Source: State Library of New South Wales

The AHC also helped kick start the grassroots Aboriginal civil rights movement, in conjunction with emerging organisations like the Aboriginal Medical, Legal and Children's Services and the Aboriginal Black Theatre House. In the 1970s, Redfern became a symbol of the Aboriginal people's struggle for self-determination, a place for "Indigenous people to remain living in a community environment with the extended family, living together providing a support network"¹¹.

Funding for the AHC's housing project was terminated when the Fraser Coalition government was elected in 1975.

Without financial assistance the Block descended into disrepair and disorder. By the early 1980s the Aboriginal Housing Company had acquired almost half the properties on the Block and with another change of federal government (Hawke/Keating) came renewed support for Redfern's Aboriginal community. In 1994 the last house on the Block was finally owned by the Aboriginal Housing Company.¹²

In an attempt to counter the negative view of The Block and Redfern generally, local Aboriginal people were involved in the painting of murals on walls and buildings in the Redfern area. The 'Welcome to the Block' mural, on the Eveleigh Street wall at the intersection of the Lawson Street Overbridge, was

¹¹ Statement of Significance : The Block, Australian Heritage Commission (1983 revised 2000)

¹² Ibid.

painted in the 1990s (Figure 15). Two other murals are located on the Lawson Street Overbridge including: '40,000 Years is a Long, Long Time', by artist, Carol Ruff, 1983, on the northern side of the bridge and, on opposite wall, 'Say kNOw to Drugs: For the Next Generation', painted by a group of six Tribe members under the supervision of community artists. Other murals within The Block precinct, include the Settlement Building, at 1 Edward Street, "Think Globally, Act Locally" and the Elouera 'Tony Mundine' at the Gym, among others.

Over the past three decades, the AHC has attempted to redevelop The Block through a variety of housing plans. In close consultation with the Aboriginal community, these plans have a common theme of community – each included affordable and safe housing, health, education and cultural facilities, and promoted Aboriginal enterprise and employment. Many of the recommendations and strategies from the various AHC plans in the 1980s, the 1990s, the 2001 AHC Social Plan and the 2004 Concept Plans (prepared by Merrima Aboriginal Design Unit) were not implemented mainly due to lack of funding and resources, and government neglect and inaction. As all levels of government continued to ignore the escalating social problems, the drug trade intensified and interest in community plans slackened.¹³

In the 1990s, heroin became a major problem, resulting in injuries, deaths from overdoses and increased crime. Junkies established illegal shooting galleries in the boarded-up houses and dealers took over at least 15 properties, mainly along Eveleigh and Louis Streets. In 1992, then Prime Minister Paul Keating gave a speech on Aboriginal reconciliation that would later be known as the Redfern address and is now regarded by many as one of the greatest Australian political speeches. The AHC purchased its last privately owned terrace in 1994. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission committed \$6.3 million to the demolition.

¹³ Pitts, A., *Dreaming the Block: Aboriginal Housing Company Pemulwuy Redevelopment Project*, <http://www.theregoestheneighbourhood.org/TGTN-eBook.pdf>
HERITAGE INTERPRETATION PLAN: PEMULWUY DEVELOPMENT, THE BLOCK, REDFERN

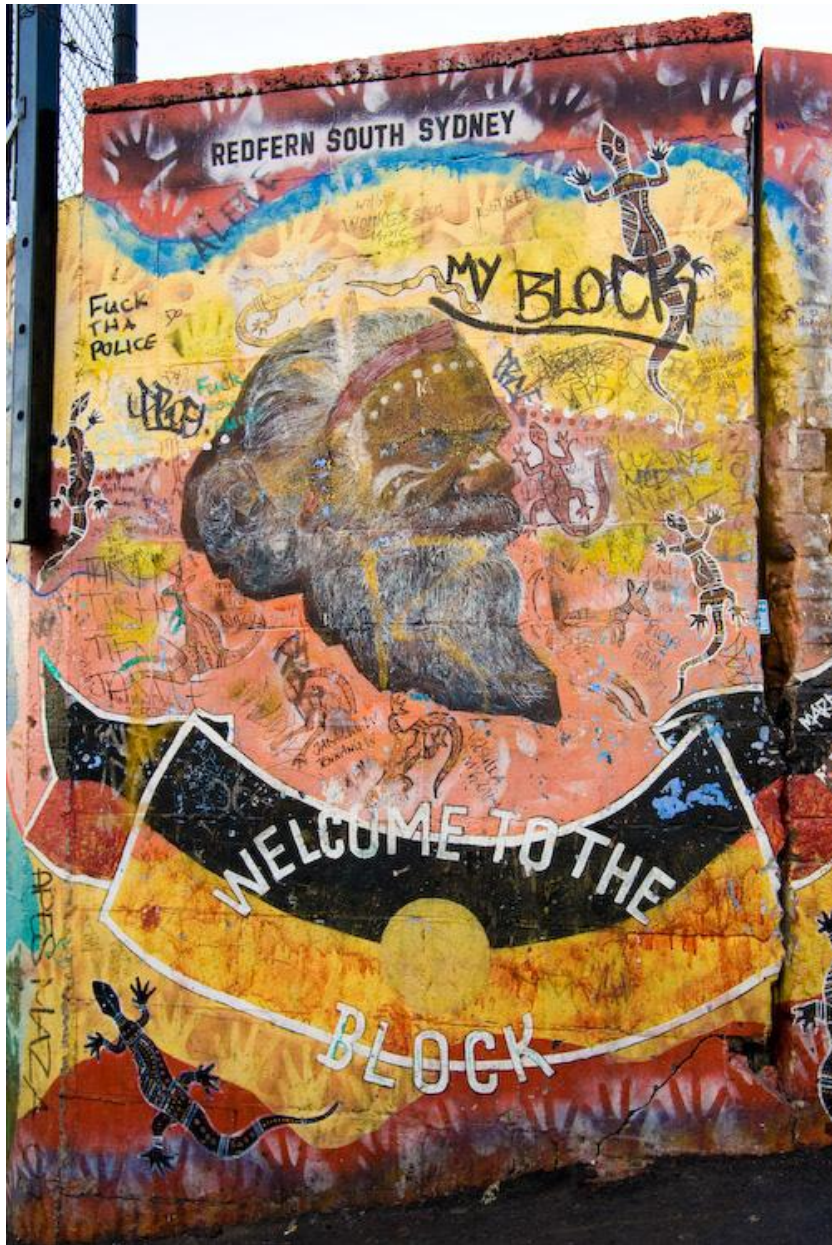


Figure 15 – “Welcome to the Block”, mural, Eveleigh Street, Redfern, November 2008.
Source: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/71072750@N00/3117289887/>

3.9 Pemulwuy Redevelopment Project

The Pemulwuy Redevelopment Project application seeks to develop the land into “three groups of buildings designed for residential, commercial and cultural and recreational activities”¹⁴. The AHC plans to provide 62 dwellings; other families have been relocated elsewhere in the suburb or in other parts of Sydney by the Housing Department. At the present time 1/3 of land in Redfern and Waterloo is owned by the NSW government, including Redfern railway station, the old Police station, Redfern public school, the former Courthouse, Rachel Foster hospital, and public housing. The AHC’s Pemulwuy Project for The Block is just one of several urban renewal project currently under the supervision of the Redfern Waterloo Authority (RWA). Formed in 2005, the RWA is responsible for the urban renewal of Redfern, Waterloo, Eveleigh and Darlington, in three areas: built environment; employment and sustainability; and human services.

3.10 Oral History

The Aboriginal Housing Company website contains a Redfern Oral History. This can be found at the following link:

<http://www.redfernoralhistory.org/Organisations/AboriginalHousingCompany/tabid/209/Default.aspx>. We note the site contains transcripts of oral histories by the following interviewees:

- Bob Bellear
- Kaye Bellear
- Sonya Brindle
- John Butcher
- Chicka Dixon
- Uncle Max Eulo
- Auntie Ale Golding
- Auntie Joyce Ingram
- Ted Kennedy
- Col James
- Paul Morris Bill Simon
- Mick Mundine
- Naomi Mayers
- Ningenah
- Roberta Sykes on Mum Shirl
- Sharon Hickey
- Lyn Turnbull
- Trevor Davies
- Sr Pat Ormesher

These oral histories have been reviewed in the preparation of the Heritage Interpretation Plan for Pemulwuy Development, at The Block, Redfern.

¹⁴ Cracknell and Lonergan, *Environmental Assessment 060101 Pemulwuy Mixed Use Development Redfern Concept Plan*, October 2007.

3.10.1 Charles Perkins(1936-2000)

Charles Perkins, known as an excellent soccer player, was the first Aboriginal Australian to graduate from the University of Sydney. In 1965, Perkins, one of two Aboriginal students at the university, formed the Student Action for Aborigines (SAFA). He organised a bus tour of western New South Wales towns, including Walgett, Moree and Kempsey, and exposed discrimination in the use of halls, swimming pools, picture theatres and hotels. This trip became known as the Freedom Ride and assumed iconic status. Effective, because they used the television to bring the issue of racial discrimination in country towns to national attention.

Perkins became a national Aboriginal leader and spokesman. In 1965 Perkins became the manager of the Foundation for Aboriginal Affairs in Sydney. In 1969, he moved to Canberra to begin work in the Office of Aboriginal Affairs, set up by Prime Minister Harold Holt. By 1984, Perkins was Secretary of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs, the first Aboriginal Australian to attain such a position in the bureaucracy. Perkins played key roles on the boards of Aboriginal arts, sport and media organisations. As well he was a member of the Aboriginal and Torres Straits Islander Commission (ATSIC) and of the Arrente Council of Central Australia.

Charles Perkins was instrumental in assisting The Block in acquiring the Railway View Hotel and the publican license for the Aboriginal Housing Corporation (AHC) and ensuring the pub was closed and converting The Block to a alcohol free zone.



Students involved in the demonstration against discrimination of Aboriginal people in Walgett, NSW, 1967. Photograph reproduced with permission of Wendy Watson-Ekstein (nee Golding) and supplied by Ann Curthoys.



Figure 16 – Students on the Freedom Ride in Walgett, NSW, 1967 (left). Charles Perkins graduated from The University of Sydney, in 1965, the first Aboriginal person in Australia to become a university graduate (Source:



Figure 17 – At left: Assistant Secretary of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs, Charles Perkins, Protesting on the lawns outside Parliament House, with his children, Hetti 9, Rachael 4 and Adam 6, 18 November 1974 (Source: ACT Heritage Library). At right: Charles Perkins travelling to University, 1963 (Source: National Library of Australia)



Figure 18 – Charlie Perkins, by Robert Campbell Jnr, 1986, Oil on board, University of Sydney Union collection (Source: © The artist's estate, courtesy the artist's estate and Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney)

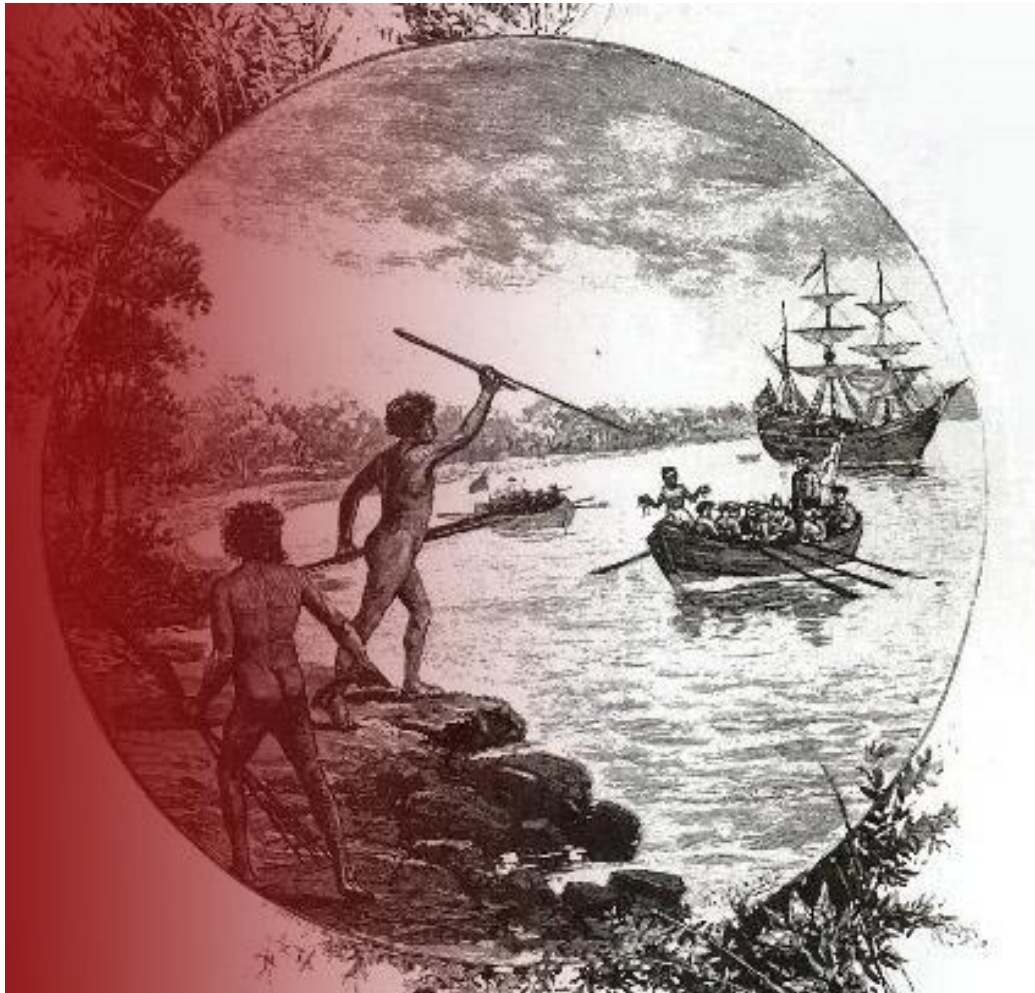


Figure 19 – Railway View Hotel, corner Lawson and Eveleigh Streets, 2000 - prior to its purchase for the AHC (Source: City of Sydney Archives, File No 048\048526)

3.10.2 Tony Mundine and Role of Sport

Tony Mundine is one of Australia's boxing legends and one of the greatest Aboriginal fighters. He held the Australian middleweight, light heavyweight, cruiserweight and heavyweight titles and Commonwealth middleweight and Light heavyweight titles. He is the only Australian boxer to compete in four weight divisions. Tony Mundine established the Elouera Gym, a training place for many successful boxers including his son, Anthony Mundine.

3.10.3 Pemulwuy



3.11 Thematic Framework

Australian Theme	NSW Theme	Local Theme
2. Peopling Australia	Aboriginal cultures and interactions with other cultures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Story of Pemulwuy; ▪ The Block as Resistance and Protest site; ▪ The Block as place of self – determination; ▪ Aboriginal activists and prominent citizen and first Aboriginal graduate from the university of Sydney – Charles Perkins
3. Developing local, regional and national economies	Transport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Impact of the construction of the Redfern Railway Station and Central Sydney rail line on the subdivision of the area; ▪ Construction of Eveleigh Railway Workshops.
4. Building, settlements, towns and cities	Land tenure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Activities and processes for identifying forms of ownership and occupancy of land, both Aboriginal occupants and non-Aboriginal occupants. ▪ Early land grants to William Chippendale and his family's occupation;
4. Building, settlements, towns and cities	Towns, suburbs and villages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Creation of the early subdivision of Redfern and Darlington – from Chippendale Estate to Eveleigh Estate to terrace housing
4. Building, settlements, towns and cities	Accommodation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Development of terrace housing ▪ Site for Eveleigh House (archaeological)
5 Working	Labour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ NSW Builders' Federation work bans and assistance with construction of Aboriginal housing at The Block
7 Governing	Law and Order	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Block as a protest site and place associated with racial discrimination and injustice
7 Governing	Welfare	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Activities associated with public housing and trades training
8 Developing Australia's Cultural Life	Sport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Development of a gymnasium as a meeting place and to conduct organised activities for health and recreational activities

3.12 Darlington Heritage Conservation Area

The Block is located within Conservation Area 17 (CA17) as identified in the South Sydney Local Environmental Plan 1998 (South Sydney LEP 1998). While The Block forms part of the Darlington Heritage Conservation Area (CA17), it is administered by the Redfern Waterloo Authority. The following is a statement of significance from the Heritage Branch Inventory Sheet:

Darlington Heritage Conservation Area is historically significant as a representative area of mid nineteenth century residential subdivision and mid to late nineteenth century working class housing. It illustrates the principal characteristics of a working class district of the period 1860-1890. The area demonstrates the impact of the Eveleigh Railway Workshops on the development of the surrounding area. The establishment of the Railway Workshops introduced a unique and powerful influence which stimulated development, particularly housing to meet the requirements of employees of the Workshops. The Conservation Area illustrates the impact of the railway line, Cleveland Street and the topography of the area on the street pattern, which is dominated by narrow twisting streets with changing views ending in T-intersections and long bent through streets. The area's basically residential character is intact and consists of rows of terraces hugging the curving streets. There is a complementary mix of light industrial buildings, largely sympathetic in scale and alignment to the terraces. The residential buildings are low scale and austere in their presentation, occupying narrow deep allotments. The form, layout and location of the buildings demonstrate the urban forms of the pre-motor car, pre-electricity era for working class people in Sydney and express the social conditions and environment of that time. The area is significant as a relic of mid to late nineteenth century urban development and illustrates the principal characteristics of a working class district in this period. The Darlington Conservation Area lies within the lands of the Gadigal (Cadigal) people, part of the Eora Nation.

The area within the Darlington Conservation Area referred to as The Block is significant as one of the bases for Koori people in Sydney; it was one of the first pieces of land in urban Australia owned by Aboriginal people when it was purchased for Aboriginal housing in 1973. The Block has provided Aboriginal Australians moving to Sydney the opportunity to remain living in a community environment with extended family, living together, providing a support network. The sense of community is partially maintained by the time residents spend in the public spaces of the verandahs and Eveleigh Street. The layout of the houses and the street facilitates this community atmosphere. The media attention and visibility of The Block has helped in the national acknowledgement that it is a significant place. The Block is important to all Australians as a symbol of the ability of Aboriginal Australians to maintain their community identity in an urban situation. The struggle to gain ownership and control of The Block by the Aboriginal community was part of the movement by Aboriginal people during the 1970s towards self-determination. The Block is also significant for its association with many famous Aboriginal people who have been residents or associated with The Block including the late Robert Bellear, Charles Perkins and Tony Mundine Snr.

3.13 Heritage Listings

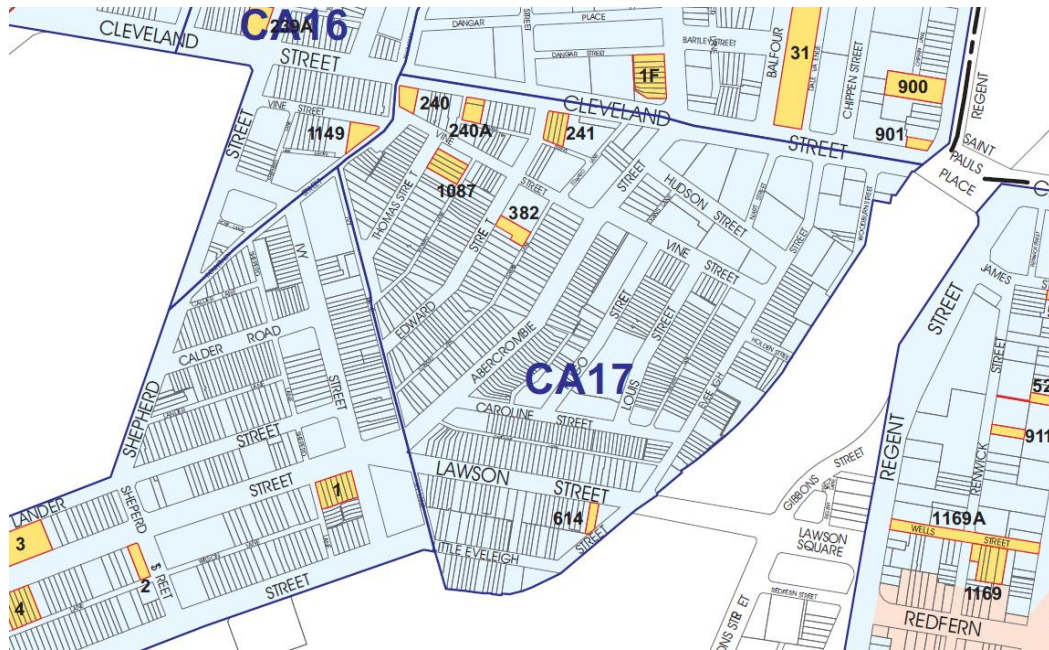
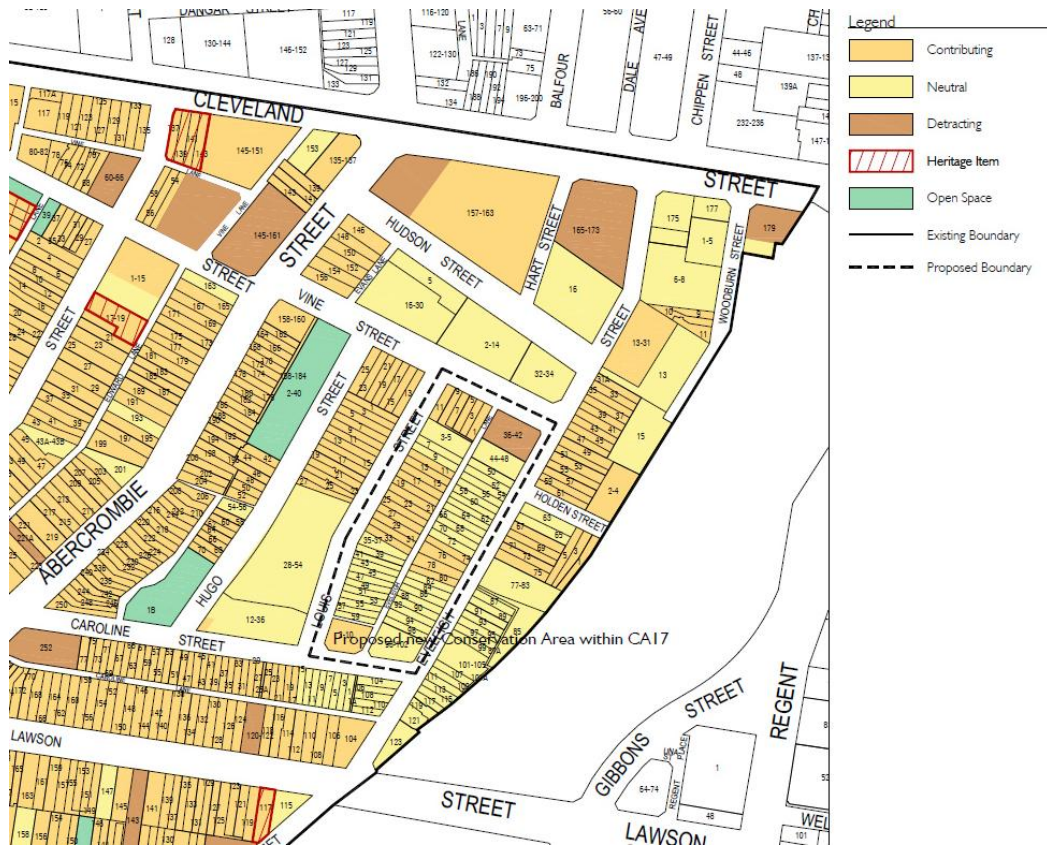


Figure 20 – Conservation Area CA17 – Darlington (Source: South Sydney LEP 1998 – Heritage Map)



4.0 INTERPRETIVE OPPORTUNITIES

4.1 Overview

Heritage Interpretation is the art of explaining the significance of a place to the people who visit it, with the objectives of promoting an understanding of its heritage values and the processes involved in its conservation. Interpretation also involves conveying messages including presentation of particular points of view about places and history. Interpretative methods might include, but might not be limited to, conservation, signage, public programs, publications, heritage trails and web sites on the internet.

Interpretation can occur in a variety of ways and may consist of:

- Treatment of the fabric – such as the retention of evidence of former use of the site, but now removed;
- Interpretive signage incorporating photographs and images based on historic material such as photographs, maps and plans;
- Furnishings and other objects – both existing or introduced; and
- Signs – permanent, fixed, movable and temporary.
- Posters, pamphlets, books, internet web sites, interactive search programs, videos, audios, tapes and CD ROMS, postcards, tea-towels and images.
- Interpretation may also include oral histories, video recordings, access to the item through day-to-day use and management; access via tours, open days and events for associated people and special interest groups.

The Pemulwuy Project includes the construction of buildings that provide the following functions:

- Affordable Housing (four, three and two bedroom houses);
- Commercial Centre / Office Space;
- AHC office;
- Gymnasium - Health and Fitness Centre;
- Student Accommodation;
- Retail;
- Childcare Facilities; and
- Art Gallery.