



2.0 CONTEXT AND ANALYSIS

2.1 FUTURE ROLE OF THE PRECINCT

The future of the Fremantle Prison Heritage Precinct needs to evolve at a number of levels. Firstly, in the international and national context, secondly at a metropolitan and regional level and thirdly, at the local level.

2.1.1 International and National Context

Fremantle Prison Heritage Precinct is recognised as a site of national heritage significance and is currently being considered for nomination as part of a serial nomination for World Heritage Listing of Australian Convict Sites. These sites include:

- First Government House Site, NSW
- Port Arthur Historic Site, Tasmania
- Coal Mines Historic Site, Tasmania
- Hyde Park Barracks, NSW
- Darlington Probation Station, Maria Island National Park, Tasmania
- Ross Female Convict Station Historic Site, Tasmania
- Great Northern Road Complex, NSW
- Fremantle Prison, WA.

The Australian Convict Sites is the most evocative and widespread set of convict transportation sites surviving in the world.

The Fremantle Prison Heritage Precinct is the most intact of Australia's convict sites.

World Heritage listing would be likely to increase visitor numbers and the profile of the precinct as a heritage tourism site. This Master Plan reinforces opportunities for World Heritage Listing and recommends that the historic link between the precinct and other elements of the Convict Establishment in Fremantle, should be incorporated into the nomination for World Heritage Listing.

2.1.2 Metropolitan and Regional Context

Fremantle Prison Heritage Precinct is recognised as the State's premier heritage icon. As such, it is protected through the City of Fremantle's Municipal Inventory and the Heritage Council of Western Australia's State Heritage Register of Heritage Places.

It is expected that once completed the Fremantle Prison Heritage precinct Master Plan will be adopted by the State government and the Heritage Council of Western Australia and form the basis for future development of the site as Western Australia's premier heritage precinct.

2.1.3 Local Context

At a local level, Fremantle Prison Heritage Precinct is located within the City of Fremantle's West End Conservation Area. It is expected that once completed the Fremantle Prison Heritage Precinct Master Plan will be adopted by the City of Fremantle and incorporated into the West End Conservation Policy.



The development of the precinct as a destination-based tourist and mixed-use centre, with new activities that complement existing facilities, will contribute to the continued growth of the Fremantle area as a unique centre of tourist, cultural and educational activities.

2.2 HISTORY OF THE SITE

The Fremantle Prison Heritage Precinct offers a culturally rich experience for all Australians and overseas visitors. Its history dates from the early years of European settlement, when it was constructed as the centre of the British Imperial Convict Establishment in Western Australia.

Within twenty years of the settlement of the Swan River Colony, the colonial administration petitioned England for the transportation of convicts to the colony. It was believed that convicts would provide much needed labour for the building of roads, bridges, jetties and other infrastructure necessary for the economic progress of the colony. The first transportation of 75 convicts, on the barque Scindian, arrived at Fremantle on 1 June 1850. Work on the Imperial Convict Establishment (or Fremantle Convict Establishment), commenced in 1852 and was completed in 1859.

With less than fifty convicts still imprisoned under the convict system in 1886, the British government passed control of Fremantle Prison to the colonial government. It then became the colony's, and later the state's, primary place of incarceration.

To accommodate the female prisoners, an area in the north west corner of the Prison compound was walled off to become Female Division. Until 1970, when a new facility was built on the outskirts of Perth, Female Division functioned as the only women's prison in Western Australia.

During both World Wars, the Australian Army occupied Fremantle Prison. During the Second World War, the Army used the Prison as an internment centre, as well as the detention of military personnel.

Despite changes implemented at the Prison in the early twentieth century, the buildings remained substantially unchanged from the convict era. By the end of the century, they were vastly inadequate for housing state prisoners. The Prison was decommissioned on 8 November 1991. It opened as a heritage site in January 1992.

2.3 CONSERVATION AND INTERPRETATION

Fremantle Prison Heritage Precinct is one of the most extensively documented conservation sites in Australia. The conservation imperatives are broadly apparent. As a high priority, the backlog of maintenance works needs to be addressed and mechanisms put in place to ensure that the intactness of the place is retained for future generations.

Fundamentally, conservation involves the retention of significant fabric for future generations. Conservation actions at the precinct will involve all the processes of looking after a place so as to retain its cultural significance, including:

- interpretation
- adaptation for existing and proposed uses
- maintenance
- repair

In addition sub-surface remains offer opportunities for interpretation through archaeological investigations.



Although the precinct has a system of interpretive devices, it has no formal interpretation plan or strategy. Without a firm policy and plan for interpretation, resourcing errors in implementation can happen. A formal interpretation strategy should be prepared and implemented concurrently with this Master Plan.

Visitor numbers declined following the initial post-decommissioning period and have only recently reached higher levels. Visitation is a key element of interpretive conservation at the precinct. Income from visitation is a principal revenue source and increased numbers of visitors as well as improved visitor experiences would reinforce interpretive conservation and increase revenue available to conserve the place.

2.3.1 Links and Layers

The history of the precinct has been well documented, however much of the 20th century history has yet to be documented, largely because access to prison files is restricted by state legislation. The provision of facilities for further research will enhance the understanding of the many layers of history at the site.

Fremantle Prison Heritage Precinct has links to other convict establishments structures still extant in the City of Fremantle, to regional convict depot sites in Western Australia and to the Australian convict sites. An increase in awareness of the links to convict era sites within the local, state and national context will assist in an understanding of the significance of the precinct.



Figure 2.1 Location of convict era sites in Australia

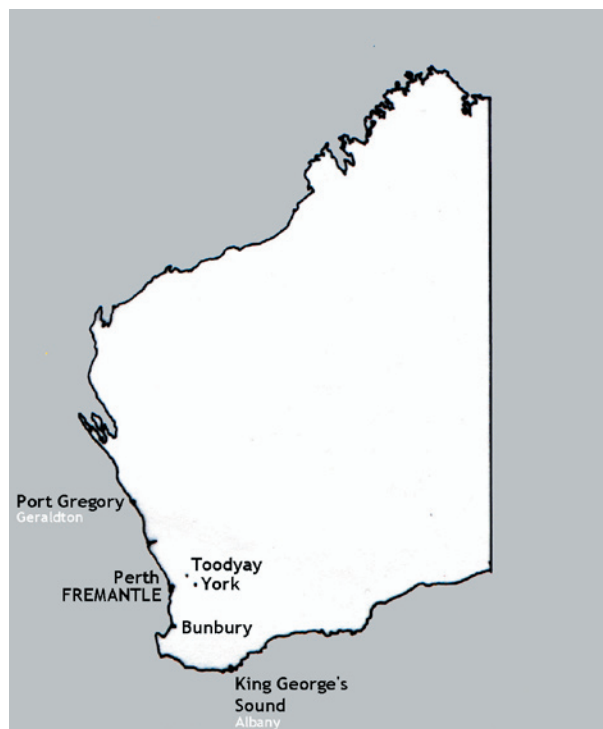


Figure 2.2 Location of convict era sites in Western Australia



Figure 2.3 Location of extant convict era structures in Fremantle

2.3.2 Significant Buildings

Fremantle Prison Heritage Precinct comprises a number of intact convict era structures, including the limestone perimeter walls, which are of exceptional heritage significance. Other structures, dating from the time the precinct was in use as a colonial and state prison, are also significant.

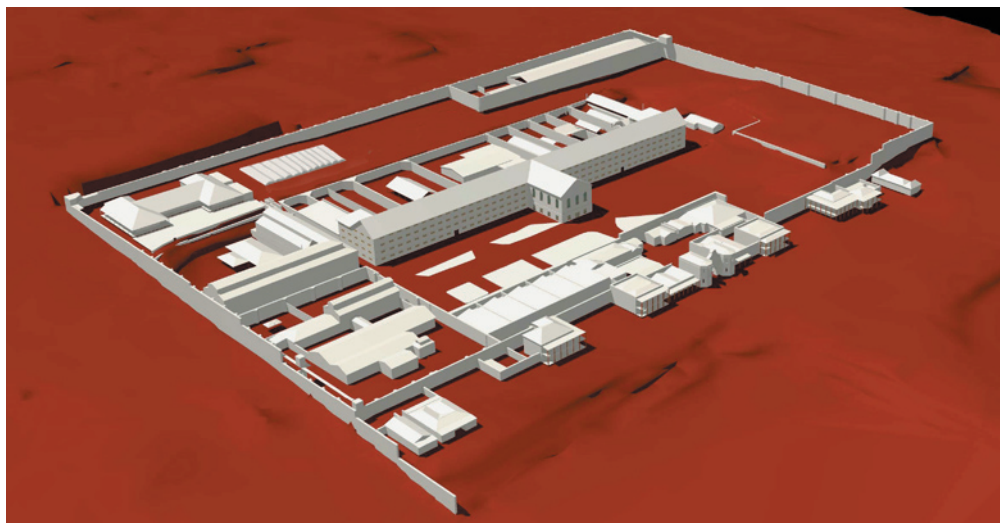


Figure 2.4 3-D View of the Precinct



Figure 2.5 Significant Buildings

2.3.3 Significant Spaces

The open spaces of the Fremantle Prison Heritage Precinct are particularly significant. These spaces not only provide impressive settings for the structures of the precinct, but are important spaces in their own right. In particular, the extensive forecourt of the main cell block, with its scale and secure location within the perimeter walls, offers an urban space unparalleled in the metropolitan region.



View of the Forecourt and Main Cell Block



View across the East Terrace to the Main Cell Block



2.3.4 Significant Landscape Elements

The significant landscape presents an austere and formal quality within the perimeter walls. Generally the landscape is sparse and simple, comprising unobtrusive elements such as lawn, low plantings and pavement.

Elements of significant landscape outside the walls include the exotic almond and pine trees on the Terrace. The Terrace Master Plan (1997) has been partly implemented with the reinstatement of the terrace gardens and the upgrade of a section of the Fairbairn Street Ramp.

The site experiences considerable changes in ground level, natural and man-made, as a result of its location and former use. The site development for the Convict Establishment involved:

- the creation of a broad level terrace by a process of cut and fill
- limestone quarried on and near the site provided the building material
- the spoil was used to build up an inclined rampway - Fairbairn Street Ramp - and the batter bank ramp to Holdsworth Street.

The ground level is considerably higher in the south western corner of the site with what remains of the natural landform, formerly known as 'Church Hill', now referred to as the South Knoll. The eastern portion of the site is also considerably higher than the ground level established around the main cell block. It is a comparatively level terrace and is the highest part of the precinct. This change in ground level throughout the site can be used as an opportunity to add interest to future development without compromising the integrity of the historic site.



View of the Fairbairn Street Ramp



View of the South Knoll

2.3.5 Site Features

Archaeological zones and sub-surface remains of varying levels of significance are found throughout the site. In particular, the sites of the three former cottages to the east of the perimeter wall in the Hampton Road reserve and the site of the former 'cage', in the New Division courtyard, are well documented. Any future development will require archaeological investigation of sub-surface remains.

Other site features are associated with the water supply system constructed in the 1890s. These features, which include the underground tunnel network, the associated pumping station and the east reservoir are enticing assets to visitation yet are currently difficult to fully access. The reservoir has ceased operating as a reservoir. Increased access to these site features, in particular the tunnels in the first instance will provide an exciting visitor experience.

The site is connected to all major services including water, power, sewerage, gas and telephone.



2.4 COMMUNITY ASPIRATIONS

Community consultation is essential in developing a shared vision for the future of the precinct. The Master Plan has therefore been prepared with extensive community and stakeholder consultation.

The project consultations provided a rich source of views for the development of the Master Plan. It was commonly accepted that the buildings on the site require urgent attention. Key areas of comment were:

- the need to re-integrate the site with the local, state and national communities
- that interpretation is vital to authentically display the history of the site and its past residents
- that adaptive re-use must be compatible
- that a significant resource source will be needed in the future to achieve these outcomes
- that government's continued contribution to resourcing the site is important.

The Master Plan was seen as critical in providing a framework to guide future use and resourcing for the site.

2.5 TOURISM

The precinct has an important role to play in the development and expansion of tourism in Western Australia, and a substantial base on which to build. From the current year (2002/03), the Fremantle Prison Heritage Precinct has received a much-needed increase in resources to fund marketing and promotion so as to more fully realize its potential in terms of a well-defined market position in relation to intrastate, interstate or international tourist markets. Further promotion and marketing of the site would enable it to be positioned as an integral or "must see" component of the Fremantle visitor experience for tourists and others.

With current visitor tour numbers at approximately 112,000 per annum, and growth despite difficulties in the international and interstate tourism markets for Western Australia, the precinct has a sound base on which to expand its tourist revenue and prominence. Furthermore, during consultation, tourism industry representatives have suggested that the precinct could achieve perhaps double its present visitor numbers.

The possibility for dramatically increasing visitor numbers is apparent when numbers of precinct visitors are compared to the number of tourists to the State. The current visitor mix to the precinct is:

- 37% international,
- 32% interstate and
- 31% local (intrastate).

This means that the Fremantle Prison Heritage Precinct attracted around 6.9% of WA's 446,000 international visitors in the nine months to March 2002, and 3.7% of WA's 940,000 interstate visitors in the 12 months to March 2002. By comparison, Fremantle is estimated to receive 75% of international visitors, and 40%-50% of interstate visitors to Western Australia.

At present, the precinct's paid tourism services and products include a guided tour program, with night and day schedules, and a self-guided tour of the grounds. There



is an Interpretive Visitor Centre and small retail outlets. There is, then, opportunity for new, extended and higher yield products and services. There is considerable potential to further improve market penetration, site revenues and profit margins from visitor tour and other activity within the recommended framework of this Master Plan.

2.6 SUSTAINABILITY

Sustainability is defined by Western Australian State Sustainability Strategy (draft 2002) as meeting the needs of current and future generations through simultaneous social, environmental and economic improvement. The Master Plan needs to balance commercial activity and leasing arrangements with public access and community use whilst ensuring that the precinct has ongoing funding and resources for its conservation.

Fremantle Prison Heritage Precinct has been under-resourced over the last ten years with a substantial backlog of maintenance receiving insufficient government funding. Sources of funding to date include:

- proceeds of the sale of the Henderson Street Warder's Cottages to Homeswest
- direct government funding
- income from visitors
- income from leases (government and non-government)

Total rent generated by the leased properties roughly equates to the outgoings of the precinct complex, excluding maintenance.

The best commercial rental returns are currently achieved along the Terrace. The rent being achieved for the West Workshops is reasonable for the style of building, location and local market. The Coastal Business Centre in New Division provides a lower rent return. The small retail properties produce only a nominal rent, reflecting the current limited customer base and their appeal.

In order to achieve a sustainable future, it is important, in the first instance, that the government provide funding to address the backlog of maintenance that has not been fully resourced over the last ten years. Ongoing cyclical maintenance can then be implemented in a sustainable way. In recognition of this important site, the state government has recently made a commitment to funding a substantial portion of the maintenance backlog works.

The consultations revealed a number of individuals and organisations offering to partner in specific enhancements of the site in the future. The Master Plan will provide an integrated framework with opportunities for both public and private investment that will maximise revenue return for conservation of the site in the future.



2.7 INTEGRATION AND ACCESS

The Fremantle Prison Heritage Precinct and its context lie within the City of Fremantle's Inner Urban Area. The Master Plan provides strategies that enable the integration of the precinct with the City and the broader community with provision for increased visual, physical, social and economic integration.

2.7.1 Accessibility

Due to the location of the site and the nature of surrounding land uses, Fremantle Prison Heritage Precinct is highly accessible by both private and public transport.

Public transport

Hampton Road and South Terrace form part of a major bus route for services to Fremantle. These services provide bus stops all within close walking distance to the precinct. The Fremantle CAT bus does not currently provide direct access to the precinct.

Fremantle is also serviced by train. Whilst the train station is not located within close proximity to the precinct, it forms an integral part of the transportation network for Fremantle carrying a significant number of passengers to and from Fremantle daily.

Vehicular movement and car parking

Vehicular movement around the site is extremely high along both Hampton Road to the east and Parry Street to the west. The uses located to the west of the site, particularly the Fremantle Markets and the 'café strip' along South Terrace, generate a high level of vehicular movement within close proximity to the site. A substantial portion of this traffic is accommodated within car parks located directly west of the precinct (Parry Street car park) and the multi level car park located in Henderson Street.

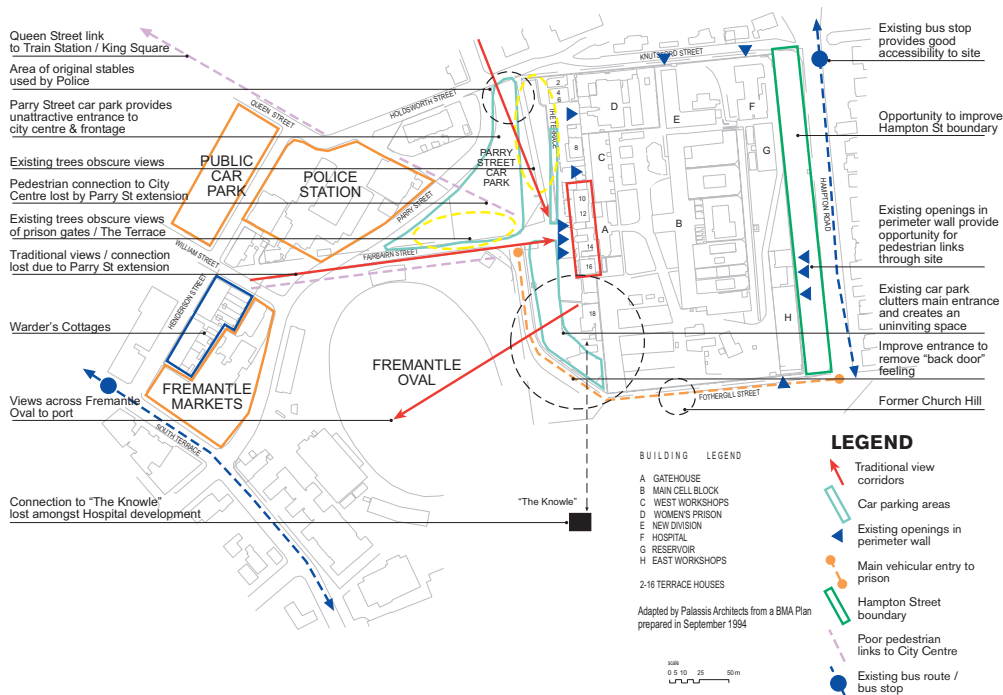


Figure 2.1 Site Context Analysis



Vehicle access to the precinct can be obtained via Fothergill Street along the southern perimeter wall. This street would have once experienced a lot of usage as a main artery into the city centre via the now truncated Fairbairn Street Ramp. Now its only function is to provide access to the precinct and Fremantle Hospital's car parks. As a result, the street presents a "back door" feel when arriving at the precinct by car. Fothergill Street should be upgraded to improve its status to reflect that it is the main vehicular access point to the precinct and to provide a greater sense of arrival for visitors to the precinct.

Car parking also presents an issue. The principal parking for the precinct consists of The Terrace carpark facilities (leased to the City of Fremantle). There currently exist vehicular/pedestrian conflicts on The Terrace. As views of the precinct are important, it is necessary to minimise the impact of car parking to this area. Some carparking is also provided at the northern end of the Hampton Road Reserve. Opportunity for additional car parking exists along the reserve. Car parking within the perimeter walls is not supported in the conservation policy for the place.



View of Fairbairn Street Ramp looking towards Gatehouse



View of Fairbairn Street Ramp looking towards Henderson Street

2.7.2 Fairbairn Street Ramp

The Fairbairn Street Ramp is a key feature of the prison precinct and once connected the port and city of Fremantle to the convict depot before being truncated to allow the Parry Street bypass in the 1980s. Plantings and landscape elements have further obscured its clarity.

The City of Fremantle has commenced works associated with past studies, to reinstate the visual connection between the precinct and Henderson Street. Reconstruction of the ramp would increase the visibility of the precinct and therefore increase visitor numbers, reintegrate the precinct within its urban context and assist in the credibility of the World Heritage Nomination.

2.7.3 Permeability

Permeability refers to the number of alternative ways to traverse an environment, within both the public and private realms. In contrast to the surrounding area which is typically characterised by small urban blocks providing a myriad of vehicular and pedestrian links, the Fremantle Prison Heritage Precinct, which remains largely as constructed in the 19th century, occupies a large site and was intentionally constructed to reduce permeability and access.

Whilst the continuation of surrounding vehicular links through the site is not desirable, and pedestrian links are limited due to the perimeter wall, it is important to improve the links to this significant site. There are a number of existing openings in the perimeter wall that are blocked or not utilised. The permeability of the site



would be improved through allowing access to the site through these openings, while retaining the mystery the walls create. These access points may assist the viability of new uses at the site.

Increased access could be achieved by other methods such as opportunities to attend events and special opening times, which improve social access while retaining the physical barriers to permeability.



Figure 2.2 View from the Fremantle Town Hall, with the precinct clearly visible on the right, c1920s. (Courtesy Fremantle City Library)

2.7.4 Legibility

Legibility enables people to form clear, accurate images of a place which aids considerably in orientation. Legibility is therefore an important element for the future development of the precinct.

The precinct commands a prominent location within the City, located high on a hill (formerly Church Hill) having a dominant, symbolic impact on the town centre below. This location made the precinct a strongly identifiable structure in the early days of the settlement. However, this prominence has been eroded over time due to changes within the City and the introduction of landscaping to the top of the bank along The Terrace.

One of the most significant “legible” elements of the precinct is the vista of the Gatehouse when viewed from the bottom of Fairbairn Street in Henderson Street. There are other significant vistas of the precinct that can be reinstated to improve the legibility of the site within the City. These include views of the from Parry Street (north of Holdsworth Street), the Parry Street car park and from further afield, such as Monument Hill.

Aside from the legibility of the site in terms of its immediate surrounds, the site should also be considered within the broader context of the City of Fremantle and other projects currently being undertaken within the City. It may be possible to establish connections with other areas of Fremantle such as Queens Street, King’s Square, train station, Fremantle Harbour, Fremantle Lunatic Asylum and the Esplanade. Through strengthening the links with these areas of the City, the precinct can then play a more prominent role in the “legibility” of Fremantle. The more integration the precinct can achieve with other Fremantle attractions, the greater the chance future development on the site has of success.



2.8 FUTURE USES AND DEVELOPMENT

Future uses and development are determined by what is both compatible and feasible. This means that future uses and development must respect the cultural significance of the place while taking into account the condition of the place, procurable resources, and continuing economic sustainability.

The existing uses have been assessed to determine their continued feasibility, and an investigation of a range of uses that would increase use of the site and create visitor interest has been undertaken.

There are currently a number of existing uses accommodated at the precinct including:

- Holiday Accommodation
- Greening W.A.
- Primary Care Mental Health Unit
- Department of Education
- Department of Training – TAFE
- Coastal Business Centre
- Fremantle Children’s Literature Centre
- Fremantle & Districts Model Railway
- Gatehouse Gift-shop
- Convict Café.

The precinct occupies a significant amount of land, located within close proximity to the Fremantle city centre. However, the built form on the site is specific to its former use, firstly as a convict establishment and then a prison. The nature of the past use of the precinct provides some limitations to future use.

Despite the challenges that the precinct presents, it is possible to identify potential land uses based on an analysis of market trends for specific land uses and the compatibility of uses with the existing infrastructure and established tourism related operations. The following opportunities and constraints relating to land use and development of the places that comprise the Fremantle Prison Heritage Precinct have been considered below.

2.8.1 Opportunities

The precinct has the opportunity to attract the following land uses. These opportunities are based on existing land uses and activities within the precinct, its close proximity to the Fremantle city centre and other related tourist/convict settlement attractions.

Tourism

Tourism uses associated with the past use and the heritage significance of the site will continue to be the main focus of the precinct. There is opportunity to expand the tourism activities of the precinct to incorporate larger scale events, and other tourist activities such as tours of the underground reservoir tunnels.





Cultural and Heritage Services

In keeping with the heritage significance of the precinct, cultural and heritage services are considered appropriate and important uses that will add to the visitor's experience and enrich the community's understanding of the site. These uses include activities such as archives, genealogy, research facilities, museums etc.



Education

Educational land uses are considered to be highly compatible with the future use of the precinct. Educational uses are currently operating on the site such as the TAFE Jewellery studios and Children's Literature Centre. Specific educational programs that relate to the site's convict history and construction techniques would be ideal.



Retail

Limited conventional retail opportunities exist for the precinct. Most parts of the site are not well located in order to capitalise on the movement economy and other surrounding activities, therefore conventional retail is not considered an opportunity for the site. However, it is anticipated that there will be a number of retail activities associated with the other operations on the site as an ancillary, but important activity, in the form of tourist outlets, craft/jewellery shops, cafes and restaurants.



Special Event Venue

The large and unique spaces within the site and its buildings, make it ideal to become one of Perth's premium special event venues. The forecourt to the main cell block is a versatile space (once unencumbered through the removal of raised former garden areas) to host a range of events such as car shows, festivals, outdoor theatre/music, and conferences.





Accommodation

Short stay accommodation, designed to meet a range of budgets, is considered to be a compatible use with the tourism/retail and special event uses proposed for the site. Perth (excluding Fremantle) is currently considered to be over-supplied with short-stay accommodation in some sectors and regrettably, it is not possible to obtain occupancy levels for backpacker facilities. They are generally too low in room numbers to be registered. However, it is considered that demand for low-cost backpacker-style accommodation is growing and, at the opposite end of the market, there are opportunities for smaller boutique-style high quality accommodation.



Creative production

This use is considered consistent and complementary with the other uses proposed for the site. Furthermore, a number of existing buildings within the precinct are considered to be easily adaptable for production uses, such as arts and crafts as well as trades such as carpentry and stone masonry.



The following land uses are considered inappropriate within the precinct for the following reasons:

Residential -

Residential uses are not considered appropriate due the extensive modification that would be required to be made to the precinct in order to accommodate appropriate built form for residential purposes. Substantial modification of the precinct would impact on its heritage integrity. Furthermore, it is considered that if the precinct were developed for residential purposes, the tourist operations within the precinct would be compromised.

Commercial -

The Fremantle commercial centre currently faces economic challenges and competition. Whilst the precinct is within close proximity to the commercial centre, market advice indicates that stand alone commercial development would find it difficult to succeed due to the isolation of the precinct and competition from existing, better located commercial areas.



2.9 OWNERSHIP & MANAGEMENT

Ownership of the Fremantle Prison Heritage Precinct and surrounding areas is shown in the figure below.

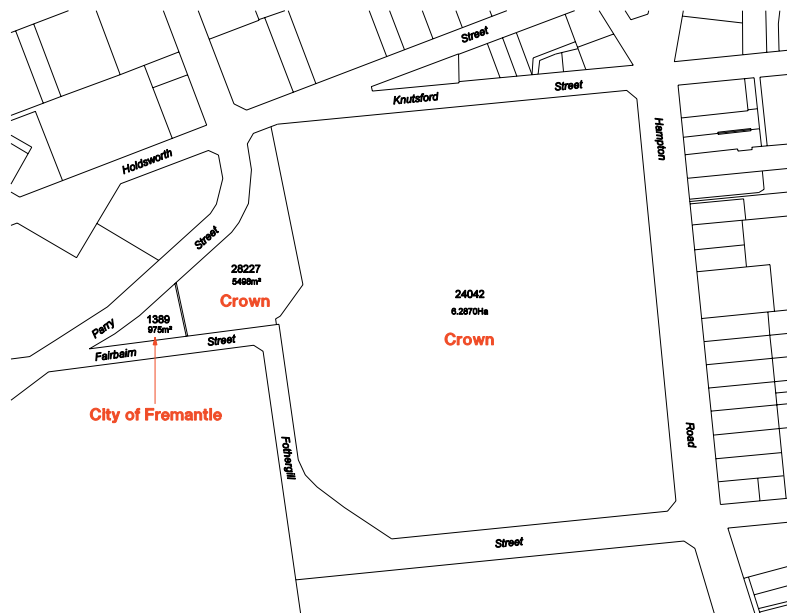


Figure 2.3 Plan showing land ownership

With the exception of Lot 1389 (owned by the City of Fremantle) the remainder of the land is owned by the Crown. Most of the ownership details have remained unchanged since the early 1900s. The first major changes occurred when the Parry Street ring road was constructed. As there is no non-government land ownership within the site or immediate area relating to the site, future development should be relatively easy to coordinate.

The Master Plan brief did not include reference to management of the precinct, however future management and ownership issues will impact substantially on the long-term sustainability of the precinct and need to be considered as part of the implementation of the Master Plan.

There are a number of differing examples of management systems for heritage site and for tourist attractions, currently operating in Australia and overseas. The majority of these agencies are set up with clear goals for particular pieces of land, or clear goals for certain outcomes.

Currently, a range of government agencies run/manage what can be classed as visitor attractions, for example:

- CALM - National Parks, tourist attractions
- Kings Park Board – Kings Park
- Department of Planning and Infrastructure – Whiteman Park
- W A Museum – museums
- Zoological Gardens Board - Perth Zoo
- Rottnest Island Authority – Rottnest Island
- Department of Transport – Hillarys Boat Harbour



- Department of Culture & Arts - WA Art Gallery
- State Sports Centre Trust – Challenge Stadium, etc.

The function of managing a tourist attraction requires a number of specific skill sets, normally handled by the private sector. However, the management of heritage assets in Australia is most commonly a government or community function. Examples of these management bodies for sites of heritage significance include:

- Port Arthur Historic Site Management Authority - established by the Tasmanian Government in 1987 to manage the Port Arthur Historic Site
- The Historic Houses Trust of New South Wales - a statutory authority within the New South Wales Ministry for the Arts established in 1980 to run Vaucluse House and Elizabeth Bay House. It has now grown to manage 13 diverse sites and properties including houses, public buildings, a farm, gardens, parklands, a beach and urban spaces.
- Sydney Harbour Federation Trust - set up by the Commonwealth Government in 2001 to plan the future of former Defence and other special Commonwealth lands on Sydney Harbour. These lands contain historic buildings and areas of pristine natural vegetation, magnificent views of the harbour and a record of the city's Aboriginal, maritime and defence heritage.



Hyde Park Barracks, Sydney



Port Arthur Historic Site, Tasmania

If the government's role is broadly defined as a combination of heritage retention and budgetary control, it is likely that the heritage property would remain in government ownership and private operators could lease or be contracted to manage aspects of the site and activities, or the complete site.

However, private operators are unlikely to accept responsibility for expensive interpretation, collection or care of heritage artefacts. Therefore, while it may be relatively simple to decide that government should not operate, for instance a hotel on the site, it is possible that heritage needs would be more effectively subsidised/ supported with ongoing government management of the tourist activities, a situation not dissimilar to Rottnest Island, the Perth Zoo or the Perth Mint, all excellent tourism operations.

Further analysis and the production of a business plan for the site should define these issues. However, it is recommended that initially and throughout the process of implementing the Masterplan, government continue to own and operate the facilities and activities.



Once established buildings and/or businesses can be leased or placed under management contract to the private sector, e.g. short stay accommodation. Tour activity, once established, could again be leased as a business to the private sector.

Subsequent business planning would determined which arrangement provides government with the highest return while protecting heritage values.