

Comments on the Provisional Heritage Registration of City Railway Remnants, Kingston and Reid

The Council has provisionally registered City Railway Remnants as a way to indicate that they intend to make a decision on whether or not to permanently put it on the ACT Heritage Register. The provisional registration sets out what it is about the place that the Council think is important to the ACT and why. This public consultation aims to find out the views of the ACT community.

Please read the Provisional Registration Decision and the Background Information documents before starting.

Privacy Statement

This survey fulfils the role of public consultation under section 37 of the [Heritage Act 2004](#) (the Act), and the collection of personal information as authorised by the Act. If you make a comment using this form, you will be considered an *interested person* under section 13 of the Act. For this reason, the survey requires respondents to provide contact details so functions under the Act relating to notification of interested persons can be fulfilled. If you do not provide your identity or contact details then the ACT Heritage Council will be unable to give you notice of decisions as an interested person under the Act. Also, you may not be able to be identified as an interested person entitled to appeal rights under the Act.

The personal information on this survey is collected by the Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate (EPSDD) and provided to the ACT Heritage Council. All personal information provided will be collected, used and stored in accordance with the [Information Privacy Act 2014](#) and EPSDD's [Information Privacy Policy](#), which contains information about how you may access or seek to correct your personal information held by EPSDD and how you may complain about an alleged breach of the Territory Privacy Principles.

Section 1 - ACT Heritage Council considerations - place

The boundary on the map (Figure 1) and the attributes listed below are what the ACT Heritage Council considers to capture the proposed heritage significance of the City Railway Remnants. Do you agree or do you have suggested changes you want the Council to consider?

City Railway Remnants has the following attributes:

- **The Reid Railway Remnants** – consisting of the ~290m x 48m long strip of land at Reid that remains undeveloped within the former railway easement.
- **The Kingston Railway Easement** – consisting of the ~27m wide median between the two roads that form The Causeway.
- **The Remnant Temporary Railway (west tracks)** – consisting of the original alignment of the temporary construction railway that run for ~25m from the road verge through to the southern edge of the rail yard perimeter road in Section 11 Block 7, Kingston.
- **The Remnant Temporary Railway (east tracks)** – the 1967-1969 track realignment that run for ~47m from the road verge to the existing track termination in Section 11 Block 7, Kingston.



Figure 1 - Heritage boundary

Your Comments on the proposed boundary and features that describe the significant attributes of the place:

- 1) I agree that the boundary for the **Reid** remnants is appropriate for the easement landscape planting.
- 2) The **Kingston** railway easement actually marks the ultimate intended railway route (Causeway), and only that part below Eyre St marks the route of the temporary railway, where it curved north-eastward and rejoined the Causeway alignment to then cross Mill Flat. The boundary is appropriate as long as this is made clear.
- 3) The boundaries for the two sets of remnant temporary railway **tracks** (west and east) are appropriate.

Section 2 - ACT Heritage Council considerations - significance

A place or object has heritage significance if it meets with one or more of the eight heritage significance criteria as defined under section 10 of the [Heritage Act 2004](#).

The heritage significance criteria are labelled (a) to (h), and your comments are most useful when addressed against each of these criteria, or you could focus on the ones relevant to your argument. However, you may choose to only leave a general comment by skipping to the General Comments section.

The ACT Heritage Council has determined that the City Railway Remnants is likely to have heritage significance under criteria (a), (b) and (h) only. The criteria that are not met can also be commented on.

While the Council will independently assess and research any claims you make against the criteria, it may be helpful to refer to the [Heritage Assessment Policy](#) as a guide to providing the strongest argument with appropriate evidence.

(a) importance to the course or pattern of the ACT's cultural or natural history;

The City Railway Remnants, Reid and Kingston, meets this criterion.

The City Railway Remnants are the only remaining physical evidence of the implementation of the planning for the main railway that was part of Walter Burley Griffin's design for the city of Canberra.

Griffin's design for Canberra always included a railway that was designed to operate alongside a city-wide tram network. The location of the railway was formalised in the 1925 gazetted plan of the Layout-out of the City of Canberra and Its Environs. In the 1940s the planned railway easement was landscaped with trees and shrubs to help identify the route as well as help control wind and reduce dust from adjacent city development. The railway route was removed from the gazetted plan in 1950 and development quickly resumed most of the easement. In 2016, all that remained of the former easement was a small section along Amaroo Street in Reid and the Causeway in Kingston.

The Amaroo Street remnant easement is a ~290m long stretch of land that until 1950 had been reserved for the railway. The remnant part is the southern half of the original easement with the other half contained in the Amaroo Street road easement and the southern half of Section 2 Reid. The design for the railway was for tracks in a 12 foot deep cutting with embankments on both sides through the city area north of the Molonglo River (later Lake Burley Griffin) and running offset from main avenues to separate it from the main public spaces. The tree planting pattern of an avenue that still exists today would have been located on the south of the rails as a part of the landscape buffer planned for each side of the easement.

The Kingston section of the remnant easement remains as the wide strip of land, 350m long, between the two parallel roads that form The Causeway road easement. This section of the planned railway was designed to run at ground level in the open as it was on the outskirts of the planned city and would allow for grand views and vistas for passengers arriving in Canberra, particularly where it changed direction at intersections of Griffin's axial lines and the planned embankment across what is now the Jerrabomberra Wetlands. This section of the remnant easement had landscaping similar to the section in Reid, but the trees failed to thrive and there is little suggestion of a formal avenue of trees, however the relationship of the place to the existing railway can still be clearly discerned.

The temporary construction railway existed for a very short time at the start of the 1920s and was laid out according to Walter Burley Griffin's plan, albeit on a temporary basis to help construction of the city. While the railway had only a minor role in the construction of Canberra, it is a testament to Griffin's planning and influence as Director of Design and Construction that it was built along his intended route. The only remnant of this railway is the short section in Kingston adjoining the rail yards.

Your Comments on criterion (a):

I agree that this criterion is met.

A number of statements in the background require comment:

1 The statement: *'...development quickly resumed most of the easement. In 2016, all that remained of the former easement was a small section along Amaroo Street in Reid and the Causeway in Kingston.'* is not strictly accurate. Other parts of the railway route remain visible today within the city structure and can be walked e.g. City Walk, Garema Place, Genge St and (in particular) Lonsdale St; and arguably also the the south-eastern continuation of the Amaroo St alignment, across Anzac Pde and along the one block of public realm space east of Anzac Park East. Other parts of the route do not lie under buildings as such, and can be traced visually through car parks, public realm spaces and the Jerrabomberra Wetlands Nature Reserve, and through Narrabundah (see 3b below). This does not affect eligibility under this criterion.

2 The statement: *'The design for the railway was for tracks in a 12 foot deep cutting with embankments on both sides through the city area north of the Molonglo River'* may require checking. It is my impression that the railway ran at ground level across most of the city area, with cuttings required to negotiate higher ground towards the Market and the Russell apex of Griffin's axial line triangles. These cuttings were heavily criticised and led to the temporary railway skirting that higher ground to rejoin (at ground level) the 'proper' easement (around modern Feakes PI to the east of Anzac Park).

So, this statement may require checking. This does not affect eligibility under this criterion.

3 The statement: *'This [Causeway] section of the planned railway was designed to run at ground level in the open as it was on the outskirts of the planned city and would allow for grand views and vistas for passengers arriving in Canberra, particularly where it changed direction at intersections of Griffin's axial lines and the planned embankment across what is now the Jerrabomberra Wetlands.'* is not strictly accurate in two aspects:

a) Only the upper part of the Causeway easement might have been *'at ground level'*; as noted, the design called for the railway to cross Mill Flat on a large earthen embankment which also impounded East Lake. The railway (at the top) was to be 30ft above the level of the central lake basin and 10 ft above the level of East Lake (hence the 'grand views and vistas'). The railway may have started 'at ground level' at the higher (southern) end of the Causeway but it then continued at height across the river and flats atop the embankment, and it gained height as it progressed to the north to allow bridging of some key lakeside roads.

It is also quite possible that the railway may have required a cutting at the higher (southern) end of the Causeway to allow it to run between Eastlake Station (at modern Hume Circle) and Central Station (beneath Griffin's Market building) via the Causeway without the need for road level crossings at the Eastlake end.

So at the very least the *'at ground level'* statement does not reflect the (acknowledged) intention to build a large embankment (dam wall).

This does not affect eligibility under this criterion.

b) The reference to *'grand views and vistas...particularly where it changed direction at intersections of Griffin's axial lines'* is curious. At the southern end of the Causeway Axis the direction change was to be achieved in a gentle arc which may have offered some limited views of East Lake. That gentle arc, between Lakebourne and Eastbourne Stations (the latter at, or under, modern Hume Circle), is now marked by Kootara Crescent in Narrabundah, so this is an additional visible railway easement. When the railway was dropped from the gazetted City Plan, the arcing easement remained and was converted into a street, in the same manner as Amaroo and Lonsdale Sts in Reid and Braddon.

At the northern end, the change of direction was to be in an arc through the underground Central Station beneath Griffin's Market building, then following a cutting until the vicinity of modern Feakes PI (to the east of Anzac Park).

So no grand views or vistas were likely to have been available at either the northern or the southern ends of the Causeway axis, making this a curious statement.

This does not affect eligibility under this criterion.

- (b) **has uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of the ACT's cultural or natural history;**

The City Railway Remnants, Reid and Kingston, meets this criterion.

The City Railway Remnants are considered uncommon and endangered aspects of the ACT's cultural history. Very little rail was built in the ACT and planning history notes the changes in mass transportation away from rail to motorised travel. This has resulted in what little physical evidence there was of the easements reserved for the railway being built over so that only a small portion of that land remains. The land remaining in Reid has survived as it acted a barrier between a large educational institution and a low density residential area. The land remaining in Kingston has survived as the avenue had been constructed before 1950. It was one of the few sections of Griffin's plan where the railway would be above ground and run down the median of the avenue.

Your Comments on criterion (b):

I agree that this criterion is met.

Again, I think caution is required in stating that 'what little physical evidence there was of the easements reserved for the railway being built over so that only a small portion of that land remains' for the reasons noted in the box for criterion (a) above.

This does not affect eligibility under this criterion – it is still uncommon.

- (c) **potential to yield important information that will contribute to an understanding of the ACT's cultural or natural history;**

The City Railway Remnants, Reid and Kingston, does not meet this criterion.

There is some potential for the City Railway Remnants to yield important information that will contribute to an understanding of the ACT's cultural history. The planning history is better represented by the planning documents and designs for the ACT, while the remnants of the temporary construction railway are of a standard gauge track that is well documented already.

Your Comments on criterion (c):

I agree that this criterion is not met.

- (d) **importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural or natural places or objects**

The City Railway Remnants, Reid and Kingston, does not meet this criterion.

The City Railway Remnants are not important in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a railway easement. As land that has been reserved for a possible future use, the only defining feature is that it has not been built over; and as this is a very common feature of many areas across the ACT, it cannot be considered important for demonstrating the type of place. While the plantings may add to the ability of the place to be interpreted, they are necessarily of a temporary nature and would have needed to be removed when the railway was built. As such, the plantings in themselves cannot be considered to be an important characteristic of the type of place.

The remnants of the temporary construction railway are of a standard type of track and design that still exists as part of the working Kingston railway station and the line out to Queanbeyan. As a common feature that still exists elsewhere, they cannot be considered to be important in the broader context of railway tracks.

Your Comments on criterion (d):

I agree that this criterion is not met.

I disagree that 'While the plantings may add to the ability of the place to be interpreted, they are necessarily of a temporary nature and would have needed to be removed when the railway was built.' I don't believe this statement is accurate and may need checking. Weston planted screening belts of trees to reduce visual blight, dust and noise, and in places wind. I think it is most unlikely that he considered those plantings temporary, to be removed later - there was not enough resourcing available for that kind of wasted effort.

Nonetheless, that contrary view does not alter my opinion that this criterion is not met.

- (e) **importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics valued by the ACT community or a cultural group in the ACT;**

The City Railway Remnants, Reid and Kingston, does not meet this criterion.

The City Railway Remnants may be valued by rail, engineering and Griffin planning enthusiasts, but they are not considered to be representative of the ACT community as a whole, nor are they considered to be cultural groups. Additionally, the Council could find no existing evidence that would suggest it is valued for exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics.

Your Comments on criterion (e):

I agree that this criterion is not met.

- (f) **importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement for a particular period;**

The City Railway Remnants, Reid and Kingston, does not meet this criterion.

While Griffin's design of Canberra is an important creative achievement of urban design at the start of the 20th Century, the land reserved for one part of that design which was not built cannot be said to be important in demonstrating this.

Additionally, the remnant temporary construction railway was of a standard design for the time and is not important in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at the start of the 20th Century.

Your Comments on criterion (f):

I agree that this criterion is not met.

- (g) **has a strong or special association with the ACT community, or a cultural group in the ACT for social, cultural or spiritual reasons;**

The City Railway Remnants, Reid and Kingston, does not meet this criterion.

While the ACT Railway Easements may be held in high regard and be visited by some community groups, such as those associated with engineering and railways or Walter Burley Griffin, there is no evidence that the place has a strong or special association with the ACT community as a whole, or a cultural group in the ACT for social, cultural or spiritual reasons.

Your Comments on criterion (g):

I agree that this criterion is not met.

- (h) **has a special association with the life or work of a person, or people, important to the history of the ACT**

The City Railway Remnants, Reid and Kingston, meets this criterion.

*The City Railway Remnants are associated with Walter Burley Griffin, a person important to the history of the ACT, who designed the railway route which existed in every version of his design of the City and in his role as Director of Design and Construction he pushed to create the temporary construction railway along his chosen route. Paul Reid's 2002 book *Canberra Following Griffin: a design history of Australia's national capital* clearly shows the administrative challenges Griffin faced in trying to get his railway built, which he considered would eventually become a major factor in the growth and success of the city. The temporary construction railway was one of the few major, albeit temporary, projects that occurred during Griffin's employment in Canberra and his efforts to get it built along his original planned route show how important it was to him.*

While the remnants of the temporary railway do meet this criterion, this does not apply to the easements for the proposed railway. The easements were formalised by the 1925 gazetted plan several years after Griffin had left Canberra and while they were based on his designs, many others were involved in the refinement of the design. This is not considered to be a special association as required by this criterion.

Your Comments on criterion (h):

I agree that this criterion is met.

Despite financial strictures in World War I, Griffin persevered to ensure that his railway to the north side of the Molonglo would be built (albeit in temporary form), because without it his design for the city would be compromised. Ultimately, he was proved correct. The railway is a strong element in the story of Griffin's obstinate struggle to build the city he had envisaged.

Section 3 – General Comments

I support the proposed heritage registration? Yes – under criteria (a), (b) and (h)

Please include any further comments to your submission:

I have queried the accuracy of a number of the statements in the considerations above.

I also have queries about statements in the background information which I have not included here. Some of these may be important e.g. a number of records indicate that the temporary railway was begun in 1918, not 1920 as stated in the background information. This goes to the overlap of time for Griffin’s presence in the city (relevant to criterion (h)), and additionally it means next year is the centenary of its commencement, which is worth marking.

My interest in the Civic railway has arisen in conjunction with my current research and writing regarding historical layers in Jerrabomberra Wetlands and environs (Molonglo-Jerrabomberra floodplain).

A concise history is to be published this year and a more comprehensive book in 2018.

This has necessarily included detailed investigation of the Causeway embankment and bridge, and factors in their loss due to flooding. Prompted by a public presentation on the area’s history, an inaugural walk/drive inspection of the temporary railway route was undertaken in Nov 2016, with participants from Engineering Heritage Canberra, Railway Historical Society, and National Trust.

The walk and the information provided aroused a great deal of interest. Consequently, I intend to:

- develop additional self-guiding materials in conjunction with those organisations
- undertake additional archival research and documentation of the temporary railway.

The evident interest in, and value of, the remnants warrants the erection of interpretive (‘Canberra Tracks’) signs at strategic parts of the temporary railway route.

I would be pleased to assist in developing text for those signs.

I would also be willing to assist with comments to strengthen the background information.

Section 4 - Demographics

Your personal details are confidential and will not be publicly visible, but this is required for you to be kept informed and to be counted as an ‘interested person’ (refer to the Privacy Statement at the beginning of the document).

If you do not provide your identity or contact details then the ACT Heritage Council will be unable to give you notice of decisions as an interested person under the Act. Also, you may not be able to be identified as an interested person entitled to appeal rights under the Act.

First Name: Mark

Last Name: Butz

Preferred contact details (phone, email, postal address): mark.butz@bigpond.com 0418-417-635

Age range: 55-65

Relationship to the place: interested person with focus on the type of place

Have you ever provided comments on other heritage registrations? No

What next?

After you are happy with your comments and have saved this form it can be emailed to heritage@act.gov.au or printed out and mailed to:

The Secretary
ACT Heritage Council
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Canberra City ACT 2601