

# NATIONAL TRUST ENDANGERED PLACES 2003 REPORT CARD

## ? Fairbairn Airbase, Australian Capital Territory

### 2003 Threat Damage and Demolition

Failure to include management of heritage values in the management planning of the whole site.

### Description of Place and Situation

The Fairbairn precinct of the airport has presented RAAF identity in the National Capital for more than 60 years. The 1939 Base plan, intact layout and individual buildings, particularly those from the WWII era, are fine examples of the work of Commonwealth architects including E. Henderson, Cuthbert Whitley and J. Orwin. The streetscape and buildings reflect the evolution of air-force culture in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, including its identity in the national capital.

The Precinct is now under sole management control of the Capital Airport Group (CAG). Through the Airport's *Preliminary Draft Master Plan* and the *Draft Environment Strategy*, CAG now formally acknowledge the heritage values associated with the precinct, as recorded in the Register of the National Estate (RNE) listing.

Despite this, many timber buildings have been demolished over the past year, and the airport authorities claim 'significant deterioration in the fabric of the infrastructure and facilities' has occurred. The new VIP Hangar has been built on the site of the demolished WW2 Instruction Building. Access to the site remains restricted.

The Trust is making efforts to engage in positive dialogue with CAG management.

### Description of Threat

Whilst acknowledging the heritage values of the site, CAG are still making change and development decisions without the guidance of a Conservation Management Plan (CMP). Without a CMP, further deterioration is likely to continue, and this in turn could lead to further demolitions.

Heritage aspects cited in the Airport's *Preliminary Draft Master Plan* are not coordinated with the rest of the *Plan*, and therefore offer no assurance that adequate protection of heritage values will occur. There appears to be no commitment by CAG management to heritage conservation beyond reference to the RNE Listing.

### Further Action Required

As the heritage significance of the site is established, a Conservation Management Plan outlining the heritage values and the ways in which they will be protected must be completed. It must include broad community consultation, and placed on the public record prior to approval of the *Preliminary Draft Master Plan*.

The *Preliminary Draft Master Plan* must then be amended to correctly reflect the current known and potential heritage issues on the site, so that their protection can be an integral part of the management of the site.

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