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Dear Colleagues,

## HERITAGE STATEMENT OF FACTS AND **SUBMISSIONS**—6 SPRINGDALE ROAD, KILLARA

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### 1.0 Preamble

Emily Keenan, the owner of the subject site at 6 Springdale Road, Killara—sometimes referred to as the Eastman House—commissioned this expert heritage assessment in relation to the application of an Interim Heritage Order (IHO) having been made on the property by the Special Minister of State and Minister for the Public Service and Employee Relations, Aboriginal Affairs, and the Arts, at the behest of Ku-ring-gai Council (gazetted 31 January 2020 as the *Eastment House*).

The purpose of this report is to assist the Council and the NSW Office of Environment and Heritage to decide whether or not the subject site has a sufficient level of heritage value to merit site-specific heritage protection at the local or state level.

Measures undertaken to recognise and protect places of cultural heritage value in Ku-ring-gai are to be encouraged, as the conservation of important sites is integral for a community's sense of continuity and ability to interpret its multilayered evolution. However, such measures must be based on *demonstrated* significance, which is only ascertainable from a rigorous analysis of a site from a heritage perspective. In the absence of this, the Council runs the genuine risk of adding places of little apparent significance and, counterproductive to their legitimate intent, diminish the value of heritage items in the eyes of the community.

Patrick Wilson, Heritage Consultant and Professional Historian of Touring the Past, has prepared this response, and the views expressed are his alone. Due regard has been provided to *The Australia ICOMOS Charter for Places of Cultural Significance*, (*The Burra Charter*), rev. 2013, and the NSW Heritage Office's *Assessing Heritage Significance* (revised 2001).

## 2.0 Sources of Information

My assessment of the subject building and grounds is based on a lengthy whole-site inspection (February 2020) as well as access to the original architectural drawings and oral history of the development supplied by the previous—and original occupant/co-builder (with her husband)—Margaret Eastment. Her detailed recollections concerning the development of her house have been of great benefit, and her assistance is kindly acknowledged.

Letters written by Margaret, which summarise the information she has conveyed directly to the new owners and real estate agent, are attached at Appendix A.

Plans for the subject site, stamped by Ku-ring-gai Municipal Council for approval, 1 April 1971, are attached at Appendix B.

The *Preliminary Heritage Assessment* prepared by the Council in support of the IHO application acknowledges that such sources were not available/utilised in their initial analysis.<sup>1</sup> Seemingly, their assessment relied solely upon: a walk-through the property during a public house opening; review of a real estate advertisement (which in hyperbole standard to such promotion proclaimed the house a ‘truly spectacular Ken Woolley-designed residence’<sup>2</sup>); land and title, and electoral roll research; and referral to some secondary sources (namely, an obituary of Woolley from an online architectural magazine, a largely unconnected architectural PhD and the standard but dated style guide Richard Apperly et al., *A Pictorial Guide to Identifying Australian Architecture*, 1989/1994, etc.).

## 3.0 Site and Environs

The IHO concerns a property comprising a single lot located on the western side of Springdale Road, Killara, close to its intersection with Stanhope Road.<sup>3</sup> The site contains a vaguely split-level and freestanding house of variegated brown brick construction with multiple off-set skillion roof forms clad in tiles.

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<sup>1</sup> Andreana Kennedy, Antony Fabbro and Andrew Watson (assumed authors), *Preliminary Heritage Assessment* in ‘Late Agenda’, *Ordinary Meeting of Council to be Held on Tuesday, 10 December 2019 ...*, Council meetings, Ku-ring-gai Council, 10 December 2019

<sup>2</sup> ‘6 Springdale Road, Killara NSW 2071’, Realestate View, circa November 2019, <[www.realestateview.com.au/real-estate/6-springdale-road-killara-nsw/property-details-sold-residential-12895531/](http://www.realestateview.com.au/real-estate/6-springdale-road-killara-nsw/property-details-sold-residential-12895531/)>

<sup>3</sup> Lot 1, DP 505522



Contemporary aerial of the subject site, outlined in red, and suburban surrounds.  
(Source: Eagleview, August 2019)



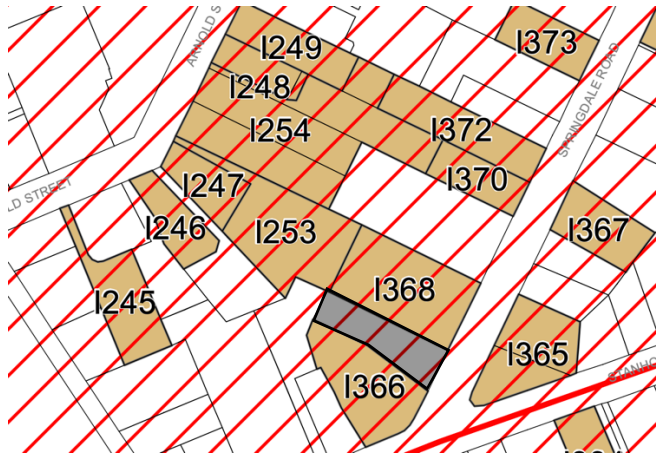
The subject site viewed from Springdale Road.



View to the rear elevation of the subject building.

## 4.0 Heritage Status

Before the IHO, the site was already subject to heritage controls. This situation was and is due to its location in the Springdale Conservation Area (C21) and its proximity to a cluster of several heritage items—all of which are listed as places of local significance under Schedule 5 of the *Ku-ring-gai Local Environmental Plan 2015* (KLEP).



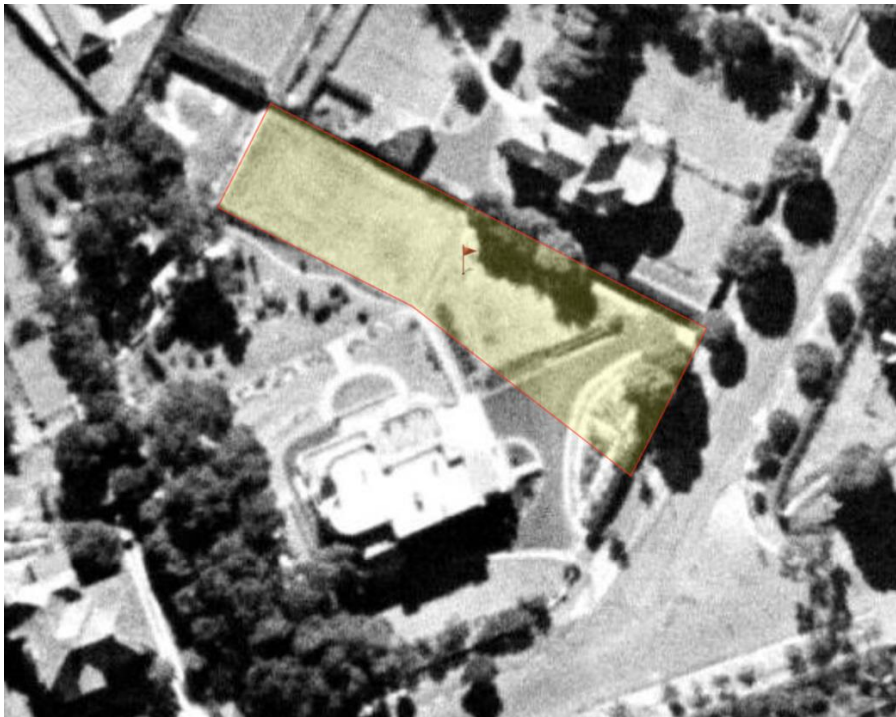
Extract from Heritage Map HER\_014 —the subject site is shaded black; red hatching depicts the Springdale Conservation Area; and tan shading individual heritage items. (Source: KLEP)

As far as it is known, the site was not identified by any previous heritage study commissioned by Council or recommended by a member of the community or outside expert. This absence of mention includes the Permual Murphy Alessi Study, *Review of Potential Heritage Items from the Post War Heritage* (2011), which examined multiple designs by Ken Woolley, or the study of the Springdale Conservation Area (circa 2019). While acknowledging Council's comments that the thrust of the latter study was on housing from the Federation and Interwar period, it is noteworthy that the independent heritage consultants seemingly had no record or reference to—for the sake of argument—the visually distinctive house at the subject site.

While non-statutory in nature, the inventories of pertinent architectural/heritage/community bodies are often strong indicators of public or expert recognition of a place, however none are known to acknowledge the Eastment House. Despite noting twelve other designs by Ken Woolley as notable, the Australian Institute of Architects' Register of Significant Buildings in NSW does not identify the subject site. It is also not recorded in the National Trust (NSW) Register or the Building Register of DOCOMOMO Australia or seemingly the publications/website of the Ku-ring-gai Historical Society.

## 5.0 Summary of Facts

- In July 1963, the subject property was excised from the extensive private grounds of 4 Springdale Road and acquired by husband and wife, Barry and Margaret Eastment. At this stage, the subject land encompassed the private tennis court of no. 4 as well as part of its curved driveway, lawn, shrubs and some trees. It also appears to have been terraced in landform, with the front section level with the street with a slight drop to the rear part.



1943 aerial photograph of the subject land, shaded yellow. (Source: SIX Maps viewer, NSW Spatial Services)

- While living at 11 Yirgella Avenue, East Killara, Barry engaged the company of Archer Mortlock Murry & Woolley to prepare a design for a family house at the subject allotment. The first known set of drawings was prepared in January 1971, a second in April 1974 and the final set, July 1975. Bar minor modifications, these drawings are the same.
- Stamped Plans from Ku-ring-gai Municipal Council (dated 1 April 1971) include several conditions, pertinent of which this case, particularly in the context of the minor works application made by the new owners (although not the focus of this report), follow:
  - 'If the weatherboards are not western red cedar or Canadian redwood, treated with a heavy body stain, they are to be painted with a pigmented paint and not oiled, stained, varnished or similarly treated'.
  - 'The height of the brick fence on the front boundary is not to exceed 6'0" above footpath level'.
- The Eastment House was built and completed in 1977.
- In regard to the design and development of the house, Margaret has—unequivocally—stated:
  - that Ken Woolley had 'little to no involvement in the interior design and construction' of the house, which was instead carried out by herself and Barry as the owner and builder. This equated with Barry and Margaret making *all* choices concerning the interior, and selecting *all* internal products, such as joinery, tiling, floor coverings, paintwork, kitchen cabinetry, light fixtures, and general material, finishes, colour schemes, and were jointly responsible for their installation,

- Ken Woolley's engagement and involvement at the Eastment house was limited to the exterior structure, and filtered through herself and Barry who had the final say in all design decisions. He did not supervise the construction, directly or otherwise, or visit the site during construction,
  - it was always her intent and that of Barry as well as Ken Woolley to construct a front brick fence as part of the submitted DA design proposal and as DA approved by Council on 7<sup>th</sup> April 1971 (stamped plans),
  - that exterior walls, referred to by Margaret as 'common brick', were always intended to be either rendered/painted or just painted. The external western red cedar timber roof cladding was always intended to be a natural stain or any pigmented paint colour, as per the DA approval by Council on 7<sup>th</sup> April 1971 (stamped plans). For various reasons at the time, the Eastments just never got around to doing so,
  - the kitchen benchtops were all replaced with rock maple in circa 1986,
  - the spa was added in circa 1988, and
  - the external western red cedar timber roof cladding was replaced in 2015 by an inexpensive finished timber from Bunnings,
- The Eastments remained in occupation at the subject site. Barry died in 2017, and Margaret placed the house on the market in late 2019. Soon after it was purchased by the current owner.

## Ken Woolley

Sydney born, Ken Frank Charles Woolley (1933-2015) studied architecture at the University of Sydney, where he graduated in 1955. He worked as a trainee in the office of the NSW Government Architect and undertook further scholarship-funded studies in the United Kingdom and Europe. Woolley's early designs—for instance, the Chapel for St Margaret's Hospital, Darlinghurst (1955-8, in collaboration with his senior at the Government Architect office, Harry Rembert) and at the University of Sydney, the Chemistry School (1956-8) and Fisher Library (1962, jointly with T. E. O'Mahony)—were well regarded. Woolley's reputation as a gifted architect was bolstered by the construction of his own home, referred to as Woolley House I (1962), at 34 Bullecourt Avenue, Mosman.<sup>4</sup>

Soon after its construction, Woolley entered private practice with Archer Mortlock & Murry as a partner in 1964. Upon attaining a directorship in 1969, it became Archer Mortlock Murray & Woolley, before once again morphing in 1983 into Archer Mortlock & Woolley. It was during this latter phase, with Woolley now chairman and design director, that his personal 'stamp' prevailed within the practice's design approach. By 2006, he had departed the firm to set up Woolley Consulting.

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<sup>4</sup> Unless otherwise noted, the following derives from Peter Webber, 'Woolley, Ken', in Philip Goard and Julie Willis, eds., *The Encyclopedia of Australian Architecture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp.775-6

Over his career, Woolley was responsible for a myriad of projects in both Australia and internationally—to name a few: the Australian Embassy in Bangkok, ADFA Cadets Mess, Parramatta Federal Court, navy buildings at Garden Island, Park Hyatt hotel, Town Hall House and Sydney Square, Australia's Pavilion at Exp 88, the State Library of Victoria, the ABC Radio building and Goosens Hall, 2000 Olympics Sports Hall, Homebush Hockey Stadium, the Agricultural Society Dome and the Control Town at Sydney Airport. His ambit, interest and skillset ranged far beyond domestic design, although between 1962 and 1977 some 3,500 of Woolley's commissioned project house designs for Pettit & Sevit were built in Australia (mainly on Sydney's north shore). Between 1972 and 1983, over 600 of his house designs were built in Canberra.<sup>5</sup>

He also achieved distinction for leadership and educational activity in the field of Australian architecture and was the recipient of several prestigious architectural and Australian awards.

Foremost amongst Woolley's domestic portfolio were the houses he designed for his family—Woolley House I, the two in Paddington (1980, 1987) and a Palm Beach holiday house (1985-6). Typical of his idiosyncratic approach, all were notably different in form and expression, although unified by their sensitive response to their bushland settings. The varied nature of his work is an acknowledged challenge in categorising his work, which only appears achievable in broad-brush strokes:

The architecture of Ken Woolley is memorable because of the integrity of its structure and form, its exquisite refinement of detail and materials, and its urbanity. Woolley has never been hostage to stylistic ideology; he has never been captive to the dogma of modernism or obscure Postmodern rhetoric. His work cannot be categorised, and indeed is so diverse that few buildings could readily be identified as the architecture of Woolley by the uninformed observer.<sup>6</sup>

Woolley saw himself as a 'late modernist', influenced by several diverse transnational sources: Alvar Aalto, Mies van der Rohe, Le Corbusier, regionalism, the 'New Brutalism', etc.<sup>7</sup> It is not irrelevant in the context of what is being argued that Woolley explicitly stated that he did not consider himself to be associated with, never mind a 'founder' of, the so-called 'Sydney School',<sup>8</sup> or discuss it at all in any of his many publications, or the obituary for the *Sydney Morning Herald*, which he co-authored.<sup>9</sup>

## 6.0 Heritage Potential

The IHO was recommended because Council's officers believed that the Eastment House had:

high potential as a local heritage item for its architectural significance as a very intact example of the Late Twentieth Century Sydney Regional architectural style designed by renowned architect and one of the founders of the Sydney School of architecture Ken Woolley. [*Preliminary Heritage Assessment*]

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<sup>5</sup> Ken Woolley, *Australian architects: Ken Woolley* (Red Hill, ACT: Royal Australian Institute of Architects, Education Division, 1985), p.32

<sup>6</sup> Webber, 'Woolley, Ken', p.176

<sup>7</sup> Ken Woolley with Harriet Vetich, 'Ken Woolley: Early-onset atheist's designs attained heritage status', *Sydney Morning Herald* [obituary], 11 December 2015, <[www.smh.com.au/national/ken-woolley-earlyonset-atheists-designs-attained-heritage-status-20151211-gll1h3.html](http://www.smh.com.au/national/ken-woolley-earlyonset-atheists-designs-attained-heritage-status-20151211-gll1h3.html)>, para. 11

<sup>8</sup> 'Interview with Ken Woolley', *Transition*, vol. 21, September 1987, passim

<sup>9</sup> Woolley and Vetich, 'Ken Woolley: Early-onset atheist's designs attained heritage status', para. 20

As part of the *Preliminary Heritage Assessment*, a 'brief' assessment against the NSW heritage assessment criteria was made and a draft Statement of Significance prepared. The latter states:

The house at 6 Springdale Road, Killara may have local or state cultural significance based upon the historical association with the designer architect Ken Woolley, aesthetic significance as a representative example of the Late Twentieth-Century Sydney Regional architectural style and be potentially rare due to its mostly intact interior.

The following discussion examines the Council's argument and applies the criteria, with a focus on those specified, to the subject site.

## Intactness

Prevalent in the *Preliminary Heritage Assessment* is the judgement that the Eastment House, in particular its interior, is intact—although to what level varies ('high level of intactness', 'mostly intact', 'very intact'). An accurate assessment of the integrity of the subject building is vital and underpins both its perceived aesthetic, representative and rarity value.

A review of the original approved architectural drawings shows that the preliminary assessment of intactness made by Council is overstated, particularly in regard to the interior.

Following is a summary of the changes that have occurred from the Council stamped plans for the subject building since approval:

- external western red cedar timber roof cladding was replaced in 2015 by an inexpensive finished timber from Bunnings,
- loss of original partial timber and vinyl flooring throughout and replacement with carpet,
- replacement of vinyl floor to kitchen (vinyl floors only last, on average, ten to twenty years),
- loss of original owner-selected/installed kitchen configuration, joinery, including benchtops, most appliances etc.—replaced in circa 1986 with existing,
- multiple adjustments and alterations have occurred to the original level 2 'En-suite bath' to Master Bedroom, including in the secondary bathroom,
- loss of original 'Cloaks' room, converted into a singular toilet area,
- alterations to original 'Cellar' walls, tiled flooring and later introduction of a bar area,
- alterations of original level 1 'WC',
- loss of the original 'Games' parquetry timber flooring,
- loss of original 'Gallery' to 'Dining Room' balustrade to level change (now non-compliant),
- introduction of a new balustrade to the stairs to and from the 'Dining Room', 'Sunroom', 'Living Room' and 'Study',
- addition of the spa to the court yard, and extension (and likely replacement) of timber deck area,
- alterations to original timber joinery to bedrooms and 'Family Room',
- modification of original laundry configuration,
- later installation of some customised/built-in elements and several lighting fittings,
- replacement of rear timber deck and supports (now rotting and non-compliant),
- alterations to the level 3 façade and windows,
- alterations to multiple external timber sliding doors, and
- tilt garage door alteration.



Collectively, this degree of modification rises above that of small-scale, incremental change and exceeds what one would typically expect for a residence occupied, until recently, by a single family, over only four decades. The originality of the interior is, at best, moderate. This realisation, coupled with the lack of Woolley's involvement regarding the internal design product selection, joinery, finishes and materials, finished paint colour schemes and construction (refer to the following section), extinguishes the supposition of the *Preliminary Heritage Assessment* that the interior is uncommon or rare for its high intactness an architect-designed 1970s space (Criterion [g]).

I also stress Margaret's instruction that it was always the intention of theirs and Woolley's to paint the external brickwork and erect a masonry fence to the front boundary, as designed, submitted and approved by Council. The fact that these design aims were never realised does, in fact meaningfully reduce the integrity of the existing exterior. Put plainly, the Eastment House does not present in the way it was designed and approved.

These findings concerning intactness are problematic for any existing or future argument that the Eastment House expresses a degree of importance commensurate with individual heritage status, be it local or state. This diminishment of integrity is, even more, worrying for a late 20<sup>th</sup>-century suburban house. In my opinion, any building that derives from the relatively recent past and from the class of 1970s suburban housing must be *remarkably* intact in order to justify its recommendation as an individual heritage item.

I note that the majority of internal additions and alterations are not easily reversible and would result in a raft of complicated issues, the introduction of a tract of new fabric and unreasonable burden on the occupants. Ironically, the fulfilment of the uncompleted design intention to the exterior (white paint and front fence) is readily achievable.

### **Criterion (b)—Associational**

The *Preliminary Heritage Assessment* argues that the subject building has a strong association with a 'renowned' Australian architect, Ken Woolley. The pertinent definition of this criterion states:

An item has strong or special association with the life or works of a person, or groups of persons, of importance in NSW's cultural or natural history (or the cultural or natural history of the local area).

The importance of Ken Woolley is not disputed. The pertinent issue is whether the subject building is assessable as demonstrating a 'strong' or 'special' link with Woolley's role as an outstanding architect. I discuss the issue of the so-called 'Sydney School' in conjunction with aesthetic significance (see below).

I believe it a self-evident proposition that not every house designed by Woolley can be ascribed with heritage value or deemed worthy of proscriptive conservation. At the domestic level solely, the number of designs he was *directly* involved with is staggering. The establishment of a high bar is necessary. Such an instrument would have to revolve around a detailed comparative understanding of Woolley's work in order to 'rank' his surviving examples. This is admittedly difficult to complete on a state-wide basis but could be achieved at the municipality scale.

If the Council is concerned with exploring the identification of late 20<sup>th</sup>-century architect-designed houses, then it should tackle the issues holistically and collectively by examining Woolley and other architects of his ilk/significance production in the area. I submit that this is the *only* effective way of analysing this layer properly from a heritage management perspective. Doing it ad hoc, on a site by site basis, is not supportive of sound-built heritage management. Such an exercise is doubly important for a relatively recent and popular architect, one who's architectural work and influence has been predominantly scrutinised by his generally respectful contemporaries.

A cursory search shows that multiple Woolley designed houses are already included under Schedule 5 of the KLEP (for instance: 15A and 23 Richmond Avenue, St Ives). It is possible that Council officers may know of more. I also note that a house Woolley designed for Brian Pettit (of Pettit & Sevitt) at 35A Lochville Street, Wahroonga that was recommended for heritage listing in 2011 by the *Review of Kuring-gai Potential Heritage Items from the Post-War Period*, has not been carried out. In another case, an outwardly intact house at 20 Campbell Drive, Wahroonga is also known to be a rare example of Woolley's MkV project home model for Pettit & Sevitt (built in 1967). This model was the 'largest and most expensive' available from the company—few were built, and only 15 are known to survive in NSW and the ACT. It is not subject to an IHO or known to be undergoing heritage assessment despite its recent sale.<sup>10</sup> I proffer that upon comparison with the subject site, any of these listed or unlisted examples are more significant specimens of Ken Woolley's work.



(Above) Photograph of western elevation (façade) of Woolley's design for Brian Pettit at 35A Lochville Street, Wahroonga. Note restrained and elegant roof line and landscaped setting.

(Source: realestate.com.au, 2012)

(Left) Contemporary aerial of 35A Lochville Street, indicated by the red arrow.

(Source: EagleView, November 2019)

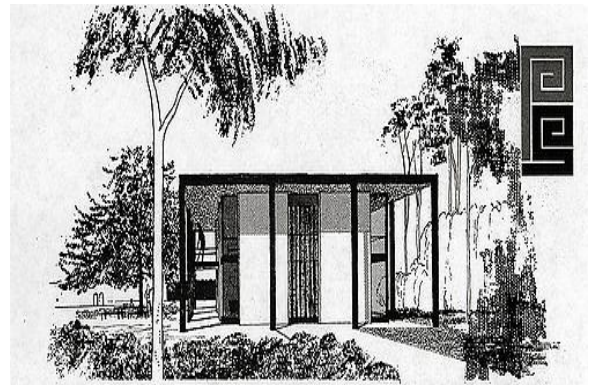
<sup>10</sup> ModernHouse, <[www.modernhouse.co/listings/pettit-sevitt-mkv/](http://www.modernhouse.co/listings/pettit-sevitt-mkv/)>

# Touring the Past

HISTORY • HERITAGE • INTERPRETATION



Photograph of 20 Campbell Drive. Note bushland setting. (Source: ModernHouse, <[www.modernhouse.co/listings/pettit-sevitt-mkv/](http://www.modernhouse.co/listings/pettit-sevitt-mkv/)>)



Undated original drawing of the MkV model, used at 20 Campbell Drive. (Source: ModernHouse, <[www.modernhouse.co/listings/pettit-sevitt-mkv/](http://www.modernhouse.co/listings/pettit-sevitt-mkv/)>)

The above is not put forward to irk, but rather reinforce that examining the creative/aesthetic output of a practitioner on a state or municipal basis has to be done contextually and comparatively. I think it is also reasonable to pose the question whether enough of a single architect's production is protected within one locality to sufficiently safeguard his or her (and its most him) legacy.

Leaving aside these comparative issues, in the case of the subject site, the evidence does not support a reading of Woolley having been closely involved in the design or construction of the Eastment House. The most that can be said is that he—as a Director of Archer Mortlock Murray & Woolley—collaborated sporadically with Barry Eastment, a professional contract builder, in the development of the house's form and external presentation periodically over the early 1970s. As discussed, Woolley played no role in the design of the interior or selection/placement of finishes, detail, etc. Little is known of Barry's career; however, the strong likelihood is that it would not rise to a level considered heritage noteworthy at either the local or state level.

The exterior of the Eastment House is not an exemplar of Woolley's residential design output—far from it. The subject building does not display his defining restrained/low-key character; for instance, the quiet ensemble of forms that compose his four award-winning family houses.

Instead, the voluminous form and 'busy' character of the roofscape, especially when viewed from the rear yard, is interpretable as the result of an architectural practice attempting to meet the brief set out by a client with a determined vision of realising a substantial abode; albeit, one likely loosely referencing the previous work of Ken Woolley and other so-called 'Sydney School' practitioners, which by the early 1970s was well-established, popular and much-replicated idiom (in no small part due to the publicising of Woolley House I and Woolley's extensive collaboration with Pettit & Sevitt in the mass production of project homes).

This in itself is not unusual. Once novel and distinctive approaches in house design—often established by architects—typically permeate the general market over time they become

conventionalised/mainstreamed. In line with this process, the Eastment House offers some of the visual attributes but little of the logic or authentic character of the design approach at its finest.

I have also not found or reviewed any evidence or indication that the design or completion of the Eastment House signalled any milestone, innovation, change in direction, maturation, etc. in the approach of Woolley or Archer Mortlock Murry & Woolley. Nor has this been demonstrated by the *Preliminary Heritage Assessment*. There also does not appear any indication that in the wake of the subject building's construction that any contemporary observer of matter believed it influential or innovative. Beyond the *Preliminary Heritage Assessment*, the same claim appears true for architectural historians, even those engaged in reassessing late 20<sup>th</sup>-century architecture.

This lack of contemporary recognition may not be a fair point to make for every historical architect, but by the mid-1970s, Woolley was in his early 40s and widely regarded by his peers and the public. The best of his work had long attracted attention. Again, I consider this lack of contemporary scrutiny, celebration or otherwise as telling of Woolley's slender involvement with the design. All indication points to the Eastment House as a run-of-the-mill project for Woolley and the practice; reflective of the fact that even the top-tier regularly up took more ordinary projects to ensure commercial operation.

In the case of Criterion (b), the case that the subject building has a 'strong' or 'special' link with Ken Woolley at either the local or state level is precarious. Taking into account the new evidence considered by this report and the various points raised, I do not see a viable avenue by which the threshold for Criterion (b) could be met.

### **Criterion (c) and Criterion (g)—Aesthetic significance and Representativeness**

The *Preliminary Heritage Assessment* contends that the subject building has aesthetic significance (c). The relevant definitions for these criteria are:

[Aesthetic] An item is important in demonstrating aesthetic characteristics and/or a high degree of creative or technical achievement in NSW (or the local area).

[Representativeness] An item is important in demonstrating the principle characteristics of a class of NSW's cultural or natural places; or cultural or natural environments (or a class of the local area's cultural or natural places; or cultural or natural environments.)

Firstly, it is difficult to reconcile how a house is supposed to be, on the one hand, aesthetically 'important' or innovative and on the other, broadly illustrative of a particular class of place (in this case, a late 20<sup>th</sup>-century suburban house). Typically, for potential individual heritage items, it is one or the other.

Instances of a single house—particularly one barely a generation old—being proposed for individual listing on the basis that it is generally expressive of its type/class are uncommon.

Placing this issue aside, the *Preliminary Heritage Assessment* appears to suggest that the Eastment House is a good example of the 'Sydney School', sometimes referred to as the Late Twentieth-Century Sydney Regional style. I do not agree.

The very idea of the 'Sydney School' is contentious. Academic Stanislaus Fung, writing in 2008:

Although it has been more than 20 years now since the first publication on this subject appeared, there is no general agreement as to whether a Sydney School ever existed, and what its characteristics are.<sup>11</sup>

In particular, Fung and others, have critiqued the work of architectural historian Jennifer Taylor—who specialised in post-World War II architectural history and did more than any other to advance the idea of a 'Sydney School'—as unjustified, arbitrary and seeking in exceedingly general concepts the gestation of a new style practised by a cadre of Sydney-based architects.<sup>12</sup>

At this point, the best that can be said accurately of the 'Sydney School' is that:

The Sydney School was not a style, a unified movement or a School with a leader and followers ... at this particular time [the 1950s and 1960s], there appeared to be a confluence of commonly held beliefs and ideas, even if the aesthetic bases from which architects were working may have been different.<sup>13</sup>

This regional trend—emergent from the early 1950s and mature by the early 1960s with the completion of Woolley House I and the Johnston House—flowered (allegedly) in opposition to the universalising impersonality of the International Style.<sup>14</sup> This approach was predominantly directed at the personal residences of interested architect or predominantly upper-middle-class clients, although by the late 1960s, it had deep roots also within the project home industry.



Distinguished form of Woolley House I, 1962.  
(Source: DOCOMOMO Australia,  
<<https://docomomoaustralia.com.au/dcmm/woolley-house->>)



*The Johnson House*, Chatswood—designed by occupant the noted architect Richard N. Johnson, built 1963.  
(Source: Author's collection)

The hallmarks of the design are often discussed as:

- modestly scaled buildings,

<sup>11</sup> Stanislaus Fung, "The 'Sydney School'?", in Andrew Leach, Antony Moulis and Nicole Sully, eds., *Shifting Views: Selected Essays on the Architectural History of Australia and New Zealand* (St Lucia, University of Queensland Press, 2008), p32

<sup>12</sup> For instance, Jennifer Taylor, *An Australian Identity: Houses for Sydney 1953-63* (Sydney: University of Sydney, 1972)

<sup>13</sup> Jacqueline Urford, 'The Sydney School', in Philip Goad and Julie Willis, eds., *The Encyclopedia of Australian Architecture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp.p.675

<sup>14</sup> Davina Jackson, 'How the 'Sydney School' changed postwar Australian architecture', *The Conversation*, 28 June 2019, <<https://theconversation.com/how-the-sydney-school-changed-postwar-australian-architecture-114367>>, para. 27

- tailor-designed buildings within a natural landscape setting, which achieve minimal site disturbance (often incorporating *cascading* split-level arrangements),
- employment of materials and building forms that respond to native vegetation and natural terrain,
- a material palette sympathetic to a bushland setting—white painted or clinker brick, tiled roofs, unpainted/oiled/stained timber, glazed tiles,
- self-effacing character and muted streetscape presence (battle-axe properties were well-represented), and
- complicated but studied open-plan interiors with minimal use of corridors, low-level of privacy (employment of screens), and custom-built detail (shelves, tables, beds, cabinets).<sup>15</sup>

The *Preliminary Heritage Assessment* identifies several elements in the design of the Eastment House that are apparently of importance. (At times, perhaps employing overly emotive/subjective language to emphasis such points to the reader—‘soaring high cedar-clad ceilings’, ‘rich cedar coupled with dramatic high [sic] ceilings’, ‘the warmth of wood fireplaces’). Distilled, the character-defining elements—according to Council—are the split-level of the house, timber post-and-beam construction, a responsiveness of the design to the site, honest expression of structure, clerestory window, rugged external palette (brown face brick, timber cladding, tiled roof), open-plan interior featuring exposed brick and oiled/stained timber beams, the fireplace, and a relaxed/informal character. A number of other internal elements were also specified, but as several of these are now identified as later addition/modifications and, in general, not the outcome of Ken Woolley’s design, they are not dealt with below.

In the context of 1970s, these identified components of value at the subject building are too common to underlie any level of distinctiveness or high-quality craftsmanship. By this period, such elements were conventional

Furthermore, the design of the Eastment House lacks the crucial site-hugging quality illustrated by the exemplars of the ‘Sydney School’. The nature of the subject allotment—only faintly undulating and historically deriving from the landscaped grounds of 4 Springdale Road in a highly suburban/established streetscape—prevented any authentic attempt on behalf of the designer to harmonise with or sensitively respond to a ‘natural’ setting. This lack of a challenging site for the design to tackle and blend into poses a major impediment to an interpretation of the subject building as a worthy example of the ‘Sydney School’. Such a facet is intrinsic within all of its celebrated examples. It cannot be said that this design was meaningfully influenced by the qualities of the site. Particularly telling in this respect is that the split-level nature of the house (hardly pronounced—compared to the Johnson House or Woolley House I) is perpendicular to the slight fall of the subject land. Its siting then is opposed to the remnant natural quality of the topography and not responsive to it at all. Simply, a mid-1970s infill house was situated between the retained tennis court and established suburban street.

At a pinch, the subject building’s external materiality could be described as ‘earthy’, consisting as it does of brown brick and timber. However, it lacks the tactile and textured character of the more rough/strong-featured ‘Sydney School’ examples. Nonetheless, in the complete deficiency of an even

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<sup>15</sup> Jennifer Taylor, *Australian architecture since 1960* (Sydney: Law Book Co., 1986), *passim*

vaguely bushland setting, it is difficult for the casual observer to interpret this palette as consciously responsive. Arguably, in the absence of such a surround, with the prevailing environ decidedly suburban, the palette is at risk of being ‘read’ by the casual observer as low in quality and selected for reasons of economy.

The Eastment House is backwards-looking and critically deficient in, amongst other elements, the key component of being more than a tokenistic reaction to a ‘natural’ environment. For these reasons, I do not consider the subject site meets the threshold for Criterion (c).

As discussed, representative significance alone is rarely pursued alone with this typology to substantiate an individual heritage listing. If it was, the onus would be on those making the argument to convincingly demonstrate why the Eastment House displays the principal characteristics of a mid-1970s suburban house better than any of the multitude of compatible houses, but also why this class/typology is considered important to the built landscape and ‘narrative’ of the municipality or state in the first place.

### Other criteria

The *Preliminary Heritage Assessment* does not refer to Criterion (a), (d) or (e). This is understandable, as patently a 43-year old suburban house of this nature would face profound issues in definitively revealing historical, community or research significance at a sufficient level to meet either the relevant state or local thresholds.

Further study is unlikely to yield information that makes applying Criterion (a), (d) or (e) viable.

## 7.0 Summarised Issues

Council’s preliminary findings have been included on the State Heritage Inventory (SHI) as part of the IHO process in an entry on the Eastment House. The following corrections/issues/key points are noted:

Eastment House SHI	Correction
<i>1970 house designed by Ken Woolley and built for Mr and Mrs Eastment</i>	The house was designed periodically over the early 1970s between Ken Woolley and his clients Barry and Margaret Eastment, who exercised a dominant influence on the visual outcome, including the design and completion of all internal spaces.
<i>Representative example of the Sydney School Architectural movement</i>	It is uncritical to refer to the ‘Sydney School’—a far from proven or accepted ‘style’—as an architectural movement. More accurately, the design of the house is describable as an example of a broad and difficult to pin down late 20 <sup>th</sup> -century regionalism. Further, the 1977 construction date of the subject building situates it well outside the gestation of this approach (the late 1940s and 1950s) as well as

	<p>its maturation over the 1960s. Upon closer inspection, the house is not found to be a 'representative example' of the so-called 'Sydney School'. While it could be said to exhibit a limited array of visual attributes similar to the excellent and earlier examples often associated with the 'style' it lacks its principal characteristics (site responsiveness, bushland setting, modesty of scale, rough/textured surfaces, etc.).</p>
<p><i>High level intact exterior and original interiors – a rarity</i></p>	<p>The original design intent of the exterior was never fulfilled (paint brick walls white, construct front boundary fence), which reduces the integrity of the Eastment House. What was built to the exterior has generally survived, although timber elements have been replaced. The interior has been subject to widespread change. It is not pristine. Further, the interior is not rare but rather a modified example of a typical mid-1970s living space that was thought up and implemented by the original occupants.</p>
<p><i>Located within Springdale Road Heritage Conservation Area (KLEP 2015 C1) but overlooked in a heritage study that was predominatntly [sic] on Federation and Inter-War residences</i></p>	<p>Clarification is needed for this comment. Was the Eastment House ignored completely by the review? Was it classified as a non-contributory or neutral property to the Springdale Road HCA? If no comment was made, why was no note or recommendation for future study made by the engaged/independent consultant about the apparently visually distinctive and 'Sydney School' representative house at 6 Springdale Road?</p>
<p><i>6 Springdale Road, Killara (also known as the Eastment House) is a c.1976 split-level Sydney School style house designed by renowned architect, Ken Woolley.</i></p>	<p>The house was constructed in 1977. Ken Woolley was not the sole designer at the subject site. He did not design the interior of the house.</p>
<p><i>The dwelling is predominately single storey with high ceilings but contains an office and an additional bedroom in the roof space, and a rumpus room, garden shed and bar in the lower level. It is constructed of smooth brown face brickwork with timber infill panels above, timber framed windows, timber cladding and a grey brown skillion tiled roof with copper gutters. It has asymmetrical massing with a split-level design that features a prominent clerestory window, which maximises the light to the interiors and integrates the indoor/outdoor entertaining spaces.</i></p>	<p>Several of these specified elements are not original or have been replaced (with similar cost-effective/low-quality materials). See Section 6.0 above.</p> <p>I would dispute the description of 'prominent' for the clerestory window. Their location within the design is based on design logic rather than an attempt to gain attention. Nor can they alone be considered as instrumental in integrating 'indoor/outdoor entertaining spaces'. Clerestory windows were not an unusual feature during the heyday of the 'Sydney School' and certainly not by the mid-1970s.</p>



# Touring the Past

HISTORY • HERITAGE • INTERPRETATION

<p><i>The property retains its original gourmet kitchen fitted with rock maple and European beech cabinetry, as well as striking original light fittings, soaring high cedar-clad ceilings, exposed brickwork and solid cedar entry door</i></p>	<p>Whether the original kitchen met the standard of a 'gourmet kitchen' (which I take to mean as a state-of-the-art culinary setup with a range of special features) is open to interpretation. However, fortunately that line of debate is unnecessary as the kitchen has been heavily modified/changed—including kitchen tops and cabinetry. It is not clear which light fittings are deemed 'striking' (surely an adjective with a high bar?) but the more exotic lights to the interior are later additions. Outside the fire place, there is no exposed brickwork to the interior.</p>
<p><i>It has a striking visual character and presence with its use of rich cedar coupled with dramatic high ceilings, curved forms and the warmth of wood fireplaces.</i></p>	<p>The interior may have been 'striking' if it was constructed in the 1950s or 1960s and was substantially intact. As a product of the mid-1970s, it is decidedly standard. Are the ceilings 'dramatically' high for a late 20<sup>th</sup>-century house in an upper-middle-class context? I would describe the interior as more angular than curved. Do not all working fireplaces offer warmth?</p>
<p><i>Rooms include a master suite with dressing room, ensuite and access to jacuzzi courtyard, children's wing with three double bedrooms and original family bathroom, upper and lower-level home offices with custom-built fixtures/drawers, entertainer's deck overlooking a grass tennis court in need of refurbishment, and court-side games room with wet bar and wine cellar.</i></p>	<p>Such a configuration is typical for a late 20<sup>th</sup>-century house. The 'jacuzzi courtyard' is the result of a modification. Both bathrooms have been altered. Some of the custom-built fixtures/drawers are later additions and do not compare well to the rustic/bespoke/textured internal built-in elements that characterise earlier and better examples of the 'Sydney School'. The rear outside deck has likely been replaced. The tennis court preceded the house. The bar is a later addition.</p>
<p><i>There is no fence to the front of the property with low perimeter plantings and garden beds. There is a double garage to front of the property with brick paved driveway.</i></p>	<p>The original design/approved plans show that there <i>should</i> be a masonry front fence.</p>
<p><i>Historical Notes</i></p>	<p>In brief, the house was constructed in 1977, and it cannot be described as 'highly intact' as there have been numerous internal modifications. See discussion throughout this report.</p>

## 8.0 Conclusion

As the conclusions I draw on the subject are based on the foundation of previously unseen evidence, they understandably run counter to those made in Council's *Preliminary Heritage Assessment*. In my estimation, the closer analysis allowed by this material proves—and amply so—that the subject building does not meet *any* of the 'tests' interwoven into the NSW heritage assessment criteria.

Respectfully, I submit that the Eastment House does not reach the threshold for inclusion as an individual item of environmental heritage to either the NSW State Heritage Register or the KLEP.

At the risk of stating the obvious, the subject site is already practically affected by heritage controls due to its location in the Springdale HCA and near encirclement by individual heritage items. This context means that any future external work would trigger an assessment of heritage impact. 'Heritage' would not be silenced at the Eastment House if the subject site was not declared an individual heritage item.

If one of the critical motivations behind the decision of the Council to applying for the IHO was the protection of what was perceived as a highly intact architect-designed interior so that further assessment could be undertaken, then this action has served its statutory purpose. The interior has now been established as fashioned entirely by its original occupants, Barry and Margaret Eastment, and not by Ken Woolley. Nor, in any sense, can this internal space be assessed as remarkably or even largely intact. As noted, any argument that the interior of a mid-1970s suburban house is generally representative of its type/period is not, in isolation, reasonable justifiable for listing a place as an individual heritage item so as to apply internal controls. If that were the case, a veritable tide of broadly representative late 20<sup>th</sup>-century interiors would overwhelm the NSW heritage management system.

Lastly, we must be wary of falling into the trap of the aesthete and seek to promote/popularise buildings that some of us believe to look 'nice', or are currently in vogue, or linked—however shallowly—to a 'renowned' architect.



PATRICK WILSON

B.A (Hist. Hons.), M. Cultural Heritage

M. ICOMAS, Pro Hist PHA (NSW + VIC), M. IAIA, M. SAHANZ, M. Interps Aus, M. Nat Trust (NSW)

**Heritage Consultant & Professional Historian**

Touring the Past

**APPENDIX A—Correspondence received from Margaret Eastment**

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**APPENDIX B—Stamped/Original Plans**

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Just a few notes on 6 Springdale

Ken Woolley drew up the plans for our home

He did not supervise or visit the site during construction

The house was built by our family building company

All joinery was also manufactured by our building company except for the kitchen

All internal finishes were selected by us – tiling, colours, paintwork, kitchen  
cabinetry, floor coverings, light fixtures etc.

It was intended the common brickwork be either rendered and painted or just  
painted

Spa was added about 1988



**With Compliments**

*Margaret,*

3/2 Milray Street  
Lindfield NSW 207  
4 March 2020

Ku-Ring-Gai Council  
Heritage Department  
Attn: Anthony  
Pacific Highway  
Gordon NSW 2071

Dear Sir

Re: 6 Springdale Road Killara 2071

I note the new owners of my family home wish to cosmetically update the existing house by painting the brickwork white, painting timber windows and doors white, spraying the roof tiles dark grey and painting the garage door and gable cladding.

It was always intended that the brickwork be either rendered and painted or just painted, hence the choice of common rather than face bricks. and that the original architect designed (and I believe Development Approved) brick fence be erected.

I wish to point out that the home was designed by our architect with all the plans and associated paperwork, but that construction was by our own building company and the architect was not engaged to supervise the build and was not on site. Choices of internal fittings, finishes and colours were selected by us.

I appreciate that the home, which is now 44 years old, needs updating to meet the needs of a young growing family.

Yours sincerely  
Margaret Eastment

*2 Milray Street  
Lindfield. NSW. 2070*

5 February 2020

Mr Josh Leahy  
6 Springdale Road  
Killara NSW 2071

Dear Josh,

**6 SPRINGDALE ROAD, KILLARA**

As requested, I am writing to confirm that I have not had any communication with Kuring-gai Council regarding any heritage matter or assessment relating to the above mentioned property.

I can also confirm that at no time have I, or any member of my family, spoken to or communicated with Council in relation to any heritage matter relating to 6 Springdale Road, Killara. Nor have I offered an invitation to anyone from Kuring-gai Council to inspect the property in relation to any heritage issue regarding the property.

I understand Council has concerns about your planned works including painting the exterior of the property. I would like to inform you that when the house was built 43 years ago, it was always the intent, by us as the owner/builder, and the architect's wish, that the external 'common bricks' be painted and for a front fence to be erected.

I hope this clarifies the situation and I hope you can commence your works to refresh to property as soon as possible.

Regards,



Margaret Eastment

# KU-RING-GAI MUNICIPAL COUNCIL

Building Application No. 71/1280 Approved subject to the requirements of the Local Government Act, 1919, and Ordinances, and to the conditions specified hereunder, and such additional conditions as may be endorsed on the approved plan.  
The approval of Council is valid

for 12 months from 7-4-1971.

F. E. WATSON  
Clerk

Per .....  
Building Surveyor.

- (1) POSITION OF BUILDING TO BE FIXED ON THE SITE BY COUNCIL'S BUILDING SURVEYOR.
- (2) The approved plan must not be departed from except when written permission is obtained from the Council.
- (3) Builder's shed NOT to be erected until building operations have been commenced. Shed must be demolished when building operations have been completed.
- (4) No buildings or structures of any kind, including garages, will be permitted to be erected in front of the building alignment.
- (5) Provide a suitable crossing and covering protection over Council's gutter and footpath as directed by the Building Surveyor.

**Notes:**  
a. Fence levels to be obtained from Council's Engineer prior to erection of same.  
b. Application to be made for Council to construct an access crossing at a cost as assessed by the Engineer.

c. Payment of all road opening fees as assessed by Council's Officers.

- (6) Front fence and side boundary fences to the building alignment of the dwelling, or a distance of 30 feet, whichever be the less, to be erected in brick, stone, concrete, post and rail with chain or strand wire, or other approved design to a height not exceeding three feet. There is a special schedule for corner blocks which may be obtained from Council's Engineer.
- (7) Concrete footings under 1'1" and 9" walls to be not less than 2'4" x 12" and under 4'1" walls, not less than 18" x 12" reinforced with 7 and 5 rods, 3/4" diameter to each respective footing with 3/4" diameter stirrups at 3' 0" centres.

or Concrete beam footings to 1'1" and 9" walls to be 16" x 14" on edge, and under 4'1" walls, 14" x 12" on edge, reinforced with 8 and 6 rods 3/4" diameter respectively supported on 10" diameter piers at not more than 6' 0" centres, or permitting engineering drawings of beams.  
or Brick footings under 1'1" and 9" walls to be 22" x 18" x 20" courses and under 4'1" walls, 1'11" x 2'14" x 2'9" courses set in cement and reinforced with "Brickbat" or other similar materials.  
or Stone foundations to have a base course all through stones 27" x 12" thick and stone walling to have 25 per cent. of through stones.

or Brick Footings under 4'1" walls to timber framed dwellings to be 1'14" course, and 2'9" courses set in cement.

- (8) All rooms to have a window with a glass area of not less than 1/10th respective floor area, or 10 sq. feet, whichever is greater.
- (9) Habitable rooms to have a floor area of not less than 80 sq. feet, and laundries not less than 30 sq. feet.
- (10) Provide fixed ventilation direct to external air to all bathrooms, shower rooms, toilets and laundries, internal ventilators to be located near ceiling or as directed. External ventilators to be located in walls immediately below eaves line, or as directed by Council's Officer.

(11) Lay approved dampcourse one course above concrete and solid floors.

- (12) Chimneys to be properly parged to full height of flue.
- (13) Insert four 9" x 6" air vents in walls of all garages at or near floor level. For double garages insert six

(14) Provide a proper structure as temporary closet accommodation for workmen, in accordance with the attached notice.

- (15) Roof water to be taken to street gutter in sealed pipes where possible. Otherwise to be dealt with as directed by Council's Officers.
- (16) Where the floor of a garage, laundry, lavatory or other room is below the existing ground level a sub-soil drain must be constructed to below floor level between the walls and the excavated ground and connected to road drains or to the street.

(17) Where a room or room part is to be used as a store, the main door shall have a minimum ceiling height of 7' 0", and be sealed from the dwelling with a fire resistant ceiling. Laundries in basement areas will be similarly treated.

- (18) The walls of any main building (including any garage, etc. which forms part of or is attached thereto) shall be no closer than 3' 0" to the adjacent side boundaries. The eaves gutter or roof overhang shall be no closer than 2' 3" to these boundaries.

**UNSEWERED AREAS.**

- (19) All sewage water to be dealt with as directed by Council's Officers, 48 hours' notice in writing to be given to Council for appointment on the site with Council's Officer to give such direction.
- (20) All drainage and plumbing work to be of the standard required by the Metropolitan Water Sewerage and Drainage Board's regulations and to be installed in accordance with the Sanitary Plumbing and Drainage Regulations. Pipelines involved in this special restriction shall be laid in accordance with the requirements of Council's Chief Health Inspector and the Board of Health relating to the installation of a septic tank and the shallow disposal of effluent and sewage waste water.

(21) Waste water from kitchen sink to discharge directly into a grease arrester and thence into a gully trap.

- (22) A separate application, plans, block plans and specifications to be submitted in triplicate and approved before a septic tank may be installed and prior to building operations being commenced.

**SPECIAL NOTICE:**  
COUNCIL MUST BE GIVEN 48 HOURS' NOTICE IN WRITING WHEN FOOTINGS ARE FORMED, DAMPCOURSE LAID, ROOF TIMBERS FIXED IN POSITION, PREMISES COMPLETED AND BEFORE DRAINS ARE COVERED IN, FOR THE PURPOSES OF INSPECTION IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE PROVISIONS OF ORDINANCE 71.

.....  
Chief Health Inspector.

*[Signature]*





**MEROGGAN MINERAL COUNCIL**

Business Application No. **7-230**

APPROVED subject to:-

- (1) The provisions of the Local Government Act, 1972, and the Meroggan Mineral Council (Amendment) Regulations, 1972.
- (2) The Schedule of Conditions of Approval attached to this Approval.
- (3) The amended Conditions relating to the proposed works, and any other conditions which may be imposed on the proposed works in accordance with anything in the country's planning legislation.

DATE OF APPROVAL: 7/4/1977

NOTE: This Approval is Subject to the Conditions contained in Council's Sheet attached to the Approved Application. Amendments to the Conditions may be made at any time, subject to the approval of the Council.

1. The proposed works shall be carried out in accordance with the approved plans and specifications, and shall be completed within the time specified in the approved plans and specifications.
2. The proposed works shall be carried out in accordance with the approved plans and specifications, and shall be completed within the time specified in the approved plans and specifications.
3. The proposed works shall be carried out in accordance with the approved plans and specifications, and shall be completed within the time specified in the approved plans and specifications.
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6. The proposed works shall be carried out in accordance with the approved plans and specifications, and shall be completed within the time specified in the approved plans and specifications.
7. The proposed works shall be carried out in accordance with the approved plans and specifications, and shall be completed within the time specified in the approved plans and specifications.

1069.

**W.A. JING**

THESE PLANS ARE TO BE USED FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE PROPOSED WORKS. THE APPLICANT IS RESPONSIBLE FOR OBTAINING ALL NECESSARY PERMITS AND APPROVALS FROM THE RELEVANT AUTHORITIES.

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**RESURGON MINERAL**  
MEMBER OF THE  
MURDOCH GROUP

THESE PLANS ARE TO BE USED FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE PROPOSED WORKS. THE APPLICANT IS RESPONSIBLE FOR OBTAINING ALL NECESSARY PERMITS AND APPROVALS FROM THE RELEVANT AUTHORITIES.



THESE PLANS ARE TO BE USED FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE PROPOSED WORKS. THE APPLICANT IS RESPONSIBLE FOR OBTAINING ALL NECESSARY PERMITS AND APPROVALS FROM THE RELEVANT AUTHORITIES.

**M. W. S. & D. B.**  
SEWER IS NOT AVAILABLE

**M. W. S. & D. B.**  
APPROVED CONDITIONAL TO THE AIR LER  
BEING VENTILATED TO EXTERNAL AIR

SUBJECT TO INVESTIGATION

1069.

THESE PLANS ARE TO BE USED FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE PROPOSED WORKS. THE APPLICANT IS RESPONSIBLE FOR OBTAINING ALL NECESSARY PERMITS AND APPROVALS FROM THE RELEVANT AUTHORITIES.







