

## ANNEXURE

### PROPOSAL TO HERITAGE COUNCIL OF NSW

#### BALMORAL BATHS

##### 1. HISTORY

###### References:

- . Attachment 2 - Submission for Classification in National Trust Register (Section 3).
- . Attachment 3 - Pictorial History of Mosman at Page 86.
- . Attachment 4 - Extract National Trust Register - History
- . Attachment 6 - Mosman Heritage Study, Identification Sheet under heading "Description".
- . Attachment 9 - Newspaper extract  
Daily Telegraph - 19.6.1935

For nearly a century Balmoral Baths have been a popular swimming facility for residents of Mosman and a wide cross-section of Sydney. Successive lessees have provided coaching for both beginners and competitive swimmers, a number of whom have achieved distinction in open competition.

The Baths have always been a centre for competitive swimming and been supported by schools in the district and swimming clubs, i.e. Balmoral Amateur Swimming Club, the Spit Amateur Swimming Club and North Sydney Anzac Memorial Swimming Club, the latter operating all year-round.

In addition to social and family groups, the Baths continue to be a nursery for the annual "Learn-to-swim" campaign in January. Less structured but equally vital, the Baths are used constantly by hundreds of patrons who perform either

SUBMISSION FOR CLASSIFICATION IN NATIONAL TRUST REGISTER

BALMORAL BATHS, THE ESPLANADE, BALMORAL.

1. NAME/USE:

Balmoral Baths

Public sea water swimming baths in use continuously since 1898. Comprises series of piles supporting chain netting below a timber deck, built in U shape, enclosing area of sea water for safe swimming.

Year-round use for swimming by general public, including school groups and swimming clubs which conduct weekly swimming races.

The swimming enclosure, together with changing rooms, shop and caretaker's flat are controlled by Mosman Municipal Council. (As I understand that the MSB own all areas below high water mark they may have an agreement with the local council regarding control and maintenance of the Baths). In 1991 the building comprising changing rooms, shop and flat was closed pending redevelopment of a restaurant on the site (already approved by Mosman Municipal Council). Since closure of changing rooms the swimming enclosure has been opened at each side, allowing free access to the public to swim or walk along a continuous stretch of beach.

The northern side of the Baths deck is divided by a fence. The section outside the baths forms part of a public jetty.

This application seeks classification of the swimming pool enclosure only.

2. ADDRESS/LOCATION

The Esplanade, MOSMAN NSW 2088

Located at southern end of Balmoral Beach between Botanic Road and Plunkett Road and adjacent to property known as Balmoral Marine, 2 The Esplanade, Mosman which is owned by the Maritime Services Board designated Property 2 Maritime Services Board.

3. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

In March 1895 the Mosman Council, newly independent from North Sydney, called for erection of public baths. In July a prize of ten guineas was offered for a design for the baths. Reginald Laidley, a

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surveyor, won. He was requested by the Council to provide plans and specification. (Sydney Morning Herald, 1 July 1895.)

In April 1896 State Government authorised Government to borrow £1000 for construction of the baths. (Sydney Morning Herald 17 July 1896.)

The baths were opened in 1899. They belonged to the Council, but were leased to Mr. H. Shearer for seven years at £52 per annum. The lease holder had to keep the baths in order. (Information from Gavin Souter, historian and journalist, currently writing official history of Mosman, commissioned by the Mosman Municipal Council.)

In June 1935 a gigantic wave wrecked 'Shearer's Baths' at Balmoral. Many of the pylons and the front platform of the lavatories were torn away. (Telegraph 19 June 1935.)

The baths were originally divided into areas for men and women swimmers. (Oral history, local resident.)

In the 1950s the Balmoral Baths were severely damaged by storms. The changing rooms were wrecked and rebuilt in concrete. (now to be rebuilt as a restaurant). In 1974 the baths were again damaged by severe storms which also wrecked the jetty, at that time separate from the Baths. The jetty was subsequently rebuilt by MSB as part of the existing baths enclosure. (Personal observation by the writer)

In spite of periodic damage by storms the Balmoral Baths have been in continuous use for ninety-three years.

#### 4. DESCRIPTION

Balmoral Baths comprises an enclosed area of Middle Harbour at the southern end of Balmoral Beach. It is a U shaped enclosure, comprising a series of concrete and wood piles supporting chain mesh wire below a timber deck. In the deepest area which forms the U shape there are diving blocks for racing, these can be raised and lowered on a pulley system to accommodate the tide heights. The spring diving boards were removed in the 1950s but the diving platform remains as an area slightly lower than the main deck. Five ladders provide access to the water in deep areas. Along the southern side there are timber benches for seating, from which Mosman Council removed the covered area in 1990.

No outbuildings or interiors.

The entire construction comprising the Balmoral Baths should be

considered significant.

It is unlikely that much of the original structure as built in 1899 remains. The present construction is faithful to the original, shape and size of the 1899 construction but is not divided into men's and women's areas.

The condition of the Balmoral Baths is reasonable. The Mosman Municipal Council has maintained the piles adequately, although they are nearly eaten away at present. The netting is sound. The structure is in good condition.

5. BOUNDARY

Balmoral Baths is bounded by sea. No breakwater or similar construction should be erected within at least 100 metres because of danger of siltation.

6. SITE PLAN

See attached.

7. PHOTOGRAPHY

See attached colour 35 mm. slides.

8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Balmoral Baths has heritage significance because it represents a fast disappearing but characteristic construction on the foreshores of Sydney harbour. Harbour swimming pools such as Balmoral Baths have existed in Sydney since the advent of public beach swimming in the late nineteenth century. Two other similar harbour swimming pools in Mosman have disappeared from the Spit and Beauty Point. The same has happened in other harbour beach suburbs. Disappearance of these distinctive local constructions has not been documented to my knowledge. The 93-year life of Balmoral Baths makes it not only a public utility but also a historic feature of the landscape characteristic of Sydney Harbour foreshores.

9. RECOMMENDATION.

Balmoral Baths is significant enough to be listed in the National Trust's Register. It should be maintained by the local government authority or the MSB as a heritage item of a distinct local character.

MOSMAN

Balmoral Baths

The Esplanade

Mosman Municipal Council 2088

Owner: Maritime Services Board

APPROVED 26TH OCTOBER 1992

Authors: P. Bell (local resident), I. Hayes.

Date: August, 1992.

Bibliography: Sydney Morning Herald (1 July 1895; 17 July 1896) Telegraph (19 June 1935).

Gavin Souter's "History of Mosman".

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#### General:

Located at the southern end of Balmoral Beach, and enclosing an area of Middle Harbour, this complex includes the swimming enclosure, and adjacent concrete building (comprising changing rooms, shop, caretaker's flat. This building is currently proposed to be redeveloped as a restaurant). However, this report is concerned only with the swimming pool enclosure.

#### HISTORY:

In March 1895, Mosman Council called for the erection of public baths. A public competition for the design of the Baths was announced and eventually Reginald Laidley, a surveyor, was granted first prize of ten guineas. Council then commissioned Laidley to provide further plans and specification.

The Baths were constructed at a cost of 1000 pounds from State Government funds. The Baths were opened in 1899 under the ownership of the Council, but subsequently leased to a Mr. H. Shearer for seven years at a cost of 52 pounds per annum

In June 1935, a gigantic wave wrecked 'Shearer's Baths'. Many of the pylons and the front platform of the lavatories were torn away. In the 1950s the Baths were severely damaged by storms; the Changing Rooms were damaged and rebuilt in concrete. And again in 1974, the Baths were damaged by severe storms which also wrecked the jetty, at that time separate from the Baths. The jetty was then rebuilt by the MSB as part of the existing Baths enclosure.

**DESCRIPTION:**

A u-shaped enclosure comprising a series of concrete and wood piles, with hardwood timber bearers and joists supporting a timber deck. A chain mesh wire net is suspended along the outermost edges of the jetty and fixed to sea-bed.

General construction employs bolted connections.

Timber deck has timber planks laid flat with 20mm approx. gap between each plank.

In the deepest area which forms the u-shape, there are diving blocks and roped lanes for swimming races; these diving blocks are raised or lowered by a pulley system to accommodate the tide heights. The spring diving boards were removed in the 1950s but the actual diving platform remains as an area slightly lower than the main deck.

Five new tubular steel ladders provide access to the deep water areas.

Timber benches for seating line the southern side; the cover over which was removed by Mosman Municipal Council in 1990.

No outbuildings or interiors.

Although the piles have been adequately maintained by Council, there is evidence of concrete cancer to the concrete piers, and wood/wet rot - due to dampness and absorption of salt from Harbour water - to the timber piers.

The wire netting is in good condition.

The actual timber decking (including bearers/joists) is in sound condition.

**STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE:**

Balmoral Baths has distinct social, cultural and heritage significance. Erected in 1899 with the advent of public swimming, it represents a fast disappearing but characteristic construction on the Harbour foreshores. Harbour pools at the Spit, and Beauty Point no longer remain.

In spite of periodic damage by storms, the Balmoral Baths have been in continuous use for ninety-three years.

The present structure is faithful to the original site, shape and size of the 1899 construction, although it is unlikely that much of the original materials as built in 1899 remains.

The Baths form an important cultural landscape feature of the Sydney Harbour foreshore.