<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study Item/ Area</th>
<th>Old Canberra House</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acton Campus Precinct</td>
<td>LIVERSIDGE Precinct</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building Nos. &amp; Names</td>
<td>73 (Old Canberra House), 73A (Chauffeur’s Cottage), 73B (Garden Shed), 74 (Gardener’s Cottage), Tennis Court &amp; Pavilion, 132 (Crawford School Extension), 37 (Stanner Building)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 1**: Location of the Old Canberra House study area within the ANU Acton Campus site.
**Heritage Ranking**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Building</th>
<th>Ranking</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Old Canberra House Group</td>
<td>Exceptional</td>
<td>Meets criteria for Commonwealth Heritage List</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old Canberra House</td>
<td>Exceptional</td>
<td>Meets criteria for Commonwealth Heritage List</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chauffeur’s Cottage</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Meets criteria for Commonwealth Heritage List</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garden Shed</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Meets criteria for Commonwealth Heritage List</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gardener’s Cottage</td>
<td>Exceptional</td>
<td>Meets criteria for Commonwealth Heritage List</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tennis Court &amp; Pavilion</td>
<td>Exceptional</td>
<td>Meets criteria for Commonwealth Heritage List</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crawford School</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>Does not meet Criteria for Commonwealth Heritage List</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stanner Building</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>Does not meet Criteria for Commonwealth Heritage List</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Heritage Listing**

Old Canberra House and associated outbuildings are listed as part of the Acton Conservation Area on the Commonwealth Heritage List (Place ID 105340).

Old Canberra House has also been nominated for the ACT Heritage Register and included on the National Trust List of Classified or Recorded Places in the ACT. Old Canberra House and each of the original outbuildings have also been individually listed on the ANU Heritage Register (Place ID AC001-AC005).

**Condition—Date**

The condition noted here is at October 2011. The extant buildings and landscapes of the Old Canberra House area continue to be well maintained and are in reasonable condition.

**Relevant Documentation**

2009 Heritage Management Plan of the Acton Conservation Area was prepared by the ANU Heritage Officer. It includes a detailed historical overview and description of all buildings and landscapes.

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**Context of the Buildings**

**Figure 2**: The Old Canberra House in context with the International Sculpture Park.

**Figure 3**: The Configuration of Old Canberra house and additional buildings.

**Brief Historical Overview**

Old Canberra House was constructed as the Residence of the Administrator of the Federal Territory in 1913. The building was commissioned by King O’Malley, Minister for Home Affairs and designed by John Smith Murdoch, the first architect of the new Commonwealth. Murdoch made a significant contribution to the architectural landscape of early Canberra, being responsible for the design of many prominent buildings.
The Administrator, Colonel David Miller, his wife and son moved to Canberra in October 1912 and were accommodated in a small weatherboard hut and series of tents until their Residence was built nearby. The Administrator was in charge of the development of Canberra, and was solely responsible to the Minister for Home Affairs in Melbourne. Both Colonel and Mrs Miller were to have substantial input into the final design of the Residence.

The Administrator’s Residence was the first double-storey brick house constructed after the limestone plains region had been chosen to become the Australian Capital Territory. The building was positioned above the worker’s quarters (Lennox House) and the married officer’s cottages built below the ridge to the east. The residence exemplified the opulence of upper-class housing at the time, with a billiard room, dining facilities and drawing room on the ground floor. The upper floor included three bedrooms and servants quarters to the rear, with open verandahs providing views of the worker’s accommodation and floodplains below the site.

A small weatherboard garage was built for the Administrator’s car shortly after, located to the northwest of the residence. A small ‘hut for gas plant’ had also been established by December 1913.

The south gardens of Old Canberra House were established by Thomas Charles Weston, Canberra’s first city gardener. Tree and shrub species were sourced from the Acton Nursery, founded by Weston in 1911. Weston also formed the paths, drives and tennis courts in 1914.

The Administrator departed the Capital after a Royal Inquest instigated his retirement in 1917.

From 1921 to 1930 Old Canberra House served as the residence and occasional meeting place of the Federal Capital Advisory Committee (FCAC) and the Federal Capital Committee (FCC). These committees set the scene for a golden age of development in Canberra, despite having to contend with funding shortfalls as a result of the First World War and ensuing economic depression of the early 1930s. Executive members were experts in architecture, town planning, engineering or departmental administration and were known to have held a number of meetings in at the site. Some members, such as PT Owen, the Director-General of Works, and Sir John Henry Butlers, the Chairman of the FCC, resided in the building on a more permanent basis. Butlers renamed the building Canberra House in 1926; his son was also born on the premises.

A brick gardener’s cottage and small weatherboard garden shed were likely constructed at Canberra House in the mid-1920s, after Weston departed the Capital. A vegetable garden and fowl yard were likely constructed to the west of the garage at the same time.

From 1931 to 1935 the buildings and grounds of Canberra House were leased to the official representative of the British Government, Ernest T. Crutchley. He was to prepare the building for the first four British High Commissioners, who were in residence from 1936 to 1952 (Sir Geoffrey Whiskard, Sir Ronald Cross, Sir Edward Williams and Sir Stephen Holmes). Crutchley organised for the building to be heavily extended at the time, including the construction of an L-shaped drawing room, enlarging the dining room and the formation of a study in the southwest corner of the ground floor. The servants’ quarters at the rear were enlarged, with a new boiler room and laundry added.

In 1937 a small weatherboard hut was constructed for the High Commissioner’s driver near the vegetable garden. This ‘room for chauffeur’ had only the most basic of amenities, but was largely sufficient for the single man. A year later the room was incorporated into a larger weatherboard cottage, to accommodate the newly-married chauffeur and his wife.

Canberra House fell under control of the Australian National University in 1952. The Registrar changed the name to Old Canberra House and permitted the British Government to name their new residence in Deakin ‘Canberra House’ (now Westminster House). Old Canberra House was soon leased to the Commonwealth Club to serve as their first club premises in Canberra. Over the next ten years the Commonwealth Club installed catering facilities, enlarged the kitchens and constructing a single-storey billiard room to the east. Two verandahs were enclosed to form a bar and auxiliary dining room.

Frederick Ward, the notable Australian designer and head of the ANU Design Section, was engaged to design and manufacture furniture for the Commonwealth Club. Ward was to provide furniture to many Canberra buildings, his designs adhering to a relaxed, modern Australian theme entirely suited to the landscaped university campus.

In February 1966, the ANU Staff Centre was opened in Old Canberra House. Membership was originally opened to select members of the University community, though within a few years all staff and students were invited to join. This was the first University Staff Club in Australia to welcome all members of the campus community. The Staff Centre served light lunches and formal dinners, with full bar services and a small number of rooms on the upper floor for accommodation of official guests. Two prefabricated units were attached to the west of the building in 1972 to provide additional kitchen space.

The University has carried out minor alterations to Old Canberra House almost every year since the early 1970s. The escalating costs, coupled with an independent governing body unfamiliar with management of such a facility, led to speculation and
dissatisfaction among members. A double-storey extension to the east of the building was carried out in 1981, with the ground floor becoming the new billiard room (named the John Morphett Billiard Room). The upstairs guest rooms and catering facilities were converted into office space in an attempt to use the rent to offset further trading losses.

From 1987 to 1994 direct management of Old Canberra House was given to University House (see Building 1). By the time University House relinquished control of the facility, the financial situation had improved considerably, due in large part to a streamlined management scheme, coupled with rent accrued by the tenants on the first floor.

From 1999 to 2009 the Humanities Research Centre (HRC) had exclusive access to the building, which had been fully converted into offices. The WEH Stanner Building, a double-storey brick office building, was constructed to the north of the chauffeur’s cottage in 2001, providing additional office space for the HRC. The original Administrator’s garage (which had become a bottle shop for the Staff Centre) was demolished and minor works carried out to the foyer of the main building at the time.

The Crawford Building was constructed at Old Canberra House in 2009. The new facility, the largest in the Acton Conservation Area, was linked to the western side of Old Canberra House. The chauffeur’s cottage and garden shed were transferred to the east of the gardener’s cottage and a number of significant Weston-era cypress trees were also removed. The Crawford School remain tenants of all buildings of the complex, as well as the nearby Constable’s Cottage (16 Lennox Crossing – Building 28).

Figure 4: Plan of garden lighting at Old Canberra House, prepared in 1936. Outbuildings include the garage, wood shed, gardener’s cottage and tennis court. The chauffeur’s cottage was constructed to the north of the woodshed in 1937.
Description of Old Canberra House

Buildings

Old Canberra House has been heavily modified and extended since its original construction, though retains much of its original character and remnants of the original architectural style. Ratcliffe & Armes (1993) describe the architecture as a blend of stylistic features, including the Mediterranean Revival and Californian Bungalow (roughcast walls), Victorian Arts & Crafts (steep roof with exposed rafter tails), Public Victorian (bar-less windows), Queen Anne (roof gablets) and Italianate (bay windows incorporating the chimney). A small but important Australian innovation is the louvered venting at the gablets, providing the signature of JS Murdoch. The same motif is also used at 16 Lennox Crossing (Constable’s Cottage), attributed to Murdoch.

The concrete-brick walls of Old Canberra House are finished in roughcast cement and painted white, with terracotta ‘egg-crane’ vents above the ground floor windows. Evidence of some removed portions are visible in places, in particular the western façade (signs of the modular kitchen units) and between the rear extensions (previously enclosed for bar services).

The steep-pitched roofs are clad in terracotta tiles and lead to a myriad of valleys (roof tiles were replaced in 1982; photographic evidence indicates that the original tiles were similar to those seen on the tennis court shelter). The exposed rafter tails and extended eave overhangs are an interesting component of the roof design. Together with the conspicuous steep pitch leading to a myriad of valleys, these elements provide for an altered sense of perspective and results in the structure appearing taller than it actually is. The chimneys are finished in roughcast with an ovolo and ogee string at the top.

The majority of doors and windows have been replaced with modern examples, with sunken panels and steel vents, rim locks and modern handles. External doors have glazed panels. The ground floor originally contained three bow windows, two of which have been removed and one consumed in later additions. The bow windows are an important element of the building for their association with Colonel and Mrs Miller, who insisted on their construction. The remaining early windows appear to date from the 1935 extensions that were undertaken for the British Government, or are sympathetic modern additions reminiscent of this style. The majority are double-hung, with four-pane sliding sashes in box timber frames. Some display ogee horns. Pronounced sills are seen throughout, again similar to the original design.

The 1935 extensions altered the façade considerably. Two bay windows were removed and the entrance remodelled. The original front façade was consumed in the extensions and led to the loss of the external dentils and the verandahs being enclosed. The remaining bay window and chimney have become obscured, though are still an important visual element of the complex.

The front single-storey Meeting Room extension (constructed as the BBQ room of the ANU Staff Centre) displays eight-pane glazed double doors flanked by glazed wall panels that provide a pleasant view of the gardens and front patio. The rear double-storey extension is generally sympathetic in mass and certain features of the original fenestration have been perpetuated. These include pronounced sills and windows styles, although the ‘Moderne’ horizontal glazing bars seen in some of the windows are an arresting departure from the original.

Internally, much of the original character has been lost with conversion into commercial premises and office space. Doors have been replaced throughout, though some likely dating from the 1930s have been retained.

Landscape

Old Canberra House gardens have plantings from Weston’s period and younger plantings of such species as Manchurian Pear (Pyrus ussuriensis) and Red Ironbark (Eucalyptus sideroxylon). A wide range of seeds and plants were introduced to Canberra by Weston from a range of suppliers in Australia and overseas. Work on the gardens of the Residence began in August 1913.

Weston had prepared planting lists for Acton which included 260 trees on the Residence grounds and plane trees every 9.1 metres along the Avenue (Acton Road). By September he had planned the paths and drives of the Residence and had begun work on the perimeter fence and border trenches. Planting began shortly after with perennial phlox, roses and carnations forming the new borders.

Recent alterations include the development of the International Sculpture Park to the south of the site and the landscaped courtyard between Old Canberra House and the W.E.H Stanner Building. Both showcase the potential for future land-use and provide a pleasant contrast to the surrounding vegetation.
Significance Assessment against the Commonwealth Heritage criteria

Old Canberra House is listed as part of the Acton Conservation Area, however has yet to be individually assessed against the Commonwealth Heritage Criteria.

Statement of Significance

Old Canberra House, erected in 1913, is significant as the home of the first Administrator of the Federal Capital Territory and is associated with the early development of Canberra. The building was the first double-storey building constructed in the newly established national capital.

The building was designed by John Smith Murdoch the first Chief Architect of the National Capital, and the landscaping was developed by Thomas Charles Weston, Canberra’s first appointed gardener.

Old Canberra House as part of the Acton Conservation Area is representative of the socio-economic division of housing in the areas. The residence is demonstrative of the opulence of upper-class housing in the period, in stark contrast to the workers accommodation of Lennox House (lower level) and the Acton Cottages, for mid-level public servants.

The building is also representative of the Federal Capital style of architecture, which is credited in part to John Smith Murdoch. Later modifications demonstrate elements of several other significant architectural styles.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Assessment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(a) Historic</td>
<td>Old Canberra House, erected in 1913, is significant as the home of the first Administrator of the Federal Capital Territory and is associated with the early development of Canberra. The building was the first double-storey building constructed in the newly established national capital. The building was designed by John Smith Murdoch the first Chief Architect of the National Capital, and the landscaping was developed by Thomas Charles Weston, Canberra’s first appointed gardener. The building was a hub for the administration of early Canberra and served an important role as the residence and meeting places of the Federal Capital Advisory Committee and the Federal Capital Committee. It also provided accommodation for the first diplomatic mission in Australia, the High Commission for the United Kingdom from 1932-53. Old Canberra House is also significant as the first premises of the Commonwealth Club of Canberra and later the ANU Staff Centre, which was the first University staff club to open its doors to all staff and students in Australia. Old Canberra House meets CHL criterion (a) for historic values. Attributes The buildings and landscaping of the Old Canberra House Complex and their former uses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) Rarity</td>
<td>Old Canberra House does not meet CHL criterion (b) for rarity values.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


## Significance Assessment against the Commonwealth Heritage criteria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criterion</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Old Canberra House</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(c) Scientific</td>
<td>The place has significant heritage value because of the place’s potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of Australia’s natural or cultural history.</td>
<td>Does not meet CHL criterion (c) for scientific values.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(d) Representative</td>
<td>The place has significant heritage value because of the place’s importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of: A class of Australia’s natural or cultural places; or A class of Australia’s natural or cultural environments.</td>
<td>Old Canberra House as part of the Acton Conservation Area is representative of the socio-economic division of housing in the areas. The residence is demonstrative of the opulence of upper-class housing in the period, in stark contrast to the workers accommodation of Lennox House (lower level) and the Acton Cottages, for mid-level public servants. Both the style of the architecture (double storey, highly decorative) and the location of the residence on the ridge demonstrate the superiority of the residents. The building is also representative of the Federal Capital style of architecture, which is credited in part to John Smith Murdoch. Later modifications demonstrate elements of several other significant architectural styles including the Mediterranean Revival, Californian Bungalow (roughcast walls), Victorian Arts &amp; Crafts (steep roof with exposed rafter tails), Public Victorian (bar-less windows), Queen Anne (roof gablets) and Italianate (bay windows incorporating the chimney).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(e) Aesthetic</td>
<td>The place has significant heritage value because of the place’s importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics valued by a community or cultural group.</td>
<td>Does not meet CHL criterion (e) for community held aesthetic values</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(f) Creative/Technical</td>
<td>The place has significant heritage value because of the place’s importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period.</td>
<td>Does not meet CHL criterion (f) for creative/technical values</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
## Significance Assessment against the Commonwealth Heritage criteria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(g) Social</th>
<th>Old Canberra House does not meet CHL criterion (g) for social values</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The place has significant heritage value because of the place’s strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons.</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| (h) Associative | Old Canberra House is significant for its associations with its designer John Smith Murdoch, Architect for the Federal Capital Advisory Committee with the landscape design of Thomas Charles Weston, Officer In Charge of Afforestation in Canberra. Other significant associations include King O’Malley, Minister for Home Affairs who commissioned the building, Colonel David Miller, the first Administrator of the National Capital and first resident of Old Canberra House, Sir Henry Butters, Chairman of the FCC, who resided in the house, and named it Canberra House, Ernest T Crutchley, who prepared the building for the residence of the British High Commissioners from 1936 to 1952 and with the Commissioners themselves, Sir Geoffrey Whiskard, Sir Ronald Cross, Sir Edward Williams and Sir Stephen Holmes who lived in the house. Old Canberra House meets CHL criterion (h) for associative values |
| The place has significant heritage value because of the place’s special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in Australia’s natural and cultural history. |

| (i) Indigenous | Old Canberra House does not meet CHL criterion (i) for Indigenous values |
| The place has significant heritage value because of the place’s importance as part of Indigenous tradition. |

**Attributes**
Architectural design evident in Old Canberra House, the Acton Cottages and Lennox House.
Photographs

**Figure 5:** The view from the south towards the entrance of Old Canberra House. (Source: ANU Heritage Office 2009)

**Figure 6:** View of interior of original section of Old Canberra House including Staircase landing and wooden wall detailing. (Source: ANU Heritage Office 2011)

**Figure 7:** Aerial View of Old Canberra House in 1956. (ANU Archives)

**Figure 8:** View of interior of Crawford School building, including artworks. (ANU Heritage Office 2011)
Management Issues

Constraints and Opportunities

Constraints arise from the identified heritage values of Old Canberra House and the requirement under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (Cwth) (EPBC Act) to conserve them. The significant attributes of Old Canberra House, as indicated above, should be conserved wherever possible.

The original configuration and contextual elements of Old Canberra House are of exceptional significance. Elements of exceptional heritage value are generally associated with the earliest phase of development of the ANU and must be retained and conserved. The tolerance for change level is generally low. Loss or alteration of individual elements that may have exceptional significance would significantly diminish the Commonwealth Heritage (or other) values of the ANU Acton campus.

The Tolerance for Change heritage management tool, outlined in Section 7.6 of the ANU Action Campus Heritage Study 2012, will assist in conserving heritage values through a process of change. Old Canberra House is able to tolerate a low level of change through development whereby the significant attributes and characteristics are conserved and interpreted. The modern elements of the complex including the Stanner Building and the Crawford School can tolerate a substantial level of change.

Opportunities arise from the identified heritage values of Old Canberra House. The history of the Old Canberra House should be interpreted to maintain the historic and associational values of significant attributes identified in the assessments above. A greater degree of change may be tolerated if interpretation is of a very high quality and considered in any future development, which presents the identified heritage values for the future.

Recommendations

The Heritage Management Plan for the Acton Conservation Area should be consulted when proposing any changes to Old Canberra House. An individual Heritage Management Plan should be developed for this complex to provide detailed guidance on its conservation and management.

If development resulting in loss of significant fabric is proposed, interpretation and a heritage impact assessment would be a prerequisite according to EPBC Act requirements.

Photographic recording for the ANU archives should be undertaken prior to any potential loss of significant fabric, buildings or landscaping in any future development of Old Canberra House.

A formal assessment of the aesthetic and social values of the building should be carried out.