



134 Macquarie Street (GPO Box 618)
Hobart Tasmania 7001
Phone: 1300 850 332 (local call cost)
Email: enquiries@heritage.tas.gov.au
Web: www.heritage.tas.gov.au

Name: Strahan Visitor Centre
Status: Permanently Registered
Tier: State

THR ID Number: 12098
Municipality: West Coast Council
Boundary: CPR11528

Location Addresses

Esplanade, STRAHAN 7468 TAS

Title References

Property Id

2822745



View south to the Centre; entry from the Esplanade
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View north-west from the waterfront
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View north-east from the waterfront
© NRE 2024



View north-west into foyer and sales area from waterfront
© NRE 2024



Stage area and amphitheatre for performance
© NRE 2024



Entry and visitor information and sales space
© NRE 2024



Indigenous Tasmanian history installation
© NRE 2024



Colonial and convict history installation
© NRE 2024



Piners' hut installation
© NRE 2024



Stone steps to upper level
© NRE 2024



Wilderness exploration exhibit with piners' punt
© NRE 2024



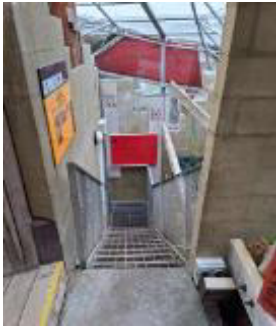
Railway bridge installation; view over piners' hut
© NRE 2024



'Lounge room' conservation installation
© NRE 2024



Hydro-electricity infrastructure installation
© NRE 2024



Conservation challenge at exhibition exit
© NRE 2024



Robert Morris-Nunn, Richard Flanagan, and
Warden Darryl Gerrity at opening
© The Advocate 19 November 1992

Statement of Significance: (non-statutory summary)

The Strahan Visitor Centre is in many ways the embodiment of an extremely controversial and important time in the history of the West Coast communities and the governments and governance of Tasmania as a whole . The place is of significance due to its direct connection to, and clear representation of, complex and controversial stories which are unique to the West Coast and the south-west wilderness. Being labelled as innovative, challenging and subversive, the approach and the place played a significant role in the history and politics of the state following the clash of cultures that unfolded around the Franklin River Blockade. The Strahan Visitor Centre is recognised as being of significance as a creative achievement , the originality of its design strategy and unique execution of the combined structure and exhibition acknowledged by professional accolades. The Centre is one of the first purpose-built structures in Australia to provide interpretation of place as part of a holistic sensory experience and is recognised internationally as one of the first built examples of the phenomenological approach to architecture known as 'magic realism'. The Centre invited patrons to form their own interpretation and gained international attention for its contribution to the field of experiential tourism. The Strahan Visitor Centre has a special association with the life and work of internationally renowned Tasmanian author, screen writer and director, Richard Flanagan. Now widely regarded and awarded as one of the finest and most versatile writers in the English language of his generation, it was as a young writer and historian with local knowledge that Flanagan was enlisted to research and develop the innovative and challenging interpretation material, used throughout the exhibition. He worked alongside architect Robert Morris-Nunn and furniture designer and maker Kevin Perkins throughout the design development and construction phases and engaged with the media contributing to the controversy around the Centre.

Why is it significant?:

The Heritage Council may enter a place in the Heritage Register if it meets one or more of the following criteria from the Historic Cultural Heritage Act 1995:

a) The place is important to the course or pattern of Tasmania's history.

The Strahan Visitor Centre is in many ways the embodiment of an extremely controversial and important time in the history of the West Coast communities and the governments and governance of Tasmania as a whole ; standing at the centre of the clash of cultures that came to a head with the Franklin River Blockade in 1982. As a visitor centre the building and its exhibition consciously tells stories and poses questions relating to Indigenous people, convicts, forestry, mining, hydro-industrialisation, and nature conservation. It speaks of turbulent politics alongside the rich history of the West Coast and its people. The place is of significance due to its direct connection to, and clear representation of, these complex and controversial stories which were pivotal to its existence. It was out of the conflicts between industry and conservation, state and federal governments, and party politics that the Strahan Visitor Centre was conceived, funded, designed, developed, and opened. The content of the exhibition also reflected this, being labelled as innovative, challenging and subversive, and this played into the history and politics of the state. The building and its exhibition stand as a partially living representation of the conflicted history of its place.

b) The place possesses uncommon or rare aspects of Tasmania's history.

The Strahan Visitor Centre demonstrates distinctive historical and architectural attributes which are uncommon in Tasmania and a composition of elements considered to be unique in the state. The Centre is one of the first purpose-built structures in Australia to provide interpretation of place as part of a holistic sensory experience and one of a few buildings in Tasmania which may be described as a built manifestation of 'magical realism'. Together, the building and the stories within, embrace and embody history and issues which are unique to the West Coast and the south-west wilderness. The building lives up to its architectural intent, standing as a unique response to its specific time and place in the world.

c) The place has the potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of Tasmania's history.

No Data Recorded

d) The place is important in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of place in Tasmania's history.

The Strahan Visitor Centre is considered to be a fine example of an interpretive visitor centre in the Tasmanian context. Recognised internationally as one of the first built examples of the magic realist phenomenological approach to architecture, the building encapsulates a key evolutionary stage in the development of interpretation centres in the state. The inclusion of a living rainforest environment and multi-sensory displays provided novel experiences for visitors and set the building apart from other tourist centres in Tasmania at the time. The Strahan Visitor Centre invited patrons to form their own interpretation and gained national and international attention as a visitor centre and for its contribution to the broader field of experiential tourism. It is still a rare example of this holistic approach in Tasmania, with the structure of the building clearly inspired by the stories within.

e) The place is important in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement.

The Strahan Visitor Centre is recognised as being of significance as a creative achievement; the originality of its design strategy and unique execution combining structure and exhibition being acknowledged with several professional accolades received since completion. The Australian Institute of Architecture's (AIA) Triennial John Lee Archer Award citation noted the Centre's innovation and distinctiveness as a design solution, expressing an 'inspired vision' and providing a 'delightfully unexpected and original structural enclosure for a challenging interpretation of the History of South-West Tasmania'. The Centre is recognised as a key point in the evolution of Robert Morris Nunn's story-telling as architecture. Ongoing professional interest and appreciation of the place, including its means of interpretation, is evidenced by the Centre receiving the Award for Enduring Architecture from the AIA in 2023.

f) The place has a strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social or spiritual reasons.

No Data Recorded

g) The place has a special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in Tasmania's history.

The Strahan Visitor Centre has a special association with the life and work of internationally renowned Tasmanian author, screen writer and director, Richard Flanagan. Now widely regarded and awarded as one of the finest and most versatile writers in the English language of his generation, it was as a young writer and historian with local knowledge that Flanagan was enlisted to research and develop content for the Centre's exhibition. The establishment of the place was directly influenced by Flanagan, who worked alongside architect Robert Morris-Nunn and furniture designer and maker Kevin Perkins throughout the design development and construction phase. He is acknowledged as the author of the innovative interpretation material used throughout the exhibition and, along with Perkins, providing the architecture team with inspiration for the overall design of the building. Flanagan also participated in interviews with local media and co-wrote a conference paper with Morris-Nunn which contributed to the ongoing controversy around the Centre. While some viewed Flanagan's words as subversive, the challenging approach to place interpretation and visitor experience provided by Flanagan throughout the exhibition has been discussed and celebrated internationally, considered as integral to the values of the Centre as a whole.

h) The place is important in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics.

No Data Recorded

Heritage approval is required for work that will result in changes to the nature or appearance of the fabric of a Heritage place, both internal and external.

Please refer to the Heritage Council's Works Guidelines (www.heritage.tas.gov.au) for information about the level of approval required and appropriate outcomes.

Heritage Advisors are also available to answer questions and provide guidance on enquiries@heritage.tas.gov.au or Tel 1300850332

This data sheet is intended to provide sufficient information and justification for listing the place on the Heritage Register. Under the legislation, only one of the criteria needs to be met. The data sheet is not intended to be a comprehensive inventory of the heritage values of the place, there may be other heritage values of interest to the Heritage Council not currently acknowledged.

Setting:

The Strahan Visitor Centre is located on the northern edge of Strahan Harbour on Tasmania's West Coast. It is accessed from the Esplanade, the main road following the waterline into the village of Strahan, the gateway to the Gordon River and the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area (TWWHA).

The building is located around 400m to the east of Strahan Point, adjacent to the Pioneer Women's Memorial and Morrison's Huon Pine Sawmill. Other significant developments along this stretch of the Esplanade includes the former Customs House and Post Office (THR #5648), the World Heritage Cruises terminal and wharf, the Former Union Steamship Office (THR #5654), and Hamer's Hotel (THR #5647).

Description:

The Strahan Visitor Centre building and the adjoining outdoor performance space occupy the eastern end of a parcel of Crown land formerly part of the port. The Centre was commissioned by the Tasmanian Government and completed in 1992 (Morris-Nunn and Flanagan 1994, p.6).

At the time of writing the site was leased and managed by the West Coast Council and the building was known as the West Coast Visitor Information and Booking Centre. The performance space continued to be operated by Round Earth Theatre Company.

ELEMENTS OF HIGH HISTORIC CULTURAL HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

Structure and exterior form

The form of the building, described by Rory Spence in his 1993 critique for *The Architectural Review* as 'an ark with a novel inside', has curved walls of rough-hewn timber, glass, and steel, while large celery top pine logs form the structural columns, complete with bark. This use of vernacular building materials clearly references the built character of the West Coast and the South-West. The steel framed roof covers over 330m², with the north-west side clad with corrugated steel and the south-east side is entirely glazed to form a conservatory space to the harbour side.

The building is structurally sound and largely intact and provides an internal floor area of around 250m². Within this envelope interior functions are divided by partitions of cast concrete and concrete block representing hydro infrastructure. The Centre provides tourist information, souvenir sales including 'West Coast brand merchandise', books and locally made products. It houses the interpretation centre known as the 'West Coast Reflections Exhibition' (West Coast Tasmania).

ELEMENTS OF CONTRIBUTORY HISTORIC CULTURAL HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

Exhibition

The exhibition was originally established in 1992, being designed and developed along with the building. The talents of 'architects, writers, woodturners, gardeners and historians' were utilised to create an immersive experience for visitors (West Coast Tasmania). Physical features, original and recreated, were used to communicate the story of the people of the West Coast, which 'starts 35,000 years ago and proceeds through convict times, mining and forestry' (West Coast Tasmania). These features included rainforest vegetation; a riverbed fed by a waterfall; cave forms; railway and hydro power infrastructure; a furnished living room representing the time of forest protests; and grave markers. Stones and crosses recognised piners and explorers who perished in the wilderness and one commemorated a Wilderness Society worker who drowned during the Franklin Dam protests. Roslyn Jones' body was not found, but the search resulted in the discovery of significant Aboriginal heritage sites and this story is preserved in the Centre (Tas 1992, p.113). An authentic piners' punt and a hut installation purpose built by 'old piner' George Martin, were also integral parts of the exhibition (Morris-Nunn and Flanagan 1994, p.9).

The rainforest display contained native Tasmanian trees such as Huon Pines and manferns which had been maintained in good condition. However, at the time of writing, the multi-sensory elements relying on power and audio visual technology were no longer operational. These include the waterfall and hydro-electric exhibit, the Franklin Dam video, and interactive voice recordings and sound effects. Part of the Indigenous Australian exhibit was also closed.

Despite the deterioration of some elements of the exhibition, it continues to be included in itineraries recommended by the West Coast's tourist information, describing it as 'an award winning display depicting Tasmanian's heritage' including 'stories of convicts and brave piners exploring the waters around Strahan, through to the infamous battle to save the Franklin River'. It is also maintained as a Learning Destination for the Children's University of Tasmania (West Coast Tasmania).

It is acknowledged that exhibitions require evolution to maintain accessibility and relevance, reflecting community values and stories, and at the time of writing the West Coast Council was in the process of redeveloping the Centre. The proposal included a commitment to incorporate *'most of the objects and interpretive messaging that formed the original display'* in the revised format, and that the exhibition would continue to tell *'the dual sides of the West Coast story'* (WCC 10 January 2025).

Outdoor Theatre

The outdoor space to the north of the building is developed as an amphitheatre with a permanent stage and storage areas for the ongoing play, 'The Ship that Never Was'. As it is performed every day 'rain or shine', membrane structures were installed to provide shelter for players and patrons.

OTHER ELEMENTS

There are spaces and elements within the building that support visitor reception and sales, staff operations and building services, which do not clearly contribute to the significance of the place.

History:

Still often described as remote and inhospitable, Tasmania's west coast and south-west wilderness have been inhabited and managed by Aboriginal people for at least 35,000 years. The people of the South-West and North-West tribes fished and sealed off the coast and hunted the forests of the area for millennia (Ryan pp.37–38). Now identified as the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area (TWWHA), this is a diverse Aboriginal cultural landscape within which rockshelters, rock markings, hut depressions, and shell middens remain (Aboriginal Heritage Tasmania).

Settlement

The port of Strahan was founded in 1881 as a centre for fishing fleets and to cater for the shipping needs of timber getters, particularly Huon piners, who had been logging the area since 1817. As the preferred port for steamers serving the west coast's burgeoning mining industry, railways were built from Zeehan in 1887, and Queenstown in 1897, and Strahan became one of the principal trading outlets for Tasmania's mineral and forest resources.

Capitalising on the influx of miners and settlers arriving in the west, Scottish merchant Frederick Ormiston (FO) Henry established a business running a store from a tent at Smith's Bay. Predicting further growth, in 1883 Henry lobbied the government to survey land around Long Bay, a more sheltered and convenient location to the east, so he may purchase a site for a more permanent store (Kok 1999, pp.28–29). With the release of this land, several businesses and specialist industries, including Huon Pine Oil production, were soon established and the frontier township thrived.

The built form of the town and the surrounding natural environment still reflect this history. Early development, including timber cottages with fine Italianate detailing and the commercial architecture of masonry construction in a range of classical revival styles around the Esplanade, are largely retained. In contrast, the waterside of the Esplanade was occupied by simple sheds which served the early functions of the harbour. These more transient buildings have mostly been lost, leaving space for infrastructure serving the West Coast's next big industry, tourism.

Political landscape

The funding and impetus behind the development of the Strahan Visitor Centre came because of conflicts over Tasmania's wilderness areas in the 1980s. Despite the national attention received during the Gordon-below-Franklin Dam battle and the High Court decision preventing its construction, logging of south-west Tasmanian forests continued, and so did the protest movement to protect them. The issue came to a head with the forest blockade at Farmhouse Creek in 1986, which resulted in an intervention by the Commonwealth Government. Prime Minister Bob Hawke's Labor Government launched a Federal Commission of Inquiry to assess the significance of Tasmania's Lemnathyme and Southern Forests and to provide advice regarding future management (Cohen 1987, p.2). The Helsham Inquiry commenced in 1987 and was met with fierce opposition from Tasmania's Liberal Government and forestry and mining lobbies. Despite Premier Robin Gray's objection to the process, the inquiry ultimately resulted in Hawke ordering a substantial expansion of the TWWHA in 1989 (Beresford 2015, pp.50–51). The Tasmanian Government received \$50m in compensation for predicted financial losses and a means to fund a new visitor centre for Strahan was found.

National interest in the West Coast followed the media coverage of the Franklin Dam protests and a tourism study conducted in 1984 recommended that an 'interpretive centre and heritage theatre' be established in Strahan (Evers Consulting Services Pty Ltd 1984, pp.6–14 in Fallon 2002 p.4). Following the 1989 election, the Labor–Green Accord formed government and this Government was convinced of the need to address the curiosity of the growing numbers of tourists visiting the West Coast. In 1990 more studies confirmed the need for a new centre to 'dramatise or interpret Tasmania's West Coast in terms of its history, people or the wilderness' (Saunders 1990 in Fallon 2002, p.4).

However, this brief was further complicated when the Tasmanian Forestry Commission's plans to develop visitor centres with 'wilderness, fishing, forestry and mining themes' were revealed. Consultants advised that a single centre should be built to encapsulate both plans for the west (Fallon 2002, p.5).

Commission

The Strahan Visitor Centre was finally commissioned by the Forestry Commission and the Department of Parks, Wildlife and Heritage in 1991 (Hamilton 2006, p.83), with involvement from local government including Councillor Darryl Gerrity, and Tourism Tasmania's Malcolm Wells. The Centre was to be located on a waterfront site previously occupied by port operations, with a forecourt space between the Esplanade and the building. Having formed part of Strahan's wharf and railway infrastructure since the establishment of the village, only one 1980s shed is known to have occupied the area. There is no evidence of other buildings on the site in the 1990s (Land Tasmania Aerial imagery).

It was architect Robert Morris-Nunn and furniture designer and maker Kevin Perkins who prepared the submission that won the national competition seeking ideas for interpretation of south-west Tasmania; the building's boat like form being credited to the timber furniture specialist. A young writer and historian, Richard Flanagan, was approached to assist with the development of these ideas. This team of three were responsible for the final design and oversight of the construction of the building and exhibition (Morris-Nunn and Flanagan 1994, p.6). Architecturally, Morris-Nunn was then supported by his practice Morris-Nunn Associates, with technical assistance from architects Forward Viney Woollan and long-time creative collaborator, structural engineer Jim Gandy. Building contractor Stubbs Constructions won the tender and work began on site early in 1992. The forecourt space was initially set up for a range of community events including woodchopping (R Morris-Nunn 2024, pers. comm., 9 April).

Along with the core design team, many creative people largely drawn from the local area, were engaged to assist, with their specific ideas and skills contributing to the success of the final exhibition. This diverse crew included printmakers and painters Carol Rodwell and Frieda Beukenkamp; ceramicist Chantale Delrue; sculptor Julie Payne; designers and makers known for their furniture, Gay Hawkes, Dan Magnus, and Marcus Tatton; and 'old pinner' George Martin, who was responsible for the creation of the piners hut installation. Graphic designers Lynda Warner and Stephen Goddard created the innovative interpretation panels and signage throughout. Content was developed by Richard Flanagan with support from researchers and writers including Kim Pearce, Jamie Kirkpatrick, and Josephine Flanagan. Film maker Steve Thomas created the audio visual experience, while John Dudley and Sib Corbett were responsible for the vegetation that allowed the interior rainforest to come to life. Local timber miller and writer, Randal Morrison; and operator of the neighbouring Huon Pine Sawmill tourism business, Snow Morrison; also contributed to the development of the Centre.

Ongoing conflict

While appreciation of the state's natural assets had increased in the 1980s, there was still opposition to the expansion of the TWWHA, most vocally from industry and locals concerned about employment. This included the member of the Legislative Council for Gordon, Peter Schulze, who came from the mining industry and supported the dam (ABC 2010). Being the only building known to have been funded by the compensation, this association resulted in public controversy within the West Coast community and across Tasmania.

The Labor-Green minority government established in 1989 did not last. When the Liberal Party returned to government early in 1992, they sought to block the visitor centre project from going ahead, but construction had commenced. As it became evident that the words Richard Flanagan had prepared for the exhibition did not always portray mining and forestry in a positive light, the Government tried to intervene again, but the project continued (C Milne 2024, pers. comm., 24 January).

Opening

Eleven months after its commission, at a cost of \$1 million, construction of the Centre was complete, and the opening in November 1992 unleashed another round of controversy (Morris-Nunn and Flanagan 1994, p.6). Despite the Tasmanian Greens not being invited to the event, the member for Lyons, Christine Milne, attended and described her experience to the House of Assembly on 1 December, praising the teamwork of the Centre's creators (Tas, 1992,

The event was noted as significant in that the Aboriginal flag had been raised before guests arrived, and to avoid conflict, it was left to fly alongside the Tasmanian flag. This was thought to be the first time the Aboriginal flag had been flown alongside the state flag at such an event (Tas, 1992, pp.113–114). Warden and local identity, Councillor Darryl Gerrity is said to have been responsible for this action and it was considered to set the scene for proceedings.

The themes of the exhibition challenged the audience and raised confronting issues often considered taboo, including the Indigenous and homosexual histories of the West Coast and opened the recent wounds of 'the dam'. Some guests, including members of parliament, did not appear to be pleased. Robert Morris-Nunn and Richard Flanagan also participated in interviews with local media on the day which further enflamed some in the community, as evidenced by an altercation at a Queenstown service station the following day (R Morris-Nunn 2024, pers. comm., 6 August). It was later noted that Flanagan's words contributed to the Centre becoming 'a symbol of the culture wars', encapsulating how divided the state was on many issues at that time (Milne 2024).

Tony Rundle, the member for Braddon and Minister for Forests at the time, also attended the opening and provided a brief account to Parliament, responding to the member for Lyons. He described the exhibition as unusual but accepted that it could serve as the 'focal point for tourists' it was intended to be. Rundle took the opportunity to air concerns around the economic sustainability of the building and its operations, stressing that its success would depend on community support. He then added that while Strahan was growing as a tourist centre, the West Coast's mining townships were still relied upon for exports vital to Tasmania's economy (Tas, 1992, p.114–115).

Accolades

Despite, or possibly in part due to, this controversial arrival, the Centre was welcomed and celebrated by the architecture profession and academia. By April 1993, a review of the building had been published in an edition of the prestigious British journal *The Architecture Review* featuring 'architecture of interpretation' around the world. The review by Rory Spence lauded Morris-Nunn's design as the first built manifestation of the philosophy of magic realism (1993, pp.38–40).

More recognition followed, with the Centre receiving the Royal Australian Institute of Architects (RAIA) Tasmanian Chapter Civic Design Award in 1993 and being presented to the National Architectural Conference in Hobart in 1994. With a paper co-written by Richard Flanagan, Morris-Nunn engaged the architectural community, including American Emilio Ambasz, and a flight was chartered to allow the international speakers to experience the building (R Morris-Nunn 2024, pers. comm., 6 August). A year later it received the RAIA's triennial John Lee Archer Award for New and Extended Buildings; and 30 years on, the 'Award for Enduring Architecture in Tasmania' by the same organisation (now referred to as the AIA). Judges cited the Centre's innovation and distinctiveness as a design solution, expressing an 'inspired vision' and providing a 'delightfully unexpected and original structural enclosure for a challenging interpretation of the History of South-West Tasmania'.

The Strahan Visitor Centre holds a valued place in the 20th century history of architecture in Tasmania, being recognised as a key point in the evolution of Robert Morris-Nunn's 'story-telling' as architecture in Barry McNeill and Leigh Woolley's *Architecture from the Edge* (2002, p.101).

In terms of the Centre's use as a visitor centre, the building was described by an expert at the time as breaking 'every rule in interpretation', but this was the intent of its creators (Morris-Nunn and Flanagan 1994, p.9). While encouraging respect for the environment of the West Coast and the history of its people, the Centre aimed to challenge visitors, provoking deeper questioning of the world around them and the way they interact with it (p.9).

Management

Initially the Strahan Visitor Centre was managed by a partnership of government departments with the intention of becoming a financially sustainable business for a local operator within 4 years (Fallon 2002 p.6). In 1994 the late Richard Davey was approached to bring his production of 'The Ship that Never Was' to Strahan to enhance the cultural experience offered to visitors, and especially children. Davey's Round Earth Theatre Company, now operated by Richard's daughter Kiah, has continued to perform the play about the famous convict escape from Sarah Island since. It is now recognised as Australia's longest running play and Robert Morris-Nunn stated that this use 'was integral to the building's success and an important part of its evolution' (R Morris-Nunn 2024, pers. comm., 9 April).

Following a high turnover of operators, Davey began running the Centre in 1998 under an agreement with the Government's board and a number of alterations were made. These included installation of a floor of railway sleepers in the foyer and shop area and development of the forecourt space as an amphitheatre for the now well established play. Under this management model, it was estimated that of the 137 600 people that visited Strahan in the year

2000, around 82 000 visited the Centre and up to 10 000 paid to see the exhibition (Brkic 2001). The West Coast Council took over management of the Centre in 2008, and it operates as the principal tourist information and booking centre for the municipality.

The writer

Tasmanian born and having spent many of his formative years around the West Coast, a passionate young Richard Flanagan was initially approached, as a largely unknown writer and historian, to work on the interpretation material for the Centre (R Morris-Nunn 2024, pers. comm., 9 April). Now variously described and praised as being 'among the most versatile writers in the English language' (Oates 27 September 2018) and 'the finest Australian novelist of his generation' (*The Economist* 3 July 2014), Flanagan is also credited as a film director and screenwriter.

The novels which made his name were yet to be written. The first, 'Death of a River Guide', was released in 1994 and was critically acclaimed, especially respected as a first work. With each new work, came increasing commercial and critical success, culminating in being awarded the 2014 Man Booker Prize for his novel 'The Narrow Road to the Deep North'. Never one to shy away from controversy, Flanagan continues to write, and to provoke public discourse on difficult issues, especially those which affect his home state, and the West Coast and south-west wilderness. In 2021 he applied his literary skills and media profile to draw attention to what he describes as 'The Rotting Underbelly of the Tasmanian Salmon Industry', with his book titled 'Toxic' becoming central to the debate over the impacts of aquaculture in our coastal waters.

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West Coast Tasmania, Itineraries, accessed 17 July 2024. <https://westcoasttas.com.au/itineraries>

West Coast Council 10 January 2025, Submission in response to Provisional Entry on the THR.

Personal Communication:

Ms Christine Milne 2024, Personal communication with HT, 24 January.

Mr Robert Morris-Nunn 2024, Personal communication with HT, 9 April; 6 August.

Comparative Analysis:

The Strahan Visitor Centre is acknowledged as being the first 'magic realist' building in Australia (Spence 1993, pp.38–40) and an early example of a visitor centre providing a holistic multi-sensory experience. There are a number of innovative and interactive information and interpretation centres elsewhere in Tasmania. These include the following developed by Parks and Wildlife between 1988 and 2002:

1988–90 - Cradle Mountain (now Ranger Station) – Bruce Goodsir, BPSM

1993 - Lake St Clair Visitor Centre – Heffernan Button and Voss

2000 - Tamar Island Wetlands Centre – Heffernan Button and Voss

2000 - Hastings Caves Visitor Centre – Forward Brianese

2000 - Mt Field National Park Visitor Centre – JAWS

Freycinet National Park Visitor Centre

Great Western Tiers Visitor Centre (Deloraine)

Other Tasmanian examples include:

2003+ - Tin Dragon Interpretation Centre & Cafe – Derby (No longer in operation)

1999; 2017 - Port Arthur Visitor Centre - Philp Lighton with Daryl Jackson; Rosevear Stephenson

These examples largely continue serve their purpose well, however, the Strahan Visitor Centre still appears to be one of very few examples of this magic realist phenomenological approach or 'style' of building and exhibition developed together for this purpose. In contrast to other centres of the period, the Strahan Visitor Centre offers novel experiences for visitors that invite them to forge their own interpretation of the objects and artefacts on display. It provides sometimes confronting 'food for thought' and the experiences are encouraged and enriched by the building that contains them.

There are no visitor information or interpretation centres included on the register due to their specific values. The type is only represented by centres included as part of registrations for larger cultural sites (e.g. Port Arthur Penal Settlement - THR #6). Therefore, this particular type of development may be considered to be uncommon as a 'class of place' in the state, and being of this late 20th century period, it would be unique on the register.

The most useful Australian comparators sourced are from Victoria and include the following :

Bangerang Cultural Centre, Shepparton

This is an Indigenous cultural centre and is the only visitor centre found to be included on a State Heritage Register in its own right. It is noted as being most significant for its role in the recognition of Aboriginal people and culture. The Statement of Significance for this place is available at:

<https://vhd.heritagecouncil.vic.gov.au/places/13104/download-report> - *updated 30 September 2004*

Brambuk Cultural Centre, Halls Gap

This is also an Indigenous cultural centre located in western Victoria. Assessed as being of local heritage significance as part of the Northern Grampians Heritage Study carried out by Wendy Jacobs, Vicki Johnson, et al in 2004, the centre (Place No. HG/22) is still awaiting inclusion in the local planning scheme's Heritage Overlay. The Statement of Significance for the place is available at:

<https://vhd.heritagecouncil.vic.gov.au/places/105127/download-report>,- *updated 31 July 2004*

The Uluru-Kata Tjuta Cultural Centre is another centre interpreting indigenous culture designed by Gregory Burgess following the success of Brambuk. It is widely known for its distinctive form and cultural sensitivity in the design process. The structure takes the shape of a kuniya python and was built with locally made mud bricks. Being opened in 1995, it also followed the Strahan Visitor Centre, but is of a substantially bigger scale and serves quite a different function in a significant tourism and cultural site near Uluru. Descriptions and images are available at:

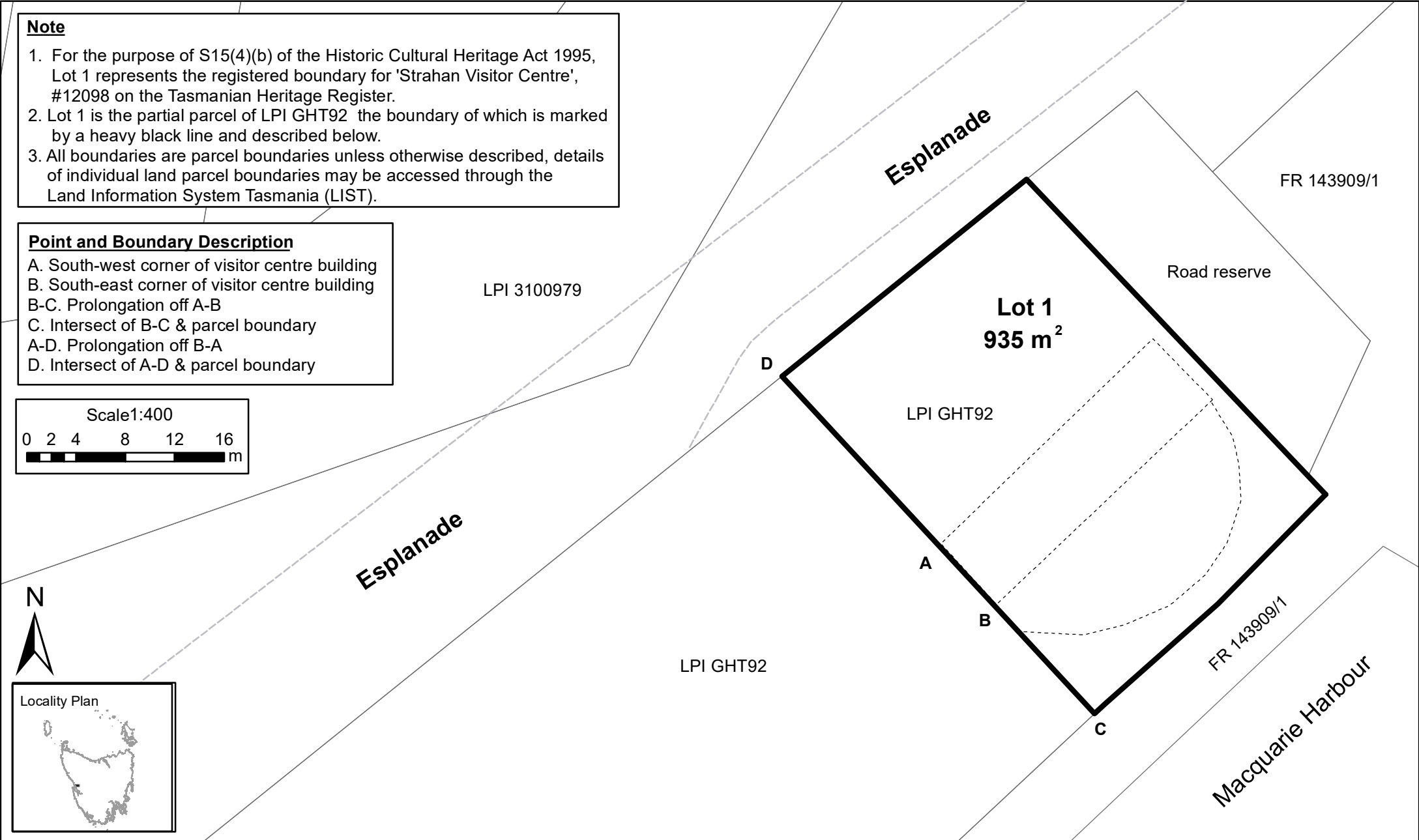
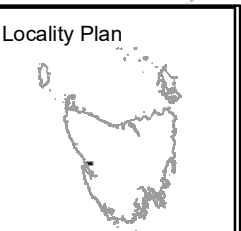
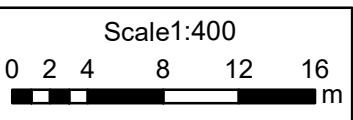
Cultural Centre building | Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park (parksaustralia.gov.au); and
<http://www.gbarch.com.au/projects/1995/uluru-kata-tjuta-cultural-centre/>

Note

1. For the purpose of S15(4)(b) of the Historic Cultural Heritage Act 1995, Lot 1 represents the registered boundary for 'Strahan Visitor Centre', #12098 on the Tasmanian Heritage Register.
2. Lot 1 is the partial parcel of LPI GHT92 the boundary of which is marked by a heavy black line and described below.
3. All boundaries are parcel boundaries unless otherwise described, details of individual land parcel boundaries may be accessed through the Land Information System Tasmania (LIST).

Point and Boundary Description

- A. South-west corner of visitor centre building
- B. South-east corner of visitor centre building
- B-C. Prolongation off A-B
- C. Intersect of B-C & parcel boundary
- A-D. Prolongation off B-A
- D. Intersect of A-D & parcel boundary



TASMAP: STRAHAN - 3633		GRID: MGA94 / ZONE 55		DATUM: AHD		CONTOUR INTERVAL: N/A	
No.	PRODUCTION / AMENDMENT	AUTHORITY	REFERENCE	DRAWN	APPROVED	DATE	
1	Production	THC	12098	AW	B.TOROSSI	16.10.24	

**CPR
11528**

**Strahan Visitor Centre
Esplanade, Strahan**



CENTRAL PLAN REGISTER
 Surveyor General: *[Signature]*
 Date Registered: 21.10.24