

PLANNING AND ECONOMIC COMMITTEE 14 AUGUST 2013	6
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THE QUEENSLAND HERITAGE REGISTER: APPLICATION FOR ENTRY –
ORIBIN STUDIO, 16 HEAVEY CRESCENT, WHITFIELD

Leisa van der Linde: 8/27/3: #4048006

RECOMMENDATION:

That Council notes the report and provides no objection to include the Oribin Studio in the Queensland Heritage Register.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Council has received notification from the Department of Environment and Heritage Protection that an application has been made proposing the Oribin Studio be included in the Queensland Heritage Register. The Notice of application received is provided in Attachment 1. The application to have Oribin Studio included in the Queensland Heritage Register has been made by the Department of Environment and Heritage Protection. It is not known if the land owner is aware of the application for entry in the Queensland Heritage Register.

The Oribin Studio is identified in CairnsPlan as a place of local heritage significance. It is recommended that Council provides no objection to the inclusion of the place in the Queensland Heritage Register.

BACKGROUND:

The Oribin Studio is identified in CairnsPlan as a place of local heritage significance and was identified in the recently completed Cairns Heritage Study as a place of potential State Heritage Significance and was recommended for nomination to the Council's Local Heritage Register. Photos are provided in Attachment 3.

COMMENT:

Under the provisions of the *Queensland Heritage Act 1992* any person or entity may lodge an application to enter a place in the Queensland Heritage Register. It is the responsibility of the Department of Environment and Heritage Protection to assess the application and make a recommendation to the Queensland Heritage Council about whether the place is of State level cultural heritage significance or not.

The Queensland Heritage Council, which is representative of the community and independent of government, decides whether a place should be entered in the Heritage Register.

As the local government for the place being proposed, Council has been invited to make a written submission to the Department advising of its response to the application. The response must be made on the basis that the place does or does not satisfy the cultural heritage criteria specified in the *Queensland Heritage Act 1992* and must be received by 19 August 2013.

The proposed criteria and supporting information for the nomination is provided in Attachment 4.

During the consultation period for the Cairns Local Heritage Register in 2011, a submission was received by the land owner objecting to the inclusion of the site within Council's local heritage register. It was recommended by officers that the site be included within the local register as the overall form is still evident however the policy and management recommendations were proposed to be removed. Further to this the site was not included on Council's local heritage register however it remains within the CairnsPlan schedule of local heritage sites. It is recommended that Council provides no objection to the inclusion of the place in the Queensland Heritage Register.

CONSULTATION:

In addition to notifying Council as the local government for the place being nominated, the proposal to enter the Oribin Studio will be advertised in the local newspaper and on the Department's website, calling for public submissions.

CONSIDERATIONS:

Risk Management:

There is no perceived risk to Council from the inclusion of the Orbin Studio in the Queensland Heritage Register. The Queensland Heritage Act provides a process for owners to seek exemptions and approvals to undertake works to the place.

Corporate and Operational Plans:

The inclusion of the Oribin Studio in the Queensland Heritage Register would support the achievement of Council's Corporate Plan 2013-2018 through Strategic Action 1.3.3 – Encourage cultural development and support heritage preservation.

Statutory:

Places on the Queensland Heritage Register are protected under the *Queensland Heritage Act 1992*. The Act outlines the process for nomination and entry of a place in the Register.

Policy:

The Far North Queensland Regional Plan 2009-2031 contains a regional policy that is supportive of protecting and conserving cultural heritage. The objective of Policy 3.7 is to identify, protect and manage the region's unique cultural heritage, including historic places and landscapes of significance to the community

Sustainability:

The community plan states that state and local heritage places are conserved and managed to provide a tangible connection to the community and landscape of the past. The nomination of the Oribin Studio to the Queensland Heritage Register will advance this.

Options

Council has the option to object or not object to the inclusion of the Oribin Studio in the Queensland Heritage Register. The response must be made on the basis that the place does or does not satisfy the cultural heritage criteria.

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment 1: Notice of Application Received

Attachment 2: Site Plan

Attachment 3: Photos of Oribin Studio

Attachment 4: Supporting Information

Leisa van der Linde
Project Support Officer

Peter Boyd
Manager Planning Strategies

Kelly Reaston
General Manager Planning and Environment

Attachment 1 – Notice of Application Received



Department of
Environment and
Heritage Protection

**Notice of application received –
proposing entry of a place in the Queensland Heritage Register**

Notice given under s.38 *Queensland Heritage Act 1992*

Ref: HRN 602825

Mr Peter Tabulo
Chief Executive Officer
Cairns Regional Council
PO Box 359
CAIRNS QLD 4870



Dear Mr Tabulo

Re: Oribin Studio, Cairns, 16 Heavey Crescent, Whitfield, Cairns

On **9 July 2013** the Department of Environment and Heritage Protection (the Department) made an application proposing entry of the **Oribin Studio, Cairns** in the Queensland Heritage Register.

The application affects the following property:

Lot	Plan
3	RP725542
D	RP746765

I understand that you represent the local government in which this place is situated and enclose a copy of the application for your information.

Under the *Queensland Heritage Act 1992* (the Act) any person or entity may make an application to have a place considered for entry in the Queensland Heritage Register, whether or not the owner has been consulted.

It is now the responsibility of the Department to assess the application and make a recommendation to the Queensland Heritage Council about whether the place is of state-level cultural heritage significance and therefore suitable for entry in the Heritage Register. The Heritage Council then decides whether the place should be entered in the Register. Please find enclosed an information sheet, setting out the process for consideration of this application.

I invite you to make a written submission to the Department advising of your response to the application. This response should address whether the place does or does not satisfy the criteria specified in the Act (s.35). It is also important that the Department is made aware as early as practicable of any other concerns the local government may have about its heritage listing, or perhaps you can provide additional information to assist with the assessment of its heritage values.

Your submission must be received by the Chief Executive of the Department before the close of business on 19 August 2013, and should be forwarded:

By mail - Heritage Branch
Department of Environment and Heritage Protection
GPO Box 2454
BRISBANE QLD 4001

OR

By email - heritage@ehp.qld.gov.au

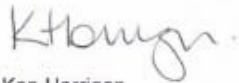
Under the Act, there is scope to extend the time for making a submission. If you require such an extension please contact Principal Heritage Officer, Ms Catherine Chambers on telephone (07) 3330 5840 before 19 August 2013. All submissions received by the Department in response to this correspondence are considered to be public information unless otherwise determined.

Please also be advised that the application will be advertised in the local newspaper and on the Department's website, calling for public submissions.

The Chief Executive requests that Cairns Regional Council notifies the Department of:

- any proposed development at least 10 business days before an application is made for a development approval on the place
- any application for Development Approval on the place that has been made but not decided under the Planning Act within 10 business days from the receipt of this notice
- any existing Development Approval on the place within 10 business days from the receipt of this notice.

If you would like to discuss this application, please contact Mary Burns on telephone 3330 5855.



Ken Horrigan
Manager
Queensland Heritage Council & Development
Heritage Branch

Date: 11/7/13

Enquiries:
Ms Catherine Chambers
Heritage Branch
GPO Box 2454
BRISBANE QLD 4001
Ph. 07 3330 5840
Fax. 07 3330 5996

Enclosed:

- Application made under s.36 of the *Queensland Heritage Act 1992*.
- Fact sheet: *Queensland Heritage Register—registering a State Heritage Place*.

Attachment 2 – Site Plan



Attachment 3 – Photos of Oribin Studio



Figure 2: View of Studio from the south (Source: EHP site visit 28/06/12)



Figure 3: Rear of Studio, looking south across creek, showing 1980s extension and deck additions (Source: EHP site visit 28/06/12)



Figures 4 & 5: Entrance area on western side with recent covered pergola; detail of glazed wall
(Source: EHP site visit 28/06/12)



Figure 7: Lower level, showing original concrete and stone walls and later weatherboard enclosure
(Source: EHP site visit 28/06/12)

Attachment 4 – Supporting Information

History

The Oribin Studio (1960) was designed by Cairns architect Edwin Henry (Eddie) Oribin for himself as his architectural drawing office and studio, from where he ran his practice between 1960 and 1973. Located in the post-World War II suburb of Whitfield in Cairns, the studio is a small two storey structure addressing Heavey Crescent, surrounded by tropical vegetation and a small creek which runs through the property. Together with Oribin's first house (1958) on an adjacent lot, these two buildings signalled the beginning of Oribin's individual residential work,¹ which was characterised by experimentation with innovative forms, structures, materials and techniques for dealing with the tropical climate of far north Queensland. The design of the studio displays the obvious influence of the works of Frank Lloyd Wright, an internationally renowned American architect.

Edwin Henry (Eddie) Oribin was born in Cairns in 1927. As a teenager he spent time in Brisbane during World War II, obtaining work with the Allison Aircraft Division of General Motors rebuilding aircraft engines. Returning to Cairns in 1944, Oribin commenced architectural training with Sid G Barnes, Chief Architect of the Allied Works Council for North Queensland, who trained Oribin with a solid grounding in structural design and construction. In 1950 Oribin moved to Brisbane to work and study, and on 10 February 1953 he obtained his registration as an architect in Queensland, returning to Cairns the following month to begin a partnership with Barnes. This partnership lasted until Barnes' death in 1959, after which Oribin continued practicing on his own.

Oribin undertook a wide range of work in North Queensland between 1953 and 1973.² Throughout his career, Oribin was devoted to experimenting with different structural and aesthetic ideas. Drawing inspiration from a wide variety of published sources, characteristics of Oribin's work included meticulous detailing, structural creativity and concern for the modulation of light. He was also known for his skill at model making and superb craftsmanship, often creating objects himself.

The city of Cairns in tropical far north Queensland was established as a port in 1876. Located on the banks of Trinity Inlet, the early growth and development of the town was restricted by its topography, which consisted of large areas of low lying swamp land encircled by a ring of mountains. Substantial reclamation of sand dunes and swamps took place over the decades to allow the township to expand. After the disruption of World War II, post-war optimism saw suburban development increase and the population grow to over 25,000 people by 1961.³

In the late 1950s Oribin chose to construct his first house (and later studio) in a new post-war suburban area on the slopes of Mt Whitfield, north-west of the Cairns CBD. This land, encompassing most of the present day suburbs of Whitfield and Edge Hill, was first surveyed in 1883. Separated from the main township by low lying swamp land, the lower slopes of Mt Whitfield were one of the few elevated areas of land available in Cairns, with views over Trinity Bay. Over time, the area was developed as agricultural land and sugarcane farms. One of these farms was owned by William Collins,⁴ who built a large house known as *Sylvan Brook* on a hill with extensive views over the surrounding landscape. From the 1950s, the Collins's land was subdivided in stages for housing development and in 1973 the suburb of Whitfield was formally declared.

¹ Majer, Martin, *E. H. Oribin: The work of a Far North Queensland Architect*, UQ thesis (1997), p27.

² Oribin closed his practice in 1973 and moved away from far north Queensland in 1978.

³ Queensland Places website, accessed May 2013, <http://queenslandplaces.com.au/cairns>

⁴ Collins was Cairns' longest serving mayor, in office from 1927 to 1949.

In October 1957, Eddie Oribin and his wife Joyce purchased two adjoining lots, resubdivisions 95 and 108 of subdivision 1A of Reserve 291. Resub 108 had been surveyed a year later than the surrounding lots and had several unusual features. It was much larger in size and irregularly shaped with an acutely angled corner at the intersection of Heavey and Mullins streets. A small creek protected by an easement ran through the property, cutting off the south-western corner. These site conditions played a key role in determining the siting and orientation of the house (constructed in 1958) and studio.

As an architect and designer, Oribin was particularly influenced by the work of Frank Lloyd Wright (1867-1959), a famous and widely published American architect who practiced from the late 1880s until his death in 1959. Over his long career, Wright had a major influence on American architecture and designed some of its most famous buildings, such as the Robie House (1910), Fallingwater (1937) and the Guggenheim Museum, New York (1959). He is also famous for his leading role in developing the Prairie School style and his ideas about 'organic' architecture. Organic architecture can be briefly defined as an architecture that is both visually and environmentally compatible, closely integrated with the site, and which reflects the architect's concern with the processes of nature and the forms they produce.⁵ Buildings designed to this philosophy made use of local materials, responded to the local topography and climate to produce comfortable conditions, and were organised so as to form an organic, integrated whole.⁶

Through publications such as newspapers and architecture journals, Wright's influence spread around the world. Early proponents of his style in Australia were Chicago-based architects Walter Burley Griffin and his wife Marion Mahoney Griffin, famous for winning the international competition to design the city of Canberra (1912), who had both worked for Frank Lloyd Wright in America. A 1969 journal article on organic architecture in Australia, which included the first Oribin House as an example, revealed the wide variety of building forms, materials and interpretations of 'organic' philosophy that were employed by Australian architects in the mid-20th century.⁷

In 1959 Oribin designed a separate studio for his property from which to run his practice. Construction was completed in 1960 and the studio served as Oribin's personal drawing office until 1973.⁸ Located on the opposite side of the creek in the south-west corner of the property, the studio was a small, two storey timber and concrete building, accessed by a flat timber walkway connecting it to the house. The studio layout consisted of a two rooms on the upper floor that were used as the drawing office, with built-in desks lining the edges of the main south-east facing glazed walls. The ground floor was partially enclosed with concrete walls and used as a carport.

The design of the studio was greatly influenced by the works of Frank Lloyd Wright, in particular by his Unitarian Meeting House (1947-51), built for the First Unitarian Society in Madison, Wisconsin, USA. The inspiration for the meeting house design is said to have been the shape of hands folded in prayer.⁹ Sited on a knoll in a rolling, partially wooded setting overlooking farmland and a lake, Wright used broad sweeping lines

⁵ Fleming, John, Hugh Honour and Nikolaus Pevsner, *The Penguin Dictionary of Architecture and Landscape Architecture*, 5th edition. England: Penguin Books, 1999. Entry 'Organic Architecture.'

⁶ Sergeant, John. *Frank Lloyd Wright's Usonian Houses: The Case for Organic Architecture*. New York: Whitney Library of Design, 1976. Introduction.

⁷ 'Organic Architecture in Australia,' in *Building Ideas*, Vol. 4, No. 5, December 1969, p12-18

⁸ Majer, thesis, p29.

⁹ Jacobs, Herbert. 'A Light Look at Frank Lloyd Wright,' in *The Wisconsin Magazine of History*, Vol. 44, No. 3, Wisconsin Historical Society (Spring 1961), p171.

and natural materials, including rough-faced stonework, to help integrate the church with surrounding nature. The traditionally separate elements of spire, sanctuary and parish hall were amalgamated into one unbroken space, with the spire becoming a great, upward sweeping, glass-enclosed prow. A triangular module was used to order the plan and deep overhangs on all sides shielded the large windows from direct sun.¹⁰ In recognition of its innovative design, the Meeting House was placed on the United States 'National Register of Historic Places' in 1973.¹¹

Drawing inspiration from Wright's design, Oribin adapted the concept to the site and the Cairns climate, utilising local materials. Like the Meeting House, the studio was designed to a triangular module, in this case using a 30°/60° grid that fans out towards the south-east. Placing the studio at ground level was impractical due to the adjacent creek which floods after heavy rain; therefore Oribin raised it up on a concrete and stone base, with the access pathway from the house passing beneath the cantilevered studio and up a series of concrete steps on the southern and western sides. The heaviness of the concrete structure, which features large random stones, provided a visual anchor to the soaring characteristics of the studio above. Glazed walls with diagonal glazing bars angled back from a weatherboard 'prow' and a sheet metal-clad roof with pointed ends and deep eaves sailed over the whole structure. Side casement windows, protected by shutters, provided cross-ventilation and surrounding trees and vegetation helped shade the building as they grew. The glazed walls of the drawing office provided good, consistent daylight and allowed views towards the house and Heavey Crescent.

Other Oribin buildings that display a similar angular 'Wrightian' influence upon their design are two of his churches, the Mareeba Methodist Church (1960) and St Andrew's Memorial Presbyterian Church, Innisfail (1960, QHR 602332). Both are highly detailed, utilise unusual and creative structural methods, and carry through triangle and diamond motifs to all aspects of the design.

During Oribin's years working from the studio he designed many houses for clients in the suburbs surrounding Mt Whitfield, each very different in structure and form.¹² He also designed a library in the suburb of Stratford (1969, demolished c2008), two motel projects, including the Hides Hotel-Motel extension in Lake Street, Cairns (1967), and several large commercial projects in collaboration with other architects, such as the Cairns Civic Theatre (1972-74).

In 1971 the Oribins subdivided their property into three lots - one lot containing the house, another the studio, and a third was created from the vacant land on the corner of Mullins Street and Heavey Crescent. These were all sold in 1973, the same year that Oribin closed his architecture practice. The family moved into a new house designed by Oribin at Edge Hill, completed in 1974.

Over time, the original connection between Oribin's first house and the studio has been obscured by the construction of a residence on the corner lot and the growth of trees and vegetation on the site. Changes to the studio include the removal of the original desk joinery in the main room and the installation of a bathroom. A 1980s extension contains a kitchen, and a timber deck and stairs have been added to the eastern corner. The lower level has been enclosed with weatherboards to provide additional accommodation. Timber fins attached to the glazed wall were added to provide

¹⁰ Christ-Janer, Albert and Mary Mix Foley, *Modern Church Architecture: A guide to the form and spirit of 20th century religious buildings*. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, inc, 1962, p272-279.

¹¹ <http://www.fusmadison.org/landmark>

¹² Refer to Majer, thesis for details on Oribin's residential work.

additional sun protection and privacy. The studio continues to be used as a private residence in 2013.

In 2000, Oribin's contribution to Queensland architecture was recognised by the Australian Institute of Architects' establishment of the 'E H Oribin Award for Far North Queensland Building of the Year', which has become an annual award.

Description

The Oribin Studio stands in the south-west corner of a long wedge-shaped block, with a sharply angled front boundary along Heavey Crescent. A creek flows through the property from behind the studio to the south-east corner before passing beneath Heavey Crescent. A temporary timber bridge crossed the creek in 2012, with the rear portion of the property remaining open grass lawn fringed by vegetation. The block slopes gently down from the rear northern boundary towards the creek then slopes up towards the road. To the west is the large estate of a private residence, to the north-east is Oribin's first house, while to the east on the corner of Heavey Crescent and Mullins Street is a two storey residence. All surrounding properties are heavily vegetated. A gravelled driveway area has been created on the eastern side of the studio, while stones and large boulders form garden beds between the studio and the street. The main entrance is along the western wall, while a timber deck at the eastern corner provides access through a 1980s extension to the north-east side.

The studio is diamond-shaped in plan with the central axis orientated north-west to south-east. The interior layout consists of a living room at the front, a bathroom and storage to the rear, and a kitchen and dining area in the extension. A room on the lower level has been used as a bedroom, and the remaining underfloor area is used as a laundry and additional storage space.

The base of the studio is constructed from rough-cast concrete and stone walls, with later weatherboard walls and timber screens enclosing most of the formerly open space beneath the cantilevered studio above. The remaining floor, wall and roof structures are constructed primarily of timber.

On the upper level, the symmetrical front walls consist of two main elements: a weatherboard-clad 'prow' at the base, and inward-sloping angled glazed walls. Constructed from diagonal timber rails and long sheets of clear glass, the weight of the roof is supported by round metal posts standing behind the facade, allowing the glazed walls to support themselves with no vertical mullions. These walls turn the corner at each end, with ornamental red panels filling the gap between the end of the glazed walls, the ceiling and the side walls.

Of the two original side walls, which angle outwards from their base and converge to a sharp point at the rear corner of the studio, the western wall remains the most intact. The lower portion is clad in timber weatherboards with pairs of casement windows occupying the upper portion to ceiling height. Containing no glass, the windows are enclosed by plywood shutters ornamented with triangular pieces of timber and secured from the inside. Each shutter has an angled top to accommodate an upside-down triangular fanlight of yellow patterned glass above each pair. Timber rafters supporting the roof are exposed on the underside of the plasterboard-clad eaves, with the ends cut away in a zig-zag pattern. Where the rafters pierce the wall structure, the gap beneath is in-filled with yellow patterned glass and triangular timber wedges. A triangular light fitting remains over the main entrance door.