



Robyn Parker MP

Minister for the Environment

Minister for Heritage

MEDIA RELEASE

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HISTORIC HEALTH BUILDING HERITAGE LISTED

The former health department building on Macquarie Street, now part of the Sir Stamford Hotel, has been placed on the State Heritage Register, Heritage Minister Robyn Parker announced today.

Ms Parker said the historic building played a central role in some of the major health issues faced by Sydneysiders and Australians in the twentieth century, including the plan conceived by Robert Paton – the first Director General of Public Health – to eradicate small pox in NSW.

“Free small pox vaccinations were available at the premises from 1913 in response to the last major smallpox epidemic in NSW from 1913-1916,” Ms Parker said.

“The long term results of these vaccinations were a resounding success with no new cases declared in Australia after 1938 and the World Health Organization declaring smallpox eradicated from the world population in 1979.

“The former health building is of state significance as the surviving fabric of an important early building by Government Architect W L Vernon, which influenced the style of buildings produced by the newly formed Government Architect’s Office.”

Designed and constructed in the 1890s, the building became an important part of the precinct and signified an increasing government commitment to social welfare and health.

“During the First World War the site was established as Sydney’s only after hours enlistment centre and was run by volunteers from the health department office and state hospitals.

“From the 1930s until the 1980s it was a major clinic for the treatment of sexually transmitted diseases.

“The NSW Government is committed to conserving, revitalising and caring for places of heritage significance.

“The former health building holds state significance in terms of its architecture and its social heritage and I’m excited to announce its inclusion on the State Heritage Register.

“Listing ensures that the future management or development of the former health department building is supported with advice from the state’s leading heritage organisation, the Heritage Council of NSW.”