

# BIDURA HOUSE AND FORMER BIDURA CHILDREN'S COURT AND REMAND CENTRE

GLEBE, NSW

PROPOSED HERITAGE LISTING

HERITAGE REVIEW



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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 THE BRIEF

The following report has been prepared to provide a heritage review of the planning proposal by the City of Sydney for the listing of the former Bidura Children's Court and Metropolitan Remand Centre at Glebe, NSW in Schedule 5 Part 1 of the Sydney Local Environmental Plan 2012 and associated maps.

This report has been prepared on behalf of NSW Planning and Environment.

### 1.2 THE STUDY AREA

The study area is Lots 1, 2 and 3 in DP 713646 (Figure 1.1).



Figure 1.1 The Study Area

Source: Six Maps

### 1.3 BACKGROUND

A development application (D/2015/1398) for the redevelopment of the site was submitted to the City of Sydney in 2015. The application was refused and a second application submitted in 2017 that was appealed to the NSW Land and Environment Court under a deemed refusal.

The site includes two main buildings. The first is a Victorian villa, *Bidura House*, designed by the architect, Edmund Blacket, and built 1857-1862. The second is a purpose-built children's court and remand centre designed in the Brutalist style by the NSW Government Architect, built in 1983. The 1983 building is also known as the Metropolitan Remand Centre or MRC.

The house Bidura to the front of the site is listed on the State Heritage Register (Listing No. 01994) as the *Bidura House Group*. The SHR curtilage only covers the house and its immediate grounds. The Bidura Children's Court & Metropolitan Remand Centre is excluded from the state listing curtilage. The house was listed on the Register in 2017.



Figure 1.2 State Heritage Register Curtilage Plan for Bidura House Group Plan 3039



Bidura house is also listed in Schedule 5 Part 1 of the Sydney Local Environmental Plan 2012 (LEP) and the whole site, including the Remand Centre is identified as a heritage item on the associated heritage maps HER\_001 and HER\_008. The site is also contained within the Glebe Point Road Heritage Conservation Area (C29) identified in Schedule 5 Part 2 of the LEP



Figure 1.3 Sydney Local Environmental Plan 2012 Heritage Maps HER\_001 & HER\_008

Bidura is item I763

The State Heritage Inventory listing sheet for the property (SHI 2427867) refers only to the house Bidura.

The City of Sydney has prepared a planning proposal for the former Bidura Children's Court and Remand Centre to list the centre as a heritage item in Schedule 5 Part 1 of the Sydney Local Environmental Plan 2012.

#### 1.4 HERITAGE ASSESSMENT

The City of Sydney has commissioned a heritage and adaptability assessment of both the house and the former Bidura Children's Court and Remand Centre to support its planning proposal.

Robertson and Hindmarsh, *Former Bidura Children's Court and Metropolitan Remand Centre, Report for the Council of the City of Sydney*, dated October 2017

(HA)

The report also assessed changes to the LEP height limits applying to the site. The report concluded:

- *The former Bidura Children's Court & Remand Centre building, together with Bidura house, should be listed as an item of environmental heritage on schedule 5 of the Sydney LEP 2012. The boundary of the listing should follow the legal lot boundary and include the pocket park at the end of the site. The interiors of the building should be included in the listing, especially those of exceptional and High Significance.*
- *The former Bidura Children's Court & Remand Centre building should be listed on the State Heritage Register for its State significance as part of the child welfare precinct with Bidura house. The former Children's Court & Remand Centre was an integral part of the child welfare process and Bidura house could not have performed its child welfare functions without the former Bidura Children's Court & Remand Centre building. To list one without the other under this criterion does not reflect the historical facts and the functionality of the site.*

The purpose of this report is to assess this heritage assessment and consider whether its recommendations are well founded.

### 1.5 CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT PLAN

A Conservation Management Plan has been prepared for Bidura House:

Graham Brooks & Associates Pty Limited, *Conservation Management Plan*, 357 Glebe Point Road, Glebe dated 2015.

(CMP)

The CMP has not been sighted by the author.

### 1.6 LIMITATIONS AND TERMS

The report only addresses the European significance of the place. The terms *fabric, conservation, maintenance, preservation, restoration, reconstruction, adaptation, compatible use and cultural significance* used in this report are as defined in the Australia ICOMOS Burra Charter.

### 1.7 METHODOLOGY

This report was prepared in accordance with the *NSW Heritage Manual Statements of Heritage Impact* and *Assessing Heritage Significance Guidelines*. The philosophy adopted is that guided by the Australia ICOMOS Burra Charter 2013.

### 1.8 AUTHORS AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This report, including all diagrams and photographs, was prepared by John Oultram of John Oultram Heritage & Design, unless otherwise noted. John Oultram Heritage & Design was established in 1998 and is on the NSW Heritage Office list of heritage consultants.

## 2.0 HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

The following summary is taken from the HA.

Pre 1788	Gadigal territory
1788	Arrival of the First Fleet
1790	Grant of land to the Church of England by Governor Phillip
1828	Subdivision and retention of Glebe Sale to William Dumaesq
1840-50s	Sale of lots in the Bossier Estate
1853	Blacket family move to Glebe
1857	Blacket purchases land parcels
c 1857-60	Erection of Mr Blacket's house (later named "Bidura")
1865	Sketch of the house by Edith Blacket
1869	Death of Sarah Blacket
1870	Sale of Bidura to the Fitz Stubbs
By 1871	Name "Bidura" in use
By 1876	Ballroom erected
c.1877	Sale to the Perks family Fitz Stubbs move to "Lynwood"
1904	Child Welfare Home opened in "Avona"
1907-08	Sale to Dr Walter Burfitt
1911	Albion Street Children's Court opened
c 1916	Burfitts move elsewhere but do not sell the house House operated as an upmarket boarding establishment By Mrs Rowley Walker
1920	Burfitt sells "Bidura" to the State Relief Board
1923	"Strathmore" opened as a Home for Girls by the Church of England
1925	Welfare Shelter at "Ormond House" in Paddington disestablished. Construction of the Metropolitan Girls' Shelter fronting Avon Street. Other hostels at Waverley, Marrickville and Willoughby
1931	Published image of the Metropolitan Girls' Shelter
By 1933	known as Bidura Depot
1939	Installation of heating
c. 1942	Erection of an Air Raid Shelter
1946	Calls for more suitable facilities than former residences
1956	Classroom added
1966	Child Welfare Shelter at "Worimi" opened
1967	"Kedumba", Katoomba (part of the Clairvaux complex) & Adult Metropolitan Remand Centre at Long Bay
1969	Formation of the Glebe Society
1970	Masterplan for Glebe by Bernard Smith
1970	Additional classroom added to the complex
1970/71	Proposal to build an expressway through Glebe
1973	Publication of <i>The Architectural Character of Glebe</i> by Kate & Bernard Smith
1974	First two Urban Conservation Areas classified by the National Trust; Hunters Hill and Glebe



1974	International Women's Year protest march to "Bidura"
1974	Closure of the Hay Institution for Girls after protests
1975	Opening of "Minali" at Lidcombe (adjacent to the existing "Minda" complex)
1976	Article - <i>Is Bidura Edmund Blacket's residence?</i>
1976/77	Proposals for site redevelopment to be proceeded with
October 1976	Brief from Dept of Youth & Community Services
December 1976	Report from the PWD Historic Buildings Group Regarding Blacket's house
1977	Closure of the Child Welfare Home at "Bidura"
April 1977	Report by the Acting Government Architect & meeting with the Minister
May 1977	Auditorium added to the brief Detailed planning to be proceeded with
January 1978	National Trust to classify "Bidura"
February	Letter from Minister Landa to Minister Jackson expressing concern regarding the scale of the proposal
July 1978	Excavation proposed to commence
mid 1978	DA 746 submitted to Leichhardt Council
Sept 1978	Shadow Diagrams sent to Council (as requested)
October 1978	Resident's petition to Neville Wran Town Planning Report Article in the SMH Wran requests preparation of a model Ministerial to the GAB
Date 1978	DA approved by Leichhardt Council
November 78	Critique by residents & Letter from L J Fergusson Foundation Stone laid by the Minister
1978	Keelong Remand Centre at Unanderra opened
c. 1980	"Bidura" and ballroom restored
1983	Children's Court transferred to Glebe from Albion Street
1983	Exhibition to mark the centenary of Blacket's death at the National Trust's S H Ervin Gallery
1984	Leichhardt Council lists the Glebe Conservation Area Under LEP 20.
1985-86	Began to use "Bidura" as staff training centre
1990	Glebe Heritage Study
1991	Main Street Study - Glebe Point Road
c2003	Demolition of "Minda" and "Minali" except for the earlier Superintendent's Residence. Site redeveloped as the Juniperina Juvenile Justice Centre
2004	'Forgotten Australians' report includes reports of treatment at Bidura
2009	Transfer of property to State Property and sale to Visionland
2015-16	The Brutalism project by Byera Hadley Travelling Scholarship awardee, Glenn Harper
?2014-date	SOS Brutalism - International Survey of Brutalism
2016	Land & Environment Court Case
2017	Building vacated but occasional use by film crews Available for lease



### 3.0 PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

No access to the site or interiors was available though the visible street elevations of the buildings were inspected by the author.

#### 3.1 BIDURA HOUSE

The building is described in detail in the State Heritage Register inventory sheet for the building (Database No. 5063601) and this is summarised below.

##### 3.1.1 Main House

The main house is a three-storey Victorian Regency house featuring the symmetry characteristic of the style, as evident in the overall rectangular form, the hipped roof and the arrangement of chimneys, windows, doors and verandas. On both sides, however, the addition of windows has produced a less symmetrical appearance.

The external walls are of rendered, coursed and painted brick. The double-hung windows are timber, with external timber louvred shutters. The roof is clad in slate with decorative eaves brackets and patinated copper gutters, and features a central valley.

##### 3.1.2 Ballroom

The Ballroom is a separate Victorian Italianate building connected to the main residence by a covered way roofed in striped, vaulted corrugated metal. The external walls are coursed, rendered and painted brick featuring ornate cornices at ceiling and roof height and parapet walls castellated at the northwestern and south western sides.

At the front (south-western) facade is a vestibule annex and behind the parapet walls. The Ballroom and Vestibule have metal butterfly roofs falling to a shared central box gutter.

##### 3.1.3 Annexe

The annex is a one-storey rectangular structure at basement level with double hung windows and a hipped slate roof. A front verandah with timber posts and striped corrugated metal roof opens onto small, grassed courtyard to the south-west. The external walls are rendered, coursed and painted brick.

#### 3.2 FORMER BIDURA CHILDREN'S COURT AND METROPOLITAN REMAND CENTRE

The former Bidura Children's Court and Metropolitan Remand Centre are described in some detail in the HA and this is summarised below.

##### 3.2.1 Exterior

The building is a multi level complex in the Brutalist style set on a large site to the rear of Bidura House. The building is in a cast in-situ reinforced concrete building with an exposed aggregate finish. The finish has been described as "off white" but the cleaned patches of the façade reveal a light sandstone coloured finish

The horizontality of the south and east elevations is emphasized with long spandrels and large cantilevered eaves/terraces as well as strip windows where there are no terraces. The lower portion of the north elevation and part of the west elevation are predominantly windowless because of the proximity to the side boundary and the functions contained behind those facades. Sloping glass skylights admit light into rooms where windows in walls are inappropriate and the cylinders of stairwells enliven the facades.

### 3.2.2 Interior

The interior has a masterful play of light against the walls and cylindrical surfaces demonstrate a high level of design skill. The main foyer has a skylight and curved walls and the indirect lighting of the multi-purpose hall shows an understanding of providing non-glare sources of light for sports halls and suffuses the space with a sublime quality of light from the two long sides of the hall.

Elements of the details such as the timber slats were used by the GAB in other multi-purpose halls by the GAB Tertiary Section.

The exposed aggregate of the main structural concrete walls of the interior in the public and common areas are contrasted with timber screens. The screens of the multi-purpose hall are particularly noteworthy. A large number of the interior walls appear to be lightweight walls sheeted in plasterboard.

Original furniture with its coloured upholstery or finish also survives along with the mural in the main foyer.

### 3.3 ENVIRONS

The buildings are set in the heart of Glebe, a largely residential area of one and two storey houses from the Victorian period onwards with a long, retail strip fronting Glebe Point Road.

Bidura House fronts Glebe Point Road with the Remand Centre set to the rear with a side elevation to Ferry Lane. The Centre extends to Avon Street to the northeast but the site is partly truncated by a residential development to the north.

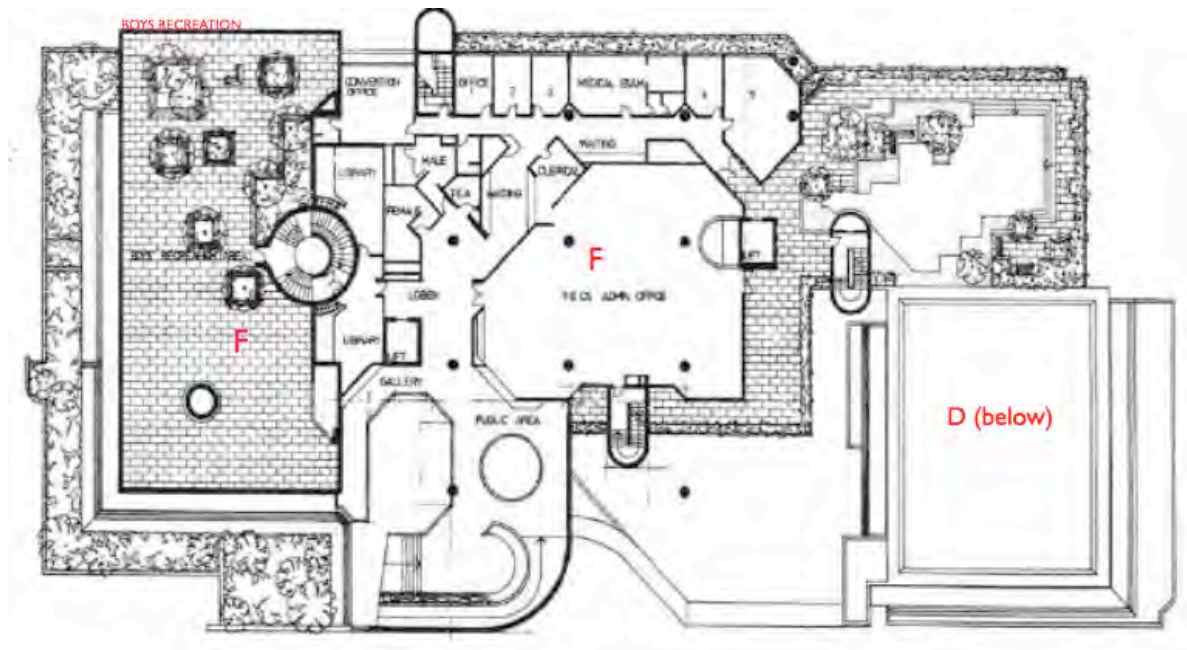


Figure 3.1 Bidura House & Former Bidura Children's Court and Metropolitan Remand Centre

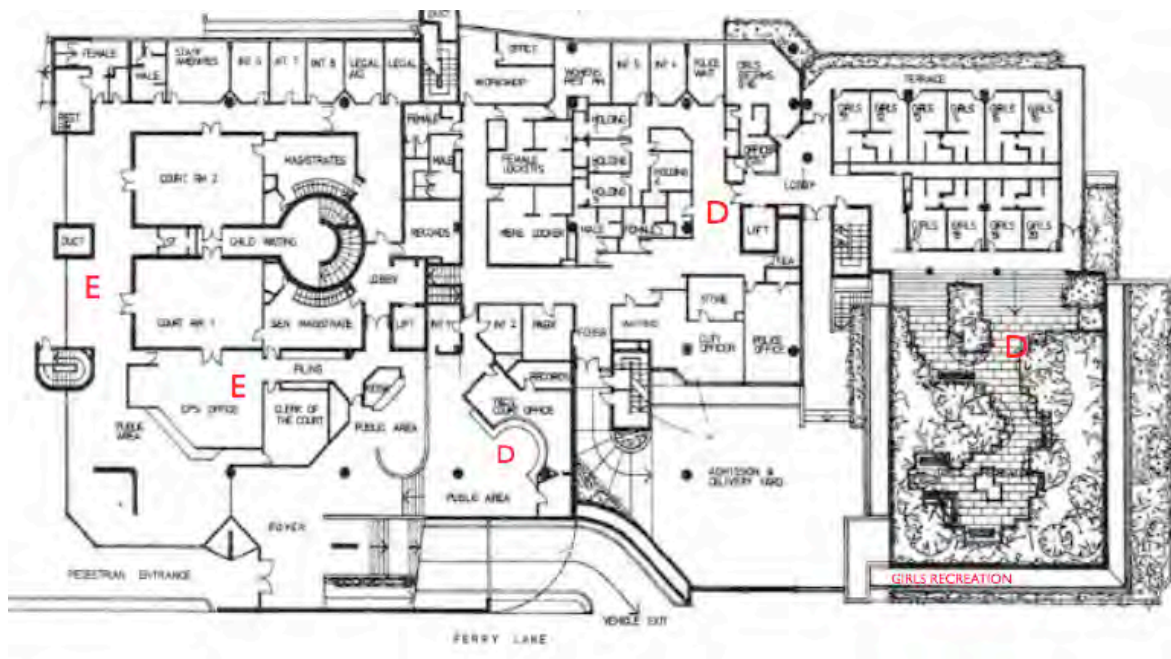
Site Plan

Source: SixMaps





PLAN LEVEL F



PLAN LEVELS D & E

Figure 3.2 Former Bidura Children's Court and Metropolitan Remand Centre

Plans

Source: HA P. 50

## 4.0 HERITAGE ASSESSMENT REVIEW

The following headings are taken from the various sections in the Heritage Assessment (HA) but are listed under different section numbers for this report.

### 4.1 SECTION 1.0 - METHODOLOGY

The HA does not set out a methodology or identify an adopted philosophy in Section 1.0 but the report follows the structure set out in the NSW Heritage Manual and *Assessing Heritage Significance* guide prepared by the NSW Heritage Division and is largely in accordance with the guidelines in the ICOMOS Burra Charter and JS Kerr's *The Conservation Plan*.

The methodology is appropriate for the preparation of the heritage assessment.

### 4.2 SECTIONS 2.0 & 3.0 - HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

The historical development of place is exhaustively catalogued in the HA for both Bidura and the Former Bidura Children's Court and Metropolitan Remand Centre. The report clearly sets out the context for the early and later development.

Section 3.5 includes a description of the current buildings and some assessment of its external and internal qualities but the description was somewhat hampered by the lack of detailed plans and access to the site.

### 4.3 SECTION 4.0 - COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

The comparative analysis provides a good overview of comparable Remand Centres, similar public buildings and the work of the Government's Architect Branch in particular examples that placed a modern structure in a historic setting.

The HA does not touch on comparative examples of Brutalist architecture in Sydney and beyond (unless part of the works noted above). This would have allowed some context for a comparative analysis of the Bidura complex in terms of its Brutalist elements and its architectural qualities and how it fits into the timeline for the development of the style. This is more apparent in Section 5.0 that provides a greater analysis of the building's qualities.

#### 4.4 SECTION 5.0 - HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

##### 4.4.1 Section 5.1 – Previous Assessments

The report contains previous assessments of the Bidura Children's Court and Metropolitan Remand Centre by the Australian Institute of Architects, the National Trust of Australia and the Twentieth Century Society of NSW. The assessments are summarised below with an indication of the relevant Heritage Manual criteria that may apply:

ORGANISATION	ASSESSMENT	CRITERION
Australian Institute of Architects	The only cast in situ concrete Brutalist court house in NSW	(f) Rarity
	Unique Brutalist period building	(f) Rarity
	A work of the NSW Government Architect's Office then at the height of its architectural output	(a) Historic (b) Historical Associations (c) Aesthetic
	Ranking	State Significance
National Trust of Australia	Major civic building in the late Twentieth Century Brutalist style	(a) Historic (c) Aesthetic
	Important role in the juvenile justice system	(a) Historic (d) Social
	Rarity as a functioning purpose built, children's court	(f) Rarity
	Accomplished and boldly composed example of the NSW Government Architect's Branch then at the height of its architectural output	(a) Historic (b) Historical Associations (c) Aesthetic
	Well executed Brutalist style building containing a highly intact auditorium/recreation hall in the Brutalist style	(c) Aesthetic
	Associations with Aboriginal and European children and staff	(d) Social
Twentieth Century Society of NSW	Fine example of the Brutalist style and accomplished and boldly composed example of the NSW Government Architect's Branch then at the height of its architectural output	(a) Historic (b) Historical Associations (c) Aesthetic
	Associations with Aboriginal and European children	(d) Social

The building was also the subject of a heritage assessment by heritage architects Lucas Stapleton Johnson<sup>1</sup>:

ORGANISATION	ASSESSMENT	CRITERION
Lucas Stapleton Johnson	Important historic role in the juvenile justice system	(a) Historic (d) Social
	Rarity as a functioning purpose built children's court	(f) Rarity
	An example of the work of the NSW Government Architect's Office and representative example of the Brutalist style	(a) Historic (b) Historical Associations (c) Aesthetic
	Contains a well executed auditorium/recreation hall in the Brutalist style	(c) Aesthetic
	Has associations for former inmates and staff	
	The only cast in situ concrete Brutalist court house in NSW	(d) Social

<sup>1</sup> Not sighted by the author



#### 4.4.2 Section 5.2 - Robertson and Hindmarsh Assessment

The assessment in the HA uses the seven Heritage Manual Criteria that are now universally used in NSW for the assessment of cultural significance.

##### 4.4.2.1 Criterion (a) Historical Significance

*Bidura house is an early (c. 1858), surviving example of the substantial homes of the prosperous middle classes that once occupied part of the glebe Point ridge. The building has historical significance for its ability to evidence early villas and villa subdivision and reflects the development of Glebe Point Road as a prestige address.*

*The former Bidura Children's Court & Remand Centre building is significant at a State level under this criterion as one of a series of purpose-designed combined children's court and remand centre buildings in New South Wales (the first being the Albion Street complex designed in 1911), each reflecting current thinking in the treatment of remanded children.*

*The former Bidura Children's Court & Remand Centre building is significant at a state level under this criterion as part of the legacy of the former NSW Department of Public Works Government Architects Branch (GAB) and as an example of how the GAB retained historic buildings designed by the colonial Architect and designed new buildings to be sympathetic to those and other surrounding nineteenth century buildings*

HA p. 88

We would largely concur with this assessment. Bidura house is a very good example of a mid Victorian house that retains its ability to demonstrate the early development of the area and was designed by a very notable architect, Edmund Blacket who was for a time NSW Colonial Architect.

We would not concur with the ranking of the Bidura Children's Court & Remand Centre as being of State significance under this criterion as the Government Architects Branch was inevitably selected to design the building and, as noted in the HA, the Branch were very active in this period. We consider the building to be of local significance (i.e. to Sydney) in this regard.

#### 4.4.2.2 Criterion (b) Associative Significance

*Bidura house and the former Bidura Children's Court have significance under this criterion at a State level because of their association with significant architects, NSW Colonial Architect Edmund Blacket, and the successive NSW Government Architect during the 1970s who impacted the development of New South Wales and Australian architecture and introduced the restoration of historic public buildings.*

*Since the early decades of the 20th century, the site has been associated with community service institutions, namely the Metropolitan shelter for girls, a Remand Centre, and the Bidura Children's Court for the then department of Youth & Community services. The site illustrates the successive re-use of the original residential structures for community related activities including child welfare, serving as a reminder, including to former staff and clients, of past regimes and policies, some of which have now been discredited.*

HA p. 89

We would concur with this assessment.

#### 4.4.2.3 Criterion (c) Aesthetic Significance

*Bidura house is a fine example of a Victorian Regency style villa in a garden setting designed by renowned architect E. T. Blacket which significantly contributes to the streetscape of glebe Point Road.*

*The former Bidura Children's Court & Remand Centre building is a well-executed and relatively intact example of late 20th century institutional architectural design which occupies almost the entire former site of the Bidura rear garden. The building is significant at a state level under this criterion for the excellence of its Modernist design as a Brutalist building that embodies honesty of expression of its materials, boldness of form and massing, excellence of construction detailing, and its use of light and shade both within and on the exterior of the building.*

*The interior of the building is a masterful composition of form and light in the greatest tradition of modern architecture. The cast in-situ concrete ceiling beams of the multi-purpose hall create a masterful play of shadow and light across the ceiling of the room and add a high degree of architectural interest.*

*its sophisticated modeling of the exterior of the building breaks up the mass of the building and imbues the building with a Humanist approach to what could have been a foreboding place of incarceration. The choice of internal colours also reflected the desire to create a calming interior. At the time of its design its "quiet, low profile" was recognized as an important design attribute in fitting the building into its urban context.*

HA p. 90

Based on the description and analysis of the building in the HA, we would concur with this assessment

Bidura house is clearly a house of considerable significance and is a fine example of the work of noted architect Edmund Blacket. Its significance in this regard is recognised in the heritage listing already applying to the house.

Bidura Children's Court & Remand Centre is a more difficult building to assess under this criterion and though the comparative analysis in the HA provides some comparable examples there is no definitive analysis of where the building sits in the pantheon of the style.

The style is discussed in detail in Jennifer Taylor's book *Australian Architecture since 1960*.

*The original inspiration for the Brutalist style lay in the later buildings of Le Corbusier. His Unité d'Habitation at Marseille, 1952, and his Jaoul houses, Neuilly, 1954, demonstrated an attitude to materials and construction that was to influence architecture through the following decades. The delight of space and shape of the chapel of Notre-Dame-du-Haut at Ronchamp, 1955, and the buildings at Chandigarh, 1957-1964, indicated the rich possibilities of the exploitation of the plastic properties of reinforced concrete for sculptural form.*

*Peter and Alison Smithson in England provided the theoretical leadership for the subsequent New Brutalist Movement. The Brutalist ethic was one of social concern, urban responsibility and integrity in the expression of material, structure and function. The aesthetic, in theory, would be a powerful image that derived directly from these considerations. While the movement was European in its genesis its influence was far reaching. Australian Brutalist architecture primarily followed European propositions and works in North America and Japan. Some Australian examples were deeply based on the building ethic of Brutalism and in certain cases this was extended to embrace the urban considerations; others drew primarily on the visual attributes.*

*The Late Twentieth-Century Brutalist style made its appearance in Australia in the mid-1960s. The style's insistence on off-form concrete made it necessary for architects and builders to pay great attention to the design and quality of formwork, some of the most significant early advances being in Western Australia. As happened in most parts of the world where Brutalism became popular, a paradoxical situation arose when enormous care had to be taken to obtain exactly the right degree of 'artless' roughness. For high prestige buildings, precast concrete panels with a factory-controlled texture were often preferred to the less predictable off-form concrete.*

*During the 1970s 'beton brut', with the accompanying articulation of masses and stress on the expression of internal, functional arrangements became a favoured medium particularly for public buildings and those for tertiary institutions. Its widespread use gave rise in some cases to sober, depressing environments, but in its more dramatic treatment to lively architecture of indented forms with a three dimensional quality that was emphasised by the deep shadows cast by the strong sun<sup>2</sup>.*

The former Bidura Children's Court & Remand Centre is not illustrated in the book but this does not imply that it is not a work of note.

<sup>2</sup> Taylor, Jennifer, *Australian Architecture since 1960*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. RAI National Education Division 1990




The major characteristics of the style were strong shapes, boldly composed and expressed in off-form reinforced concrete or textured brickwork or stone. Diagonal, sloping or strong curved elements often contrasted with horizontal and vertical members and large areas of unbroken wall surface with vertical slit windows and the use of non-loadbearing precast elements.




The Bidura Children's Court & Remand Centre is clearly an example of the style and includes many of these elements in a form that sought to respond to the site's historic setting, Bidura House and the scale of surrounding development. The building does not have the powerful forms of other well-known Brutalist buildings (see below) but is heavily articulated in a more linear, horizontal form where the architects were at pains to reduce its visual impact on Bidura house and views from Glebe Point Road.


The selection of the style was presumably a purposeful decision at a time when architects sought a contemporary expression for development and Bidura house would have given no design cues for a building of this scale and use. The setting of the building so close to the historic building would perhaps be a greater concern today when the issue of curtilage would be a greater consideration but it is clear that the architects were at pains to limit the visual impact of the Court & Remand Centre on Bidura house.

Key practitioners of the style are identified in Richard Apperly et als' *A Pictorial Guide to Identifying Australian Architecture* and include architects Ancher, Mortlock, Murray & Woolley; John Andrews; Cameron, Chisholm & Nicol; Edwards, Madigan & Torzillo and Harry Seidler. The NSW Government Architects Branch are not identified though there are several notable Brutalist buildings designed by the Branch including the Surry Hills Police Station (1975), the College of Catering Studies and Hotel Administration building at Ryde (1976) and the Alexander Mackie College of Advanced Education at Oatley (1980).

The High Court of Australia, in Canberra is perhaps the best-known example of the style but there are many examples throughout Australia. The style was particularly popular for institutional, educational and commercial buildings. Notable examples are shown below.

DATE	INSTITUTIONAL	ARCHITECTS
	Moe Courthouse	
		

1975	Sydney Police Station, Surry Hills	NSW Government Architect (Richard Dinham)
		
	EDUCATIONAL	
1973	School of Molecular & Biochemistry, Sydney University	Stafford, Moore and Farrington
		
1968-1972	Ku-ring-gai College of Advanced Education	David Turner
		

	COMMERCIAL	
1972	St Leonards Centre	Kerr & Smith/Geoff Malone
		
		The building displays the style in all its glory

The Bidura Children's Court & Remand Centre expresses many of the key elements of the style both internally and externally and has some interior elements of high quality. We consider that the building would meet the threshold for the criterion.

#### 4.4.2.4 Criterion (d) Social Significance

*The site is of social significance at a State level for its lengthy association with community service institutions, with a focus on child welfare, since 1920.*

*The former Bidura Children's Court & Remand Centre building is of social significance to the current local community as evidenced by their strong opposition to the demolition of the building.*

HA p. 91

We would concur with this assessment and add that the building would also have associations (though perhaps not be held in high regard) with the numerous children who have passed through its halls and the staff that have worked there.

Considering the extensive involvement of the NSW Government in child welfare the ranking under this criterion at State level would seem to overstate its significance but it would certainly be of local significance.

#### 4.4.2.5 Criterion (e) Research Potential

*The site has high archaeological potential as an early villa site.*

*The building has a high degree of research potential in terms of researching attitudes towards juvenile justice, incarceration, rehabilitation and the constructive use of time (learning, workshops, sports facilities) and the change in attitudes towards such buildings compared with nineteenth century and early twentieth century examples.*

HA p. 91

We would concur with this assessment.



#### 4.4.2.6 Criterion (f) Rarity

*The building is a rare example of an early villa. This is the last remaining 1850s villa within a partial garden setting on the eastern side of Glebe Point Road.*

*The former Bidura Children's Court & Remand Centre building is a rare surviving example of a purpose-built remand centre and children's court house. The building provides evidence of the original extent of the grounds of Bidura*

HA p. 92

We would concur with this assessment though in stylistic terms there are numerous examples of purposely designed, Brutalist style buildings in Sydney and beyond.

#### 4.4.2.7 Criterion (g) Representativeness

*Bidura house is an outstanding example of a Victorian Regency style villa in a garden setting that contributes to the streetscape.*

HA p. 92

We would concur with this assessment.

*The entire Bidura complex meets the criteria for listing at a state level in a number of criteria.*

HA p. 92

We would not concur with this assessment. While Bidura House is significant at a State level we consider that the former Bidura Children's Court & Remand Centre could only be considered significant at a local level.

#### 4.4.3 Section 5.3 - Integrity/Intactness

We would concur that both Bidura house and the former Bidura Children's Court & Remand Centre are substantially intact.

#### 4.4.4 Section 5.4 – Significance

The HA contains a statement of significance.

*The former Bidura Children's Court & Remand Centre building has historical significance as one of a series purpose-designed combined children's court and remand centre buildings in New South Wales, forming part of the legacy of the former NSW department of Public Works government Architect's Branch (GAB), providing an example of how the GAB retained historic buildings and designed new buildings to be sympathetic to those and other surrounding nineteenth century buildings. The design of the court building and remand centre is significant aesthetically because of its location within the Glebe Conservation Area (1974), for its sensitive treatment of the curtilage around Bidura house and its preservation of the major part of the historically important views from the rear verandah of Bidura house to glebe island and the city.*

*Bidura house and the former Bidura Children's Court & Remand Centre building have associative significance because of their association with significant architects, NSW Colonial Architect Edmund Blacket who designed the house for his family, and the successive NSW government Architects during the 1970s who impacted on the development of new south Wales and Australian architecture and introduced the restoration of historic public buildings across the state.*

*Since the early decades of the 20th century, the site has been associated with community service institutions, namely the Metropolitan Shelter for Girls, a Remand Centre, and the Bidura Children's Court for the then department of Youth & Community Services. The site illustrates the successive re-use of the original residential structures for community related activities including child welfare, serving as a reminder, including to former staff and clients, of past regimes and policies, some of which have now been discredited.*

*Bidura house is a fine example of a Victorian Regency style villa in a garden setting designed by renowned architect E. T. Blacket which significantly contributes to the streetscape of glebe Point Road.*

*The former Bidura Children's Court & Remand Centre building is a well-executed and relatively intact example of late 20th century institutional architectural design which occupies almost the entire former site of the Bidura rear garden and is significant at a State level under this criterion for the excellence of its Modernist design as a Brutalist building that embodies honesty of expression of its materials, boldness of form and massing, excellence of construction detailing, and its use of light and shade both within and on the exterior of the building.*

*The interior of the building is a masterful composition of form and light in the greatest tradition of modern architecture. The cast in-situ concrete ceiling beams of the multi- purpose hall create a masterful play of shadow and light across the ceiling of the room and add a high degree of architectural interest.*

*Its sophisticated modeling of the exterior of the building breaks up the mass of the building and imbues the building with a Humanist approach to what could have been a foreboding place of incarceration. The choice of internal colours also reflected the desire to create a calming interior. At the time of its design its "quiet, low profile" was recognized as an important design attribute in fitting the building into its urban context*

*The court and remand centre building has a high degree of research potential in terms of researching attitudes towards juvenile justice, incarceration, rehabilitation and the constructive use of time (learning, workshops, sports facilities) and the change in attitudes towards such buildings compared with nineteenth century and early twentieth century examples.*

*The former Bidura Children's Court & Remand Centre Building is a rare surviving example of a purpose-built remand centre and children's court house. The building provides evidence of the original extent of the grounds of Bidura.*

HA pp. 93 & 94

We would concur with the statement with the provisos on the ranking of the former Bidura Children's Court & Remand Centre Building as noted above.

#### 4.4.5 Section 5.5 - Gradings of Significance

The HA uses the standard criteria from the Heritage Manual for the ranking of significant spaces and elements.

#### 4.4.6 Section 5.6 – Significance of Components

The complex has not been inspected by the author but the HA assessment seems reasonable.

#### 4.5 SECTION 6.0 - ADAPTABILITY ASSESSMENT

This section sets out the planning considerations for the site that are not at issue.

#### 4.6 SECTION 7.0 – IDENTIFICATION OF A RANGE OF USES

The HA canvasses a number of alternative uses for the buildings and is a thorough investigation of likely options and their implications. It is clear from the ranking assessments and the alternative use discussion that the building could be adapted to a range of uses without extensive change and without unduly impacting on the heritage significance of the place. There are extensive areas in the upper floors that are identified as being of moderate significance that could see extensive change.

The HA does not assess the possibility of major additions to the building (probably because the major facades are ranked as being of Exceptional Significance – see also conclusions below) though it may be feasible to add to the building vertically in some sections to improve the range of adaptive re-uses possible.

#### 4.7 SECTION 8.0 – ADAPTIVE USE EXAMPLES

The HA provides a number of comparable buildings in both Australia and abroad that have been successfully adapted for other uses. Based on Section 7.0 (discussed above) it is clear that the building could be retained and adapted to a range of uses.

#### 4.8 SECTION 9.0 - CONCLUSION

##### 4.8.1 Section 9.1 - Building Envelope

We would largely concur with the assessment that there be limited change to the external form and appearance of the building to limit the impact on views and the surrounding neighbourhood, but vertical additions to the building may be feasible if this leads to a successful adaptive reuse and provided that they are compliant with the relevant planning controls.

##### 4.8.2 Section 9.2 – Floor Area

We would concur with this assessment apart from the potential for vertical additions as discussed above.

##### 4.8.3 Section 9.3 - Heritage Listing

We would concur with the assessment that the former Bidura Children's Court & Remand Centre Building should be listed as a Local heritage item in the Sydney LEP. We do not concur with the assessment that the building meets the threshold for listing on the State Heritage Register.

#### 4.8.4 Section 9.4 – Uses

This section reiterates the uses set out in Section 7.0 discussed above.

#### 4.8.5 Section 9.5 - Recommendations

*The former Bidura Children's Court & Remand Centre building, together with Bidura house, should be listed as an item of environmental heritage on Schedule 5 of the Sydney LEP 2012. The boundary of the listing should follow the legal lot boundary and include the pocket park at the end of the site. The interiors of the building should be included in the listing, especially those of exceptional and High Significance.*

We would concur with this assessment.

*The former Bidura Children's Court & Remand Centre building should be listed on the State Heritage Register for its State significance as part of the child welfare precinct with Bidura house. The former Children's Court & Remand Centre was an integral part of the child welfare process and Bidura house could not have performed its child welfare functions without the former Bidura Children's Court & Remand Centre building. To list one without the other under this criterion does not reflect the historical facts and the functionality of the site.*

We would not concur with this assessment and see no issue with the separation of listings between Bidura house and the former Bidura Children's Court & Remand Centre.

*A detailed dossier on the design of the building should be prepared that includes the available architectural documentation, ie presentation drawings of both schemes and the sun shading diagrams (if they exist) as well as a full set of the architectural plans. A statement of design should be obtained from the design architect.*

We would concur with this.

*The building height and setback controls for the site should follow the outline of the existing buildings and should not be increased beyond these limits, as the current form of the building still permits intended views towards the city and towards Glebe Island and the Glebe Island Bridge from Bidura (Mr Blacket's house) and relates to the scale and character of the Glebe Conservation Area.*

We would potentially concur with this but the building could be the subject of further investigation to consider vertical additions.

*To protect the amenity of the surrounding dwellings in the conservation area the floor area of the buildings should not be increased, with the exception of any additional floor area created through excavation under the former Children's Court & Remand Centre building and the stage / back of house area or the roofing over of the Boy's recreation yard on Level f. the remaining terraces should remain as terraces but there is potential to increase their usability and their landscaping should be reintroduced after repairs to the waterproofing are carried out.*

We would concur with this apart from the possibility of vertical additions noted above.



*The buildings could be adaptively re-used for any of the uses listed as being able to be approved with consent (or a combination of them) as the building construction and planning would enable the building to be used by one tenant or be subdivided into two separate areas (utilising the two lifts) or into a number of separate areas for use by multiple tenants (section 7.0). Such uses may include:*

- *commercial uses,*
- *educational uses including student accommodation.*
- *medical uses, day spas, recreation uses,*
- *community uses (such sporting activities using the auditorium or pool, meeting rooms, adult education classes, etc),*
- *Penthouse accommodation on the upper floors (eg one penthouse per residential floor),*
- *or any combination of these.*

*Apartment use is problematic other than on the upper levels and the building is more suited to student accommodation with shared common rooms. Penthouse style apartments could however be created on the upper levels.*

We would concur with this assessment.

*Internal layouts relating to the use as a remand centre can be altered after having been recorded, however the principal characteristics of the major public spaces should be retained.*

We would concur with this assessment.

## 5.0 SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 5.1 SUMMARY

We consider that:

- The Heritage Assessment is a thorough examination of the historical development and significance of the site and its elements
- The Heritage Assessment includes a through examination of the issues regarding adaptive re-use and change
- The conclusion of the Heritage Assessment to list the former Bidura Children's Court & Remand Centre in Schedule 5 of the Sydney LEP 2012 is well founded
- The case for listing the Bidura Children's Court & Remand Centre on the State Heritage Register has not been established and that listing on the LEP is the appropriate level of recognition of the cultural significance of the place



JOHN OULTRAM