


## Heritage Inventory Sheet

<b>Recommended Name</b>	The Oakes Centre		
<b>Site Image</b>			
<b>Address</b>	74 Hawkesbury Road, Westmead 2145 NSW		
<b>Lot/Section/DP</b>	-	-	SP44805
<b>Heritage Study ID</b>	HS96		
<b>LEP ID</b>	Not currently included on the Cumberland LEP		
<b>Heritage Conservation Area</b>	Included in a proposed HCA, Westmead Estate.		
<b>Date Updated</b>	February 2021		
<b>Significance Level</b>	LOCAL		
<b>Site Type</b>	Level 1	Built	
	Level 2	Commercial/Residential Buildings (private)	

## Curtilage Map



## Statement of Significance

The Oakes Centre at 74 Hawkesbury Road, Westmead is of local significance for its historic, associative, aesthetic, and representative values. The item is historically significant as a planned shopping centre built by the Housing Commission of NSW during the Post-War period to service the growing local community placed in housing commission residences, collectively known as Westmead Estate. The Oakes Centre is a central component of the Westmead Estate and forms a unique element within the landscape. The building is associated with renowned architect, Emil Sodersten who was known as one of Sydney's leading Art Deco architects during the 1920s and 1930s. The building has aesthetic significance as a highly intact brick Post-War Austerity building, constructed in brick with subtle modern detailing in the brickwork and windows. The building demonstrates the ideals of the Housing Commission which was established to build comfortable and well-appointed dwellings within the resources and capacity of the state during the 1940s. The item is a good representative example of early Housing Commission buildings constructed of brick, c.1948.

## Criteria Assessment

a) Historic	The item is historically significant as a planned shopping centre built by the Housing Commission of NSW during the Post-War period to service the growing local community placed in housing commission residences, collectively known as Westmead Estate. The Oakes Centre is a central component of the Westmead Estate and forms a unique element within the landscape.
b) Associative	The item is associated with renowned architect, Emil Sodersten who was known as one of Sydney's leading Art Deco architects during the 1920s and 1930s.

c) Aesthetic/Technical	The building has aesthetic significance as a highly intact brick Post-War Austerity building, constructed in brick with subtle modern detailing in the brickwork and windows.
d) Social	The item does not meet this criterion.
e) Scientific	The item does not meet this criterion.
f) Rarity	The item does not meet this criterion.
g) Representativeness	The building demonstrates the ideals of the Housing Commission which was established to build comfortable and well-appointed dwellings within the resources and capacity of the state during the 1940s. The item is a good representative example of early Housing Commission buildings constructed of brick, c.1948.

### Physical Description

The complex at 74 Hawkesbury Road, Westmead comprises of two symmetrical Post-War brick austerity buildings, three-storeys high with commercial use along the ground floor and residential apartments above. The roof is hipped with terracotta tiles, Colorbond guttering and boxed eaves. The brickwork is laid in courses of stretcher bond with expressed header courses surrounding windows above the entryway, and glazed bricks along the lower facade. Windows are a mix of fixed and casements with multipaned metal frames and brick sills. The front façade features metal lettering that reads 'OAKES CENTRE'.

A cantilevered awning with tensile bracing extends along the front façade, above the ground floor to adjoin the two buildings. The awning has a metal fascia with contemporary signage and ceiling constructed of fibre-cement sheets with timber battens. The lower façade retains original brickwork and resident entry doorways. Original doors are timber, painted green with four rectangular glass panels in each door. The shop fronts are contemporary with modified metal framed windows and doorways.

There are some rear, single storey extensions constructed of brick that are a discreet addition to the building.

The building has a deep setback from Hawkesbury Road with a small carpark bay fronting the building. Between the building and the roadway there are concrete slabbed pedestrian areas with seating, play equipment, garden beds and a pavilion. The pavilion is constructed in face brick with half height walls which extend to full height walls at each corner. It has a hipped roof with Marseilles tiles, Colorbond guttering, boxed eaves, and a fibre-cement sheet ceiling. The roof is supported on the full height brick walls at the corners as well as square timber posts either side of the entry points in the middle of the pavilion on the street frontage and the shop side frontage. The shop side entry is addressed by four brick steps and a metal handrail, while the street side entry is level with the footpath. On the street side of the pavilion is a bronze plaque set flush with the brickwork that reads:

Westmead Shopping Centre  
This stone was unveiled by Mrs Clive R. Evatt  
2<sup>nd</sup> October 1948  
Emil Sodersten F.R.A.I.A      John Stubbs and Sons Pty Ltd  
Architect                              Builders

The landscape of the Oakes Centre consists of a number of low-lying plants with some palms and deciduous trees located immediately in front of the building. There are several deciduous trees planted along the pedestrian footpath above the parking bay. A grassed lawn is located to the south of the building to front Nolan Crescent.

The building is well maintained and in good condition.

<b>Condition</b>	<b>Good</b>	Fair	Poor
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### Alterations and Additions

- Contemporary shopfronts
- Upgraded roadway c.1999-2000s
- Rear extension.

The Oakes Centre retains a high level of integrity with much of its original fabric and form intact.

<b>Integrity</b>	<b>High</b>	Moderate	Low
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\* *element detracts from the overall cultural significance of the place*

### Historical Notes

Construction years	c.1948
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#### Westmead

The suburb of Westmead is bounded by the suburbs of Wentworthville to the west, Parramatta to the east, Northmead to the north and Mays Hill and Merrylands to the south. The southern half of Westmead, south of Westmead Station lies in the area governed by Cumberland City Council.

Westmead originally formed part of the western portion of the Domain of Government House at Parramatta, which was laid out by Governor Philip in 1790. It originally comprised of over 2000 acres of land established by Governor Macquarie as an administrative area for the penal colony and it became a residential office for ten governors.

By the 1850s the Domain became known as Parramatta Park. In 1859-1861, an extensive portion of the Domain was subdivided, and it was at this time that the suburb became known as Westmead ('West meadow'). The major landholder in the area was William Fullagar, a butcher and publican turned stock agent. Land was also allotted to James Houison, John Savery Rodd and George Oakes. These allotments comprised 50 acres, however, many of these individuals acquired multiple allotments. By the time of this subdivision, a number of main roads had been established including Hawkesbury Road, Pye Street, Oakes Street, Bridge Road, Good Street and Houison Street.

Westmead was relatively slow to develop, and it was only after the Westmead Railway Station was opened in 1883 that landowners began to subdivide in the area. By the 1920s, the station's facilities had improved and several estates such as Toohey's Palm Estate and Fullagar's Estate were further subdivided.

#### Westmead Housing Estate

The Post-War period presented a crisis for Australians as there had been limited building during the war time and there was a considerable shortage of housing. By the mid-1940s it was evident that creating new housing was of paramount importance and the quicker new houses could be erected the better. In the 1940s the Housing Commission of NSW was established, along with the first Commonwealth/ State Government Housing Agreement. Statistics from the time indicated that there were over 80,000 families requiring urgent housing. According to an article from 10 September 1944, it was estimated that by 1945 there would be a need for up to 300,000 homes in order to adequately address the housing shortage issue.

The Housing Commission acquired land throughout NSW for the establishment of new homes to alleviate the housing crisis and by the end of the 1940s, more than 12,000 houses had been constructed in addition to 10,000 that were either in the process of being developed or planned. At the time, Westmead remained relatively undeveloped and was noted to consist of 'barren paddocks' that could serve as 'the foundations of a modern, well-planned garden suburb'.

The Westmead Housing Commission Competition was held in June 1944 where qualified personnel from around the world were invited to create designs for the planning of a 36 acre allotment of land, on the former Toohey Palm Estate which had been acquired by the Housing Commission. The designs were to accommodate 183 houses within the 36 acre allotment. In regards to the architectural designs, three concepts were required for the following:

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*Type A House - to accommodate a man, wife and their two children and to the cost of no more than £800;*

*Type B House - to accommodate a man, wife and their four children to the cost of no more than £900;*

*Type C House - to accommodate a man, wife and their six children to the cost of no more than £1000.*

The NSW Housing Commission received 97 submissions for the planning of the area which included 15 differing architectural housing designs. The architectural section of the competition required that five designs be submitted that covered the three different types of homes. The winner of the NSW Housing Commission's Westmead building scheme was architect Albert HA Hanson who completed the designs in conjunction with architecture student LW Jackson of Melbourne University. According to Hanson, the cost limitations (which dated from 1939) meant that concessions had to be made and rooms downsized below the minimum Sydney building approved regulations, which stipulated 80 square ft as a minimum.

A variety of responses were received regarding the unsuitability of the winning architectural design specifically owing to the size and lack of natural light in the house. In November 1944, it was revealed that the original winning design was not used in the final cottages. The final designs were completed by the Commission's architects and consisted of approximately nine varying designs. It also included the construction of low brick fences and concrete foot paths.

#### **Construction of the Westmead Housing Estate**

On Wednesday 5 July 1944, the State Housing Commission began construction of 21 brick buildings on the former Toohey Palm Estate. However, these houses were not part of the "model suburb" the competition sought to create, even though they were located in close proximity to the Westmead Estate zoned area, along Austral Avenue.

Work began on the Westmead Housing Development on 28 July 1944 including surveying, the drafting of architectural plans, excavation, the laying of foundations and connection of water and telephone lines. By 23 August 1944 it is reported that the Commission had begun working on the eastern section of the Toohey Palm Estate, which was to be an extension of the main development located within Austral Avenue. Towards the end of 1944 questions were being raised as to who would benefit from the new housing development in Westmead. In an article dating from 12 October, it is noted that the houses would be open to tenants by ballot. Two separate ballots were to be conducted in order to appropriately divide housing between Servicemen and civilians.

According to an article from 1947, the new housing in Westmead had resulted in a 50% increase in school attendance but appropriate facilities had not been provided to accommodate this increase. As one of the first mass housing commission projects, the Westmead Estate was considered largely successful and building activities continued to occur well into the late 1940s.

#### **The Oakes Centre**

The subject site is located on land which formed a part of the Government Domain which was subdivided in 1859. The land was acquired by William Roberts. The land remained undeveloped until the 1940s when the Housing Commission developed the Westmead Estate. The Westmead Housing Commission Estate comprised of 300 brick houses as well as a retail strip with 12 shops and a block of flats. It was the intention of the Housing Commission to make Westmead a 'model village'. The Oakes Centre formed an important part of this development which provided community shops. The building was designed by renowned Sydney architect Emil Sodersten and built by John Stubbs and Sons Pty Ltd in c.1948.

Emil Sodersten was one of Sydney's two leading architects of Art Deco buildings during the 1930s – noted especially for apartment buildings around Elizabeth Bay. He also designed interiors and furniture for some of his commissions, including the Australia Hotel and the City Mutual Life Assurance building.

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As part of the development works a shopping centre was designed and was to be constructed along Hawkesbury Road. In an article from May 1946 the shopping centre is described as follows:

The erection of this shopping block will be the central and culminating feature of the Westmead plan, and it will add the finishing touch to what is already one of the Housing Commission show projects.

To be erected in a central position on the main arterial highway the building will comprise 12 shops with 16 flats occupying the upper portion of the block. Plans provide for a grocery, bakery and a cake shop, butchery, green grocery, delicatessen, chemist, newsagent, barber, beauty parlor [sic], library, book repairer and hardware store.

An architectural feature of the design is the ornamental treatment of the space allotted to essential facilities such as public telephones. These will be located in the two small rotundas, whilst the larger rotundas will house a bus waiting room on the left and a florist's kiosk on the right.

While the description that appeared in the aforementioned newspaper article does not directly correlate with the final shopping centre design, it provides an indication of the significance the shopping centre development had in relation to improving the amenities of the area.

The building remains in use a commercial centre with apartment blocks above.

Recommendations					
Heritage Management		Existing Built and Landscape Elements		Future Development and Planning	
1. Include this item as a new heritage listing on the LEP.	X	6. Original fabric is highly significant and should be maintained.	X	12. Alterations and additions should respond to the existing pattern of development, with careful consideration of the setting (form, scale, bulk, setback and height).	X
2. Include this item's listing as part of or as a Heritage Conservation Area.		7. Unsympathetic alterations that detract from the cultural significance of the item should be removed.		13. New alterations and additions should respect the historic aesthetic/character of the item and area (e.g. paint scheme, materiality, style, landscape elements).	X
3. Consider additional research to nominate this item for the State Heritage Register.		8. Maintain heritage landscape elements and schemes.	X	14. Future uses for this item should be compatible with its historical functions/associations.	
4. The heritage curtilage for this item should be revised/reduced.		9. Maintain the existing setting of the heritage item, informed by the historic pattern of neighbouring development (form, scale, bulk, setback and height).	X		

5. Not recommended for inclusion on the LEP.	10. Maintain the historic aesthetic/character of the item and area (e.g. paint scheme, materiality, style, landscape elements).	X	
	11. The condition of this item is poor. Condition and maintenance should be monitored.		

Other recommendations and/or comments:

- None.

### Listings

Heritage Listing	Listing Title	Listing Number
Heritage Act – State Heritage Register	N/A	-
Local Environmental Plan	N/A	-
Cumberland Heritage Study	The Oakes Centre	HS96
National Trust Australia Register	N/A	-

### Other References

- Broomham, R and T Kass. 1992. *Holroyd Heritage Study Thematic History*. Sydney: Holroyd City Council.
- City Plan Heritage 2017, *Westmead Station (South Precinct) Heritage Study*, City Plan Heritage, Sydney.
- Elias, J and Coppins, S 2013, *Pictorial History Holroyd*, Kingsclear Books, Alexandria.

### Limitations

1. Access to all heritage items was limited to a visual inspection from the public domain. The interiors of buildings and inaccessible areas such as rear gardens were not assessed as part of this heritage study.

2. Condition and site modification assessment was limited to a visual inspection undertaken from the public domain.

3. Unless additional research was required, historical research for all heritage items was based on existing information in the Cumberland Heritage Study Stage 1 2019 prepared by Extent Heritage.

Additional Images



View from parking bay to front façade.



Middle of buildings, adjoined by awning.



View of commercial shops occupying the ground floor.



View of commercial shops occupying the ground floor.



Detail of front façade with metal lettering.



Detail of shopfront at the northern end of the building.





View south from northern end to building.



Overview of building.



View along parking bay.



South elevation of building.



Pavilion.



Foundation stone inlaid in pavilion wall.



Rear elevation with discreet brick single story addition.



Rear elevation.