



# weather station

## fact sheet

The Centennial Park weather station was part of a network of meteorological stations installed across Australia from the 1860s, yet it is exceptionally rare in type. Built on a square timber frame, its slatted pyramid-shaped roof and lattice sides open at the bottom allowed air to circulate freely while protecting the instruments inside from direct sunlight and wind. Despite its square shape, it was called a *Round House weather station*.

### Historical context

Originally constructed in 1907, the Centennial Park weather station was part of a much larger project to assist the European settlers across Australia to understand and predict the weather. From extreme drought to deadly fogs, floods and storms, the weather has profoundly shaped the development of the Australian colonies and nation. In the years before Federation, scientists took a leading role in thinking of the Australian continent as a united place.

In November 1879, the first inter-colonial conference on astronomy and meteorology was held at Sydney Observatory, and soon after a standardised system for recording weather information and issuing continental weather forecasts and charts was put into place. As a measure of a united approach and the importance of science to national development, when the new Commonwealth of Australia was established in 1901, astronomy and meteorology were specifically defined as Commonwealth responsibilities.

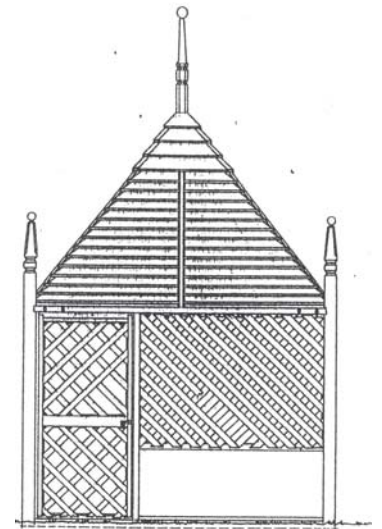
In its early years, one of the main goals of the Bureau of Meteorology's forecasting service was to reduce the number of shipwrecks. Today these measurements continue to provide valuable evidence to issues such as climate change and other matters of scientific and environmental concern.

### Role of the Centennial Park weather station

From 1907 to 1975 the weather station in Centennial Park recorded the daily maximum and minimum temperatures. The readings were used by the government astronomer, and from 1908 the Commonwealth Bureau of Meteorology, to forecast weather, a matter of vital concern to the young nation of Australia.

By the 1960s the weather station in Centennial Park had badly deteriorated, and it was decided by the Bureau of Meteorology that it would be "cheaper and more satisfactory" to completely rebuild the Round House rather than attempt repairs.

As a result, the current weather station was built in 1967–68. This replica is itself a rare and significant structure as it is one of only two existing replicas of this type of weather station in Australia - the other is within the grounds of the Sydney Observatory.



Sketch of original plan



Weather station located in Centennial Parklands depot, 1982



The weather station was finally decommissioned in 1972 and the remnants were later deposited in the Centennial Park Bird Sanctuary.

### **Restoration**

In 2004 a Heritage Assessment Report was commissioned by the Centennial Park and Moore Park Trust (Trust) to assess the significance of the weather station. Study findings concluded that the weather station was unique in the area as an excellent surviving replica of its type and was of local historical significance.

It was recommended that it should be reconstructed for interpretative purposes in a suitable position, using as much of the salvaged existing fabric as was practical, and as close as practicable to its original position.

In 2008, the Centennial Parklands Foundation was successful in obtaining funding from the NSW Heritage Grants Program which allowed restoration works to commence. The works detailed restoration of the timber structure and preparation of the new site including paving, edging and turfing.

The restored weather station is now located on the site outside the Bird Sanctuary on Parkes Drive. This site was assessed to be the most suitable in terms of accessibility, public visibility, security, compliance with the Centennial Parklands Conservation Management Plan (CMP) and proximity to its original position.

Although the weather station is not in use for regular measurements, it will provide historical and educational information to Park visitors as well as being incorporated into the Parklands' school education and interpretation programs.

### **Interpretation**

While permanent interpretive panels are being developed to provide the community with information on the weather station, the Trust has installed interim signage that outlines its history and significance.

The permanent (Stage One) signage will be used by the Trust as self-discovery interpretation and as important elements of its Education Program.

The Centennial Parklands Foundation is seeking funds for Stage Two interpretation activities including the development of an interpretive seat to provide contextual detail on the importance and evolution of meteorological observations in Australia.

### **Acknowledgements**

- *Terry Bluett, former Observations Manager for the Bureau of Meteorology*
- *Kerime Danis, City Plan Heritage*
- *Heritage Council of NSW, Department of Planning*
- *Freeman Ryan Design*