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# HIGH CROSS

## Heritage Conservation Area

*A major urban space providing a focus for nearby institutional buildings with many important religious and residential buildings in the surrounding area.*

The High Cross Conservation Area consists of High Cross Park, urban areas to the north-east and south, and part of the Prince of Wales Hospital to the west.

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### What is the area's significance?

#### **Aesthetic Significance:**

High Cross Park has aesthetic significance as one of Randwick's major urban spaces. It is a feature in vistas along Belmore Road, Avoca Street, Perouse Road and Coogee Bay Road. The Norfolk Island Pines in the park provide a visual link between the surrounding urban areas.

The sandstone and iron palisade fence and sandstone buildings of the former Superintendent's residence, former Destitute Children's Asylum and former Catherine Hayes Hospital, on the western side of Avoca Street, are part of the urban space formed by the park. The southern and north-eastern boundaries of this space are defined by Victorian, Federation and Inter-War period residential buildings, on Cuthill Street and Belmore Road. The Victorian Filigree style Royal Hotel is on the corner of Cuthill Street and Perouse Road.

In the north-eastern half of the conservation area there are excellent groupings of Victorian and Federation detached and attached houses, and Inter-War period flat buildings. The row of ten Victorian Free Gothic style two storey terraces, Nos 2-20 Mears Avenue, is outstanding. "Nugal Hall", at No 18 Milford Street, is one of Randwick's grandest early Victorian houses. "Ventnor", near the south-east corner of Milford Street and Avoca Street, is a fine quality Victorian period sandstone house. It is now in the grounds of the Sacred Heart School.

Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Church, on Avoca Street, is an excellent example of a Victorian Free Gothic style church. The church, "Ventnor" to the north, the Victorian period commercial buildings to the south, and the avenue plantings of fig trees, make a major contribution to the streetscape character of Avoca Street.

Visually, the connections to the statue of Captain Cook, and the buildings behind on the corner of Belmore and Avoca Streets, are an important part of the cross-roads character of the precinct.

#### **Historic Significance:**

The conservation area is located on a ridge in the centre of Randwick. Most of Randwick's early roads cross or originate from High Cross. The existing buildings around High Cross demonstrate its use as a major civic space, since the foundation of the village of Randwick in the mid-nineteenth century. The sandstone buildings in the grounds of the Prince of Wales Hospital, and the Royal Hotel are the best examples. Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Church is another example of a communal use which was established in the area, due to its central location.

This part of "Randwick Ridge" was one of the first parts of the City to be developed, and was historically the most important. It has strong associations with Simeon Pearce, who first promoted the locality as a prestigious living environment. The residential buildings in the

conservation area provide evidence of the subdivision, development and subsequent redevelopment of the area in the Victorian, Federation and Inter-War periods. The conservation area has excellent examples of housing from all three periods.

### **Social Significance:**

High Cross is widely recognized by the community as a central and identifying element of Randwick's historic landscape. High Cross Reserve was an early focal point for social gatherings in the village. Its proximity to the former Destitute Children's Asylum (now the Prince of Wales Hospital) was also significant. The reserve was used as a drill ground for the Randwick Volunteer Rifles in the nineteenth century, based on English village militia. This reinforced Simeon Pearce's vision of an idealized English village for the elite of the Colony.

The physical presence of the Hospital marks its continuing importance in the local and regional community. The Royal Hotel is the other major building overlooking the central space. The streetscape character of the residential parts of the conservation area is also widely appreciated.

### **Themes Represented:**

The following historical themes, identified in the 1989 Randwick Heritage Study, are directly illustrated in the conservation area:

- Speculation and promotion
- Government and institutions
- Promotion of culture, religion and education
- Recreation, entertainment and leisure
- Transport and communications

The following themes are indirectly represented:

- Modifying the landscape
- Industry and commerce
- Suburbanisation

