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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

The Rathmines RAAF Base is culturally significant on a national level because of its association with World War II, and with pivotal operational events such as the Coral Sea Battle, coast watchers and mine laying. All of these wartime events involved, to some degree, the Catalina aircraft which were based at Rathmines. Equally important were the technical training, services and support activities that were carried out at the base.

A Conservation Management Plan and a draft Plan of Management have been prepared for the base. These documents provide the guidance to support the solutions and issues identified in this Area Plan.

Note: This Area Plan should be read in conjunction with [Lake Macquarie City Council Heritage Guidelines](#), which provide additional development guidelines for Heritage Precincts.

1.2 LAND TO WHICH THIS PLAN APPLIES

This Area Plan applies to all the land outlined in heavy green edging, as shown within Figure 1 – Rathmines RAAF Base Heritage Precinct.

Note: For heritage items or potential heritage sites located within the Heritage Precinct, refer to *Lake Macquarie Local Environmental Plan (LM LEP 2014)* and [Lake Macquarie City Council Heritage Guidelines](#) respectively.



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Figure 1 - Rathmines RAAF Base Heritage Precinct

1.3 HISTORY AND EXISTING CHARACTER

Rathmines RAAF Base (1939-1952) had a profound effect on post-WW II development in Lake Macquarie. Rathmines was the largest flying-boat base in Australia, and the location for the Seaplane Training Flight, seamanship and gunnery courses, and trades training. It housed the main repair shops for all flying-boats, and was a major RAAF communications centre.

Many men and women who came to work at the base stayed in the area after the war and formed a technology skilled army. They helped develop power stations, mechanised coalmines and much of the present private industrial and commercial base of the City. Surviving structures in the subject area are an important heritage resource for the City of Lake Macquarie.

This area is largely parkland at present, with a few scattered buildings. East and south of the Catalina Memorial Nursing Home, the parkland consists of indigenous and introduced trees. Land west of the nursing home is mostly uncleared bushland.

The area has lost a large part of the atmosphere of a military base because most of the buildings that were once densely packed on the peninsular north and east of the Hospital and Rosemary Row have been demolished. A huge hangar and extensive barracks have gone. Of the buildings that survive, many seem to have been moved from their wartime positions.

The broad concrete Catalina slips remain untouched, and a boat slip on Styles Point is still recognisable.

1.4 SPECIFIC ISSUES RELATING TO THIS LOCALITY

Future development in the vicinity of the Rathmines RAAF Base will need to consider:

- The existing Conservation Management Plan and the Draft Plan of Management covering the site.
- Sensitive elements of the local topography, and existing streetscapes.

1.5 CONTEXT AND SETTINGS

Objectives

- a. To safeguard the heritage and cultural values of the Rathmines RAAF Base.
- b. To ensure that development complements the existing architectural style, decoration and adornments.
- c. To ensure that development does not detract from the significance of the dominant cultural and natural elements of the base.

Controls

1. Development on the Rathmines RAAF Base must be in accordance with the adopted Conservation Management Plan and Plan of Management.
2. Development proposals must incorporate bulk, form, scale and landscaping that is consistent with, and complements the historic development of the Rathmines Heritage Precinct.
3. Development must provide a delineated buffer to the historic uses of the land and its curtilage.