

WILLOW COURT ETHICAL PRINCIPLES AND GUIDELINES

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1. PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The Willow Court Ethical Principles and Guidelines have been developed to provide partners, tenants and external user groups accessing the Willow Court precinct with guiding principles, heritage regulations and standards to support activities.

Activities of Willow Court should abide by the following principles:

- Respecting the cultural heritage and maintaining good stewardship of the precinct.
- Respecting the built heritage.
- Ensuring accessibility.
- Respect and recognition of Aboriginal people.
- Respecting the sensitivities of the subject matter and the language used to inform audiences appropriately.
- Ensuring the privacy of former employees and patients.
- Using appropriate terminology when talking about mental health to not further stigmatise.
- Ensuring the authenticity of content/stories told with verifiable facts and sources.

Having clear Ethical Principles and Guidelines in place will help ensure a more cohesive, ethical, and consistent approach considering site context, heritage controls and permitted activities undertaken by the various user groups and tenants. The document will be reviewed and updated regularly, so the information remains relevant and of use.

It is noted that the development of a Willow Court Heritage Interpretation Plan will provide Council with a much more detailed set of Interpretation standards and recommendations that will further inform this work.

These resources, together with the development of the Willow Court Strategy and Masterplan, will help ensure that the activation of the Willow Court precinct is well governed with a consistent approach.

2. SITE LOCATION

The site incorporates the entire curtilage area identified under the Tasmanian Heritage Register (THR) as the Willow Court Asylum Complex (THR ID: 7019). It consists of 23 buildings representing over 170 years of institutional history.

3. SITE CONTEXT

Willow Court is located in the Derwent Valley, in the town of New Norfolk; it sits approximately 36 kilometres northwest of Hobart.

Situated on the outskirts of the town centre, Willow Court is bordered by Humphrey Street to the west, George Street to the north, and the Avenue, as well as the southern-flowing Lachlan River, a tributary of the Derwent River.

The Complex currently consists of 23 structures and landscape elements spread across approximately 18 hectares, representing 170 years of continuous change in design and methodology for administering mental health care. Various buildings have been sold or are being leased by tenants, with the DVC maintaining ownership of:

- The Barracks (1830-1833)
- Alonnah/Ward A (1965-1968)
- Carlton House/C Ward (1908-1909)
- Frascati (1834) • Bronte House (1925-1926)

The remaining buildings are under private ownership and form part of the main precinct that includes:

- The Ladies' Cottage/J Ward (1868)
- Olga/Ward O (1886-1888)
- The Nurses' Home/Male Residential Building (1911-1913)
- Administration Building & Hall (c.1940) • Lyprenny (Hastings) hostel/Ward H (1966-1968) • Rehabilitation/Occupational Therapy (1966)
- Lachlan House (1964-1965) • Masonic Lodge (formerly K2/Female Refractory Ward) (1901) & Lions Club Building (1966)
- The School/Derwent Valley Community Centre (1964-65) • Alcheringa House (Myrtle House/Ward M) (1964-66)
- Mortuary (c1960)
- Garden shed/arts & crafts building (c1896) • Derwent House/Ward D (1928-29) • Esperance House/Ward E (1928-29) • Industrial Therapy (1973) • Residence (c. the 1940s)

4. MAINTAINING STEWARDSHIP

Willow Court is a significant part of the social fabric of New Norfolk and Tasmania. As tenants, precinct partners and business operators working within Willow Court, we all have a shared responsibility to take care of the site's tangible and intangible cultural heritage.

Tangible cultural heritage is:

- the physical objects, buildings, land, and artefacts inherited from previous generations. In the case of Willow Court, this could include items such as the Barracks, associated artefacts, and past patient files.

Intangible cultural heritage is:

- the values, traditions and living expressions inherited from past generations. These may be oral traditions, social practices, knowledge, and ritual. In the case of Willow Court, this could include stories passed down from past patients and staff, attitudes towards and knowledge of mental health care practices dating from Willow Court, and events associated with the site.

In a cultural heritage context, stewardship is taking care of sites and their values. It is an essential part of protecting and enriching heritage places for generations to come.

As a mixed-use precinct with diverse interests and needs, stewardship is also about timely and respectful engagement, communication and collaboration between partners, Council, tenants, and business operators.

5. RESPECTING BUILT HERITAGE

Willow Court is a local and State Heritage listed site protected by legislation known as the *Derwent Valley Interim Planning Scheme 2015* and the *Historic Cultural Heritage Act 1995*.

Any changes to the site's original structures must first be approved by the Tasmanian Heritage Council, which oversees the strategic guidance of State Heritage listed places across Tasmania.

With increased knowledge on how to protect heritage places and documents such as the [Burra Charter](#)¹ to help guide their conservation, current and future uses of Willow Court can sensitively complement the site's heritage fabric, history and the people it represents.

¹ Australia/ICOMOS, 2013, The Burra Charter: the Australia ICOMOS Charter for Places of Cultural Significance

People are encouraged to view Conservation Management Plans where they exist for buildings as they will assist greatly in managing the site's historic heritage resources.

As owners, tenants, and users of Willow Court, routine cleaning, maintenance, and reporting of any structural damage is essential.

Ensuring items are appropriately stored and put away will reduce the possibility of causing risk to visitors using the space.

6. ENSURING ACCESSIBILITY

- Ensure that everyone has equal access

As a mixed-use heritage site in both the public and private domain, as much of the site as possible must remain physically and intellectually available to ensure this knowledge can be accessed. This includes ensuring:

- Access for all abilities
- Accessible communication
- Inclusive and equitable spaces and places

Steps should always be taken to ensure that the Willow Court precinct is a safe and inclusive place for all community members.

- Promote the site

In addition to conserving and making the site accessible to everyone, promoting Willow Court is integral to enacting stewardship. Given its complex and unique history, there may be many different perceptions of the site, and people may ascribe different or conflicting meanings to it over time. Recognising and promoting the diverse values of a heritage site can strengthen awareness about the need to protect and conserve it.

Promoting Willow Court can benefit the site in three main ways:

1. Advancing it as an educational resource
2. Creating a sustainable financial structure
3. Continuing to protect and conserve the site

7. RESPECT AND RECOGNITION OF ABORIGINAL PEOPLE

Council is developing an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Recognition Strategy. Once developed and approved by the Council, this will provide Council, precinct partners, tenants and operators with consistent standards and protocols.

8. STANDARDS REGARDING SENSITIVE INFORMATION

For many, difficult histories can be upsetting and stressful, and can trigger painful memories or thoughts. Difficult histories can also make visitors feel guilt or shame as they become more aware of their personal complacencies, indifferences, and inaction to social injustice.

Standards for ensuring a sensitive approach include:

- When using historic terminology or referring to outdated assumptions and ideas, do so in a manner that clearly identifies the historical context.

- Always assume that someone in your audience has a personal connection to the precinct. Doing this will make you aware of the potential negative impact certain information and stories might have.
- A trigger warning is a statement made before sharing potentially disturbing content, which allows the audience to either avoid or emotionally prepare for exposure to the content. The use of trigger warnings, delivered verbally or in written format, should be considered for specific topics and audiences and used at the discretion of the relevant authority.

9. USING APPROPRIATE TERMINOLOGY

Willow Court is a site steeped in the historical context of its many eras. As one of Australia's longest continually running mental health facilities, it encapsulates the evolution of perceptions of mental health, including changes in institutional facility design, architecture, diagnoses, treatments, and the terminologies used to describe them. The historic language and diagnostic terms used to describe mental health and its treatment at Willow Court are highly contextual and reflect the attitudes, ideas and language of the time.

The field of mental health care experienced rapid growth in the nineteenth century with the advent of psychiatric hospitals and the introduction of new theories and techniques to address mental health concerns. Primary records such as patient files from Willow Court dating from the 1830s demonstrate the changing knowledge base of psychiatry in Tasmania.

Medical terminology is constantly evolving and staying up to date with these changes can be difficult, particularly when language is often nuanced and contested. The resources provided below can assist you with talking about mental health in a contemporary context.

Tips on how to talk about mental health issues thoughtfully and respectfully:

- Replace 'suffers from mental illness' with 'experiencing mental illness.'
- Replace 'mentally ill person' with 'person experiencing a mental illness.'
- Replace 'normal behaviour' with 'usual' or 'typical behaviour.'
- Replace 'committed suicide' with 'died by suicide.'

10. ENSURING THE PRIVACY OF FORMER EMPLOYEES AND PATIENTS

All activities must avoid identifying former employees and patients who are alive or passed in the last 75 years without express permission from the individuals or their families. This excludes public figures and/or those who have shared their story on the public record.

The identification of individuals who passed away more than 75 years ago should be based on information from verified sources and should avoid speculation, misrepresentation, or embellishment for dramatic effect.

Some further tips:

- If someone has told you an anecdotal story unless explicitly stated otherwise, do not share this information with others
- When discussing the stories of individuals, avoid assumptions and conjecture which may be taken as fact and passed on as such

When discussing sensitive and private information, the foremost concern should be the feelings of those who have direct experience with Willow Court.

11. ENSURING AUTHENTICITY

Using verified and trustworthy sources of information is key to best practice heritage interpretation. Often stories which are shared informally, for example, through word of mouth or social media, can be second, third or fourth-hand information. We do not always know where the story originated, that the facts have not changed as they have been passed on, or that the story has not lost some of its essential nuances.

12. WILLOW COURT ARTEFACTS

Council is undertaking an audit of all Heritage Artefacts, including Willow Court Artefacts, which will help ensure the collection is well-managed moving forward.

13. REVIEW

The Willow Court Ethical Principles and Guidelines are a living document and will be reviewed periodically to ensure currency and accuracy.

14. RESOURCES

<https://www.healthpartners.com/blog/mental-illnesses-terms-to-use-terms-to-avoid/>

<https://humanrights.gov.au/our-work/appendix-c-how-talk-about-mental-illness>

<https://hogg.utexas.edu/news-resources/language-matters-in-mental-health>