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## 1 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 BACKGROUND

The Morisset Hospital was first established as an ‘asylum for the insane’. Today the role of the hospital and associated buildings and grounds has changed, and diversified land uses may occur in the future.

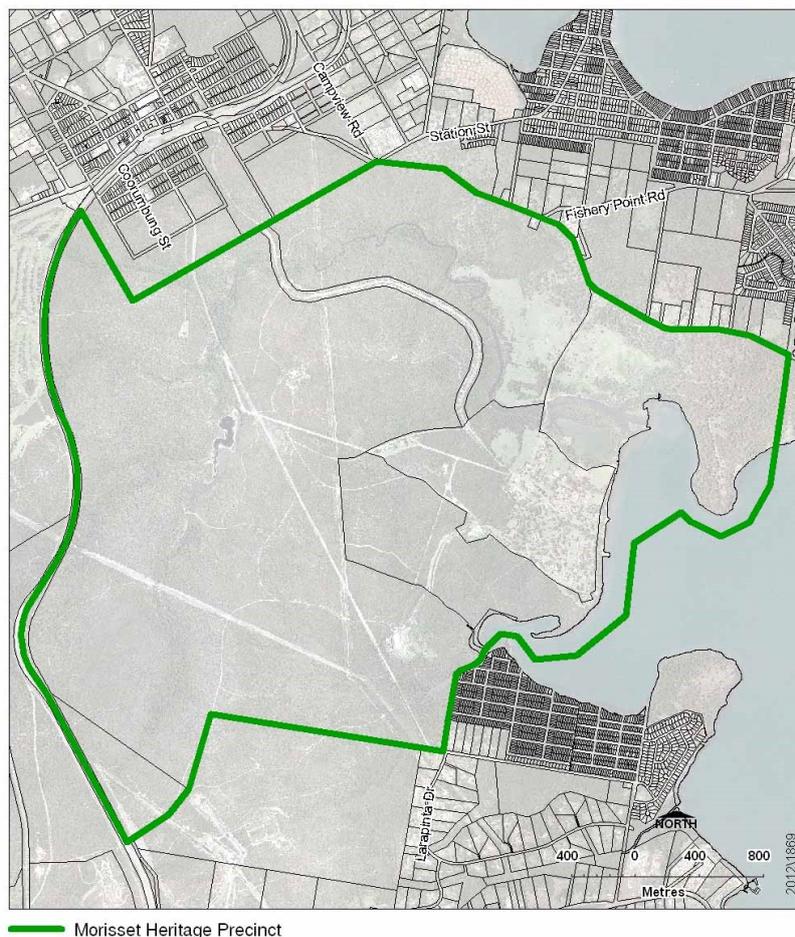
The Morisset hospital grounds and farm have been identified as requiring specific development solutions to suit the existing character and address local issues. Solutions relating to heritage can be achieved by the preparation of a Conservation Management Plan, which will in turn provide the guidelines for future development.

**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 –Morisset Hospital Grounds Heritage Precinct.

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



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Figure 1 - Morisset Hospital Grounds Heritage Precinct

### 1.3 HISTORY AND EXISTING CHARACTER

On 25 August 1900, a Government Gazette proclaimed that 1244 acres on the shores of Lake Macquarie had been reserved for an Asylum for the Insane. The Hospital is approximately 3.5 kilometres southeast of the town of Morisset and 45 kilometres southwest of Newcastle. The site extends from Lake Macquarie in the east to the Great Northern Railway in the west. The northern boundary is Fishery Point Road and Morisset Park Road.

Building work began in 1906 with a jetty, then a dam. The first ward was finished and occupied by 1909, with 78 male ‘patients’. Other wards followed, and by 1960 the number of patients had grown to 1490. The most significant construction periods were 1910–1912, and in the 1930s.

Morisset Hospital for the Insane was the second most important such institution to be built in New South Wales outside the Sydney area. In the 1930s, the first prison specifically set up for the criminally insane was established on the site.

The whole development was extraordinary. It combined an idyllic concept of natural beauty as a catalyst for mental healing with a Nineteenth Century ideal of labour as a healing instrument, and the practice of isolating those considered abnormal.

The concept of beautiful surroundings was also embodied in some of the buildings, though not necessarily those inhabited by patients. Significant items include 26 buildings, trees and vegetation groups, a dam, a jetty, the farms and native fauna.

The developed hospital grounds are in two quite distinct sections. The large area of the general Hospital for the Insane is beautifully landscaped, with grounds sloping down to the waters of the Lake on the east. The much smaller area of the Hospital for the Criminally Insane is isolated in a cleared patch of bushland, and walled like a medieval city.

Apart from cleared land between Pourmalong Creek and Morisset Park Road and the landscaped grounds of the Hospital, most of the site is bushland. The cleared land is – or was – probably part of the original ‘Industrial Farm Colony for Suitable Patients’ proposed in 1906. There are almost 100 buildings within the hospital grounds.

The bushland is an important habitat for Regent Honeyeaters and Swift Parrots in Lake Macquarie. The Swift Parrots and Regent Honeyeaters in Lake Macquarie City Council area New South Wales report, prepared by Birdlife Australian for Lake Macquarie City Council, dated June 2014, identifies the Morisset Hospital Grounds Heritage Area as containing bushland with the most numerous and most recent records of Regent Honeyeater numbers recorded in Lake Macquarie. Records also show that Swift Parrots use the site.

### 1.4 SPECIFIC ISSUES RELATING TO THIS LOCALITY

Future development within the Morisset Hospital Grounds and Farm will need to consider:

- The sense of social identity resulting from the Hospital and Aboriginal history.
- The physical boundaries of the locality.
- Sensitive elements of the local topography and the existing farm and hospital.
- The importance of the bushland on the site as Regent Honeyeater and Swift Parrot habitat.

### 1.5 DEVELOPMENT DESIGN

#### *Objectives*

- a. To safeguard the heritage, cultural and ecological values of the Morisset Hospital grounds.
- b. To ensure that development complements the existing local 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 grounds.

### ***Controls***

1. A Conservation Management Plan for the entire Morisset Hospital Grounds site must be submitted and approved by Council for any development that may impact on the heritage or cultural values of the grounds.
2. Development proposals must have a bulk, form and scale that is consistent with, and compliments the historic development of the Morisset Hospital Grounds.
3. Development must provide a delineated buffer to the historic uses of the land and its curtilage.
4. Development must avoid impacting on Regent Honeyeater and Swift Parrot habitat.