Casey House and Garden
Formerly known as the ‘Residence for Resident Minister’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Finance ID Number</th>
<th>DFD-61089</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Commonwealth Heritage List (CHL) Place ID Number</td>
<td><strong>105629</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current Status (including CHL Place ID Number)</td>
<td>Casey House and Garden is included on the Commonwealth Heritage List (Place ID: <strong>105629</strong>).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ownership</td>
<td>Casey House is currently subject to a private 99 year Crown Lease that was granted in 1997 and is administered by the Department of Finance on behalf of the Commonwealth.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Casey House is located at 4 Rhodes Place, Yarralumla, ACT. The asset is located in the Central National Area, under the National Capital Plan.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Description | The house was designed by Chief Architect, Works and Services Branch of the Interior, for the then Treasurer, Richard Gardner Casey. At the time of construction the building was known as Proposed Residence for Resident Minister and formed part of a modest collection of official residences in Canberra.

Casey House is a two storey red brick traditional domestic building with a generally symmetrical form, facing a garden and having a formal entry court. It has regular fenestration and a tiled roof, indicating a Georgian Revival character, but there are Art Deco patterns in the doorways and some cornices. The house was originally comprised of seven bedrooms for family and staff, three full bathrooms, study, day nursery, drawing room reception and dining room, kitchen and service rooms. The house had every modern convenience for the time.

Walls are cavity brick with cross walls of brick or terracotta lumber. Timber floors are Tallow wood in the main reception room, study and main bedrooms otherwise, Cypress Pine. The roof is traditional timber framed and terracotta tiled. The external brickwork skin is of specially made narrow bricks from the Canberra brickworks; a salmon red with contrasting cream bricks in the front entrance porch. Decorative patterning is used with zigzag or raised banding and soldier coursing at the front and rear entrance porches. The upper windows of the projecting end walls at the rear are surrounded by a special pattern of raised courses.

The house was set in appropriately large grounds of 2 1/3 acres to give privacy and to suit the scale and importance of the house. It is in an area allocated to official residences by Griffin, close to the Government Group. The Casey House site borders the Commonwealth Club and there are some landscaped elements on the site including levelled terraces, steps, shrubs, hedges and trees. The original placement of the building on the site took the importance of protecting existing trees into consideration. The Canadian High Commission planted some Canadian maple trees on the front lawn. |

| Landscape Setting | Situated in a garden setting in the leafy diplomatic suburb of Yarralumla, Casey House is a tangible reminder of the Commonwealth Government’s efforts to establish a permanent physical Ministerial presence in the National Capital. |
During the 1930s, as Government Administration became more focused in Canberra the requirement increased for a Minister of the Government to be resident in Canberra.

As well as a supply of Government housing for employees, a number of 'Official Residences' had been built in Canberra and were among the first buildings erected in the Federal Capital. In 1912-1913 six permanent residences designed by the Commonwealth Architect, John Smith Murdoch, were constructed at the newly opened Royal Military College, Duntroon. In 1913 Murdoch designed 'the Residency', the official residence of the Administrator of the Federal Capital, David Millar, now the ANU Staff Centre. In 1926 he designed the Director's residence at Mt Stromlo and designed renovations and extensions to Government House, Yarralumla. The Prime Minister's residence was erected at Deakin, to the design of the successful entrants in the FCAC competition, Oakley and Parkes.

Infrastructure and housing were required to support the families of public servants moved from Melbourne and Canberra. It was considered a different case to other cities as Government employees were required to move because of their employment and it was seen as the obligation of Government to provide adequate accommodation.

Heavy criticism had been directed at the Government in the daily newspapers at this time. In the Canberra Times, worker's housing at the Causeway was referred to as slums and a blot on the garden city concept of Canberra. The Government was also accused of not encouraging home building in Canberra under an assistance scheme. Although there was such a scheme in place to assist with building 4 - 6 rooms cottages, only 127 people had availed themselves of it.

It was against this background of hardship that the Government decided to build what then must have appeared in sharp contrast - a 14-roomed 'mansion' for the Treasurer.

Richard Gardiner Casey, the Member for Corio in the newly elected Lyons Government was one of the first politicians to choose to take up residency in Canberra. The Caseys had returned from London where, since 1924, Richard...
Casey had successfully carried out a special diplomatic appointment by the then Prime Minister, Stanley Bruce, to facilitate close communication between London and Melbourne (then the Federal capital). As a politician, Casey sought to gain expertise in public finance and the location of the Department of Treasury in Canberra was major factor in his decision to live in Canberra in 1932.

While the Royal Military College was based in Sydney in the 1930s, the Casey's were housed in one of the vacant Officers Residences at Dunroon. In 1937, the return of the RMC from Sydney meant that Casey, who was by then Treasurer, had to find other accommodation.

The first attempt to provide accommodation for Casey involved a proposal to build an exclusive group of houses on the slopes of Mt Ainslie behind the War Memorial. Investigation into the feasibility of the proposed subdivision continued through 1936 and the idea was later criticized along with the general criticism of the 'Treasurer's mansion' for its cost to the Government.

Casey's second attempt at selecting a site for his house was also not successful. The area selected by Casey was on Acton Peninsula within the zone allocated in the Griffin Plan for the hospital. CS Daley, Assistant Secretary, Civic Administration, opposed this choice and defended the Griffin plan.

After consultation about house plans with Casey in 1936, the Chief Architect of the Department of Works, E Henderson, submitted final sketch plans for the official residence in January 1937. These sketches were based on the site selected in Darwin Avenue. The site is described by the Surveyor-General, A Percival, as being 2 1/3 acres 'within a locality, which on the plan of Canberra, is set aside for a large city Domain. Within the domain is located a site for a future residence for the Prime Minister. The Treasurer has inspected the site and concurs with the selection made."

In political terms, the timing of the decision to build the Resident Minister's house could scarcely have been worse. Recovery from the Depression was scarcely underway and the memories of the hardship's experienced throughout Australia were still fresh. Weighed against the pressure on the Government to provide support facilities - especially health and education facilities, hostel accommodation and housing, was the perceived extravagance of government funding for a fourteen-roomed 'mansion' for one family regarded as of the wealthy and privileged sector of society.

In June 1938 questions were raised in Parliament about the cost and any contribution from the Treasurer and a commitment was given for discussion on the proposal. However, by this stage the construction of the house was already well underway and the Government was less than accurate about the state of affairs. The house was being financed in an unorthodox manner from the Architectural and Engineering Votes.

In Parliament the cost of the house was expressed in terms of the contract sum, 6 332 pounds, with additional extras such as drains and paths costing 175 pounds. Round figures were mentioned of 7 000 pounds and the somewhat exaggerated figure of 10 000 pounds with the inclusion of services, roads etc required for the block located in a new subdivision.
Comment continued to be made in Parliament and the Canberra Times editorial commented on the issues of the housing shortage and the extravagance of the Treasurer’s house. During the construction of the building, Cabinet discussions about accommodation for Ministers and the Prime Minister continued with various suggestions raised as there was a need for an increasing number of Ministers to reside in Canberra.

A local builder, JW Perry of Kingston won the tender and the completed cost in 1939 was 6,572 pounds 5 s 10d not including the cost of servicing the block. The work was stopped more than once during construction when the Cabinet reopened the debate on the need for the house.

The Caseys took up residence in September 1938. They were to stay there less than one year, for after the death of Lyons, Robert Menzies became Prime Minister and transferred Casey to the portfolio of Supply and Development. The Caseys returned to Melbourne in April 1939.

The Canadian High Commission moved into Casey House in 1941 and occupied it until 1973. The rooms were adapted easily for office, function rooms and residential accommodation for a small number of staff. In 1955, the Canadian Minister for Trade and Commerce, the Hon CD Howe, visited Canberra and offered the gift of a flagpole to the Australian Government, to celebrate the adoption of the blue Australian flag. The 128 foot flagpole, made from a single spar of Douglas Fir from British Columbia, was officially presented in 1957.

In December 1978, Casey House became the headquarters for the Australian Heritage Commission. The Commission occupied the house until 1989 during which time the staff numbers grew from 15 to 50.

The 1970s and 80s were important years in the growth of the conservation movement in Australia. Although Casey House was not the first home of the Australian Heritage Commission, it is associated with the formative years of the Commission and thereby the development of the concept of the natural and cultural environment as the National Estate. For the first year the Commission shared the house with the National Estates Grant Program but then occupied it solely, undertaking functional rearrangements as staff increased and the duties of the Commission expanded.

After the Australian Heritage Commission vacated Casey House the house was used temporarily as government offices and was vacant for 7 years until leased as professional offices in 1998.
### Statutory Heritage Values

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gazetted Statement of Significance - Commonwealth Heritage List</th>
<th>Casey House is associated with political controversy, the development of Government Administration in Canberra, the need to have at least one Government minister resident in the National Capital, housing shortages in Canberra in the 1930s and 40s and the economic hardships following the Depression. (Criterion A.4) (Australian Historic Themes: 3.18 Financing Australia; 7.4 Administering Australia; 4.1 Planning urban settlements; 4.1.4 Creating capital cities)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Casey House &amp; Garden is significant for its historic associations with Richard Gardiner Casey, Treasurer with the Lyons Government, Resident Minister in Canberra, the first Commonwealth minister to have an official residence in Canberra and later, Lord Casey, Governor-General of Australia. (Criterion H.1) (Australian Historic Themes: 7.6 Administering Australia)</td>
<td>Casey House &amp; Garden is associated with the Chief Architect of the Department of Works, E Henderson, who respected the Griffin Plan in locating the house within an area designated for official residences. (Criterion H1) (Australian Historic Theme: 4.1 Planning urban settlements)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casey House is important as the headquarters of the Canadian High Commission for over thirty years and as the focus of the administration of Canadian-Australian relationships during that time. (Criterion A4) (Australian Historic Themes: 8.5 Forming associations; 3.15 Developing economic links outside Australia; 7.1 Governing Australia as a province of the British Empire)</td>
<td>Casey House, as the Headquarters of the Australian Heritage Commission from 1978-1989, has associations with the growing awareness and concern with environmental and heritage matters felt by the Australian Government and society in the 1970s and 80s. (Criterion A.4) (Australian Historic Themes: 7.6 Administering Australia; 7.6.10 Conserving Australia's fragile environments; 7.6.12 Conserving Australia's heritage)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Architecturally, the house is unusual in Canberra for its Art Deco details in an otherwise Georgian Revival design. Through its Art Deco detailing Casey House is linked with the early group of ‘permanent’ Government buildings in Canberra favouring this style. The requirements and aesthetics of Richard Gardiner Casey</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
and his wife, Maie, influenced the design and construction of the residence. Maie Casey was responsible for the original interior design schemes and details. The garden as a setting for the house was a significant component of all housing for officials at the time. (Criterion D2) (Australian Historic Theme: 8.10.4 Designing and building fine buildings; 8.12 Living in and around Australian homes)

Casey House is significant as one of the few buildings located on Perth Avenue, one of the roads radiating from State Circle named after state capitals and generally orientated in the direction of the capital. (Criterion D2) (Australian Historic Theme: 4.1.4 Creating capital cities)

**Criterion A - Processes**

Casey House is associated with political controversy, the development of Government Administration in Canberra, the need to have at least one Government minister resident in the National Capital, housing shortages in Canberra in the 1930s and 40s and the economic hardships following the Depression.

Casey House is important as the headquarters of the Canadian High Commission for over thirty years and as the focus of the administration of Canadian-Australian relationships during that time.

Casey House, as the Headquarters of the Australian Heritage Commission from 1978-1989, has associations with the growing awareness and concern with environmental and heritage matters felt by the Australian Government and society in the 1970s and 80s.

Attributes
The whole building, its grounds and setting

**Criterion B - Rarity**

Casey House does not fulfil this criterion.

**Criterion C - Research**

Casey House does not fulfil this criterion.

**Criterion D - Characteristic Value**

Architecturally, the house is unusual in Canberra for its Art Deco details in an otherwise Georgian Revival design. Through its Art Deco detailing Casey House is linked with the early group of 'permanent' Government buildings in Canberra favouring this style. The requirements and aesthetics of Richard Gardiner Casey and his wife, Maie, influenced the design and construction of the residence. Maie Casey was responsible for the original interior design schemes and details. The garden as a setting for the house was a significant component of all housing for officials at the time.

Casey House is significant as one of the few buildings located on Perth Avenue, one of the roads radiating from State Circle named after state capitals and generally orientated in the direction of the capital.

Attributes
Art Deco details in an otherwise Georgian Revival design, plus its location in Perth Avenue.

**Criterion E - Aesthetic characteristics**

Casey House does not fulfil this criterion.
| Criterion F – Technical achievement | Casey House does not fulfil this criterion. |
| Criterion G – Social Value | Casey House does not fulfil this criterion. |
| Criterion H – Significant people | Casey House & Garden is significant for its historic associations with Richard Gardiner Casey, Treasurer with the Lyons Government, Resident Minister in Canberra, the first Commonwealth minister to have an official residence in Canberra and later, Lord Casey, Governor-General of Australia.  
Casey House & Garden is associated with the Chief Architect of the Department of Works, E Henderson, who respected the Griffin Plan in locating the house within an area designated for official residences. 
Attributes The whole house and garden, its location close to Parliament House, and any evidence of the original interior design schemes and details. |
| Criterion I – Indigenous tradition | Casey House does not fulfil this criterion. |

### Non-Statutory Listings

| National Trust Register (NTR) of Significant Places | **Casey House** is a Classified Place on the National Trust Register of Significant Places. |
| Register of the National Estate (RNE) | **Casey House** was included on the Register of the National Estate in 1991. In February 2012, the RNE became a non-statutory archive. |
| ACT Heritage Register | **Casey House** has been nominated for inclusion on the ACT Heritage Register. However, as Casey House is located on Commonwealth land the nomination does not have legal effect. |

### Additional information

| Property Access | The Finance landlord will allow access to the public areas of the premises such as the entrance, halls, foyer and gardens at certain times throughout the year. |
| Consultation | Any consultation with interested parties should include the [Compliance, Environment and Heritage team](#), Department of Finance. |
| Conservation Documents/References | Australian Construction Services for Australian Estate Management (1994), Casey House Conservation Plan, Department of Administrative Services.  
National Trust of Australia (NT) A heritage Tour of Yarralumla, Tour 1 of 2, A self guided Tour 2007 |
| More information | For further information regarding Casey House and Garden, please contact the [Department of Finance](#). |