



Heritage Fact Sheet Series 2 - Fences



A fence is important in the presentation of a period property and should complement the style and era of the building. The following fact sheet provides guidance on suitable fences for a property which is listed as a heritage item or located within a Heritage Conservation Area.

Consent requirements

All boundary fences around a heritage item require consent. This also affects the boundary of a property adjoining a heritage item.

Within the Heritage Conservation Area, fences forward of the building line, for **all** properties require prior consent, regardless of date of construction.

Types of approvals

Works fall into three main categories:

- Exempt Development No Consent Needed
- Minor Works Approval by letter required (no fee)
- Development Consent Development Application Required

Exempt Development

Fences rear of the building line for **non-listed** properties within a Heritage Conservation Area which do not adjoin a heritage item, are **Exempt Development** providing that they do not exceed the maximum 1.8m height, and other criteria that apply.

Refer to the [State Environmental Planning Policy \(Exempt and Complying Development Codes\) 2008](#). (Known as the Codes SEPP - – hyperlink below).

<https://www.legislation.nsw.gov.au/#/view/EPI/2008/572>

Minor Works and Maintenance Application

Fences forward of the building line, for all properties in a Heritage Conservation Area and boundary fences for a heritage item require consent (front and rear). These proposals can generally be handled under the through a 'no fee' written application.

You need to submit the minor works application, or e mail a request to council with sufficient information about your proposed work including the style, height and materials and finished colour of the fence. If Council is satisfied that the work is in keeping with the heritage values, it may approve it in writing. This must be in place before you start work (See hyperlink below).

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Development Applications

Any proposal to demolish or alter a significant original fence requires a Development Application. A statement of heritage impact is required to accompany your application in this situation. New fences which involve masonry over specified heights require formal approval due to structural requirements.

Choosing the right fence for your property.

If an original fence still exists, it is recommended that you retain and conserve it. The aim is to conserve as much of the original fence material as possible and replace only what is necessary.



Two contrasting fences in Dorrigo-1920s woven wire, and a diamond post and rail at the CWA

Where the original fence no longer exists, consider carrying out some research before choosing a fence style. Historic photos are an excellent source for finding the original details.

Enquire at your local historical society.

Previous owners or their relatives may have early photos. Similar buildings in the locality may also retain early fences which give some clues.

A Guide to Historic Fence Styles.

Victorian 1860-1900

The timber picket fence was the main style of fence during this period and complements the traditional 'timber and iron' domestic and commercial buildings of the region. Picket fences with 'acorn' tops and scalloped lines are typical of this period. Posts were often painted in a contrast colour.

Timber fences were typically used for dwellings and public buildings such as post offices, churches, schools and court houses.

Detailing for the grander buildings was often more elaborate with larger chamfered posts with decorative moulding and routed details.

Cast iron palisade fencing, as seen on Victorian terraces in the cities is not typical to this area or region. Such fences should only be used if there is historic evidence to support reinstatement.



Federation 1901 -1914

The picket fence continued through the Federation era particularly in a rural region with an abundance of timber.

Victorian fashions often overlapped into the early part of the 20th century in areas outside the cities.

Simpler styles of square and rounded tops gradually replaced the acorn profile.

Alternating height pickets featured on some fences and double rails were sometimes used to match the balustrade detail on the house.

The Federation era also saw the use of fences of brick piers with woven wire or timber picket inserts on more distinguished dwellings. However brick piers were not commonly used with regular domestic dwellings and are only recommended if historic evidence is in place to support it.



Interwar

1920-1940

Ornamental woven wire and wrought-iron gates and fencing was a distinctive element of the 1920s and 1930s. The Cyclone Woven Wire Fence Company was established in Melbourne in 1898. By the 1920s, the company had manufacturing works in Melbourne, Adelaide, Sydney and Perth. Many examples of woven wire fences are found on the region during this period.



The popular Californian Bungalow often had a fence of brick base and piers with a metal rail or mesh.



Timber post and rail fences with metal mesh were popular for domestic dwellings



Picket fences were also still used in this period.



Post War /Mid-century 1940 -1970

The low brick fence was a distinctive style of the post war era.

Brick and rendered piers with a metal railing or metal infill panels were often used. Matching low decorative gates marked the pedestrian and driveway entries.

The diamond post and rail was also typical in rural areas.

Original fences should be maintained or repaired. If more privacy is required, a hedge could be planted inside the fence.



Side and Rear Fences

A timber paling fence is typical for side and rear boundaries of historic dwellings and buildings and should be used unless there is other historic evidence of another style. The timber can be oiled or left to weather to silver grey. Landscaping and hedging can be used to soften fence lines.

Sheet metal panel fences are **not** appropriate in the setting of a heritage item and are not likely to be supported.



Rural Fences

Timber fences are appropriate for rural areas. Early farmhouses sometimes had the picket fence directly attached to the verandah to keep out stock.

Post and rail fences are appropriate to broader rural settings and historic homesteads. Maintain early fences wherever possible.



Further Reading

Evans, Ian, 1940- & New South Wales. Department of Planning 1989, *Getting the details right: restoring Australian houses 1890s-1920s*, Flannel Flower Press, Yeronga, Qld

Cuffley, Peter 2007, *Australian houses of the twenties & thirties*, Rev. ed, Five Mile Press, Rowville, Vic

Cuffley, Peter 2007, *Australian houses of the forties & fifties*, Rev. ed, Five Mile Press, Rowville, Vic

For further enquiries or to seek advice from the heritage advisory service, please contact Council's Planning Services Section on 02 6655 7300 or email Council at; council@bellingen.nsw.gov.au