

# Heritage Fences



A fence is important in the presentation of your property and should complement the style and era of the building. The following fact sheet provides guidance on suitable fences for a properties of different historic eras.

## Consent requirements

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

## 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     |



## Minor Works and Maintenance Application

Fencing proposals can generally be handled 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.

## Development Applications

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

## 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.



*Late Victorian palisade  
cast iron fencing on  
masonry plinth, Former  
Bank of NSW, Grey  
Street, Glen Innes*

*1920s Formal blue  
brick fence with stylish  
decorative timber infill  
panels, West Street,  
Glen Innes*

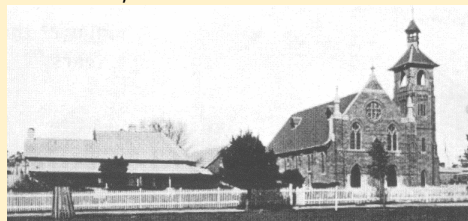


Where the original fence no longer exists, consider carrying out some research before choosing a fence style. Historic photos are an excellent source for finding the original details. Enquire at your local historical society. Previous owners or their relatives may have early photos. Similar buildings 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 and complements traditional domestic and commercial buildings of the region. Timber fences were typically used for dwellings and some public buildings such as post offices, churches, and schools.



Picket fences with 'acorn' tops and scalloped lines are typical of this period. Posts were often painted in a contrast colour.





Cast iron palisade fencing is a feature of prominent Victorian era commercial buildings in the CBD. Such fences should only be used if there is historic evidence.



## Federation 1901 -1914/20

The picket fence continued through the Federation era particularly in a rural region. Victorian fashions often overlapped into the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> 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.

The Federation era also saw the use of fences of brick piers with timber or wire inserts.





Interwar 1920-1940

Ornamental woven wire fencing with wrought-iron gates 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 during this period.

Timber post and rail fences with woven metal mesh also known as Emu wire, were popular for domestic dwellings

This interwar dwelling in West Street built in 1920, features a blue brick base and piers with ornamental timber infill panels.

Another similar fence with metal inserts exists nearby.



## Mid-century/ Post war era 1940 -1970

The low brick fence was a distinctive style of the post war era. Brick piers with a metal railing or metal infill panels were often used. Matching low decorative gates marked the pedestrian and driveway entries and matched the house balustrades. Original fences should be retained and maintained or repaired.



A double rail fence with wire infill to the lower level of a 1950s era timber house.



A hedge could be planted inside the fence if more privacy is required.





## Side and Rear Fences

Unless there is other historic evidence, a timber paling fence is typical for side and rear boundaries of historic dwellings and buildings.

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 Heritage Advisor or e mail [council@gisc.nsw.gov.au](mailto:council@gisc.nsw.gov.au).**

