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Perth Observatory sets sights on heritage stars.

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Australia's oldest and continuously operating observatory was today placed on the State Register of Heritage Places.

Heritage Minister Francis Logan said the Perth Observatory was Australia's only remaining State-run astronomical observatory and was one of the most important scientific research and educational institutions in the State.

"The observatory has always captured the interest and imagination of Western Australians," Mr Logan said.

"It is valued for its ongoing educational program for all ages, where 'science in action' includes star and moon viewing."

The Minister said the Bickley site was the State's second observatory, the first being located at Havelock Street in West Perth.

"The new Perth Observatory was built for \$600,000 and was opened by Premier David Brand in 1966, 70 years and one day after the original observatory was opened by Sir John Forrest in 1896 at a cost of 7,000 pounds," the Minister said.

"A plan for metropolitan Perth was released in 1955, identifying the observatory site as a place where all State Government offices could be located. The plan proposed to redevelop the entire site and demolish the observatory buildings to make way for Dumas House."

Mr Logan said that although the instrument buildings were demolished, luckily the Government Astronomer's residence and offices, designed by George Temple Poole, still stood and were now the headquarters for the National Trust.

"The place is commonly known as the Old Observatory and current Heritage Councillor Hon Ron Davies AM formally handed over the keys of the Observatory to the Trust when he was Arts Minister in 1984," the Minister said.

"The Bickley site was considered an ideal location for an observatory away from the interference of city lights and urban pollution.

"It also provides uninterrupted views for astronomical observations and weather recordings and has been operating since 1966."

The observatory has many significant pieces of astronomical technology from the late 19th century to the present, much of which is on display for public viewing.

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