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**Name:** Wrest Point Hotel Casino  
**Status:** Permanently Registered  
**Tier:** State

**THR ID Number:** 7496  
**Municipality:** Hobart City Council  
**Boundary:** CPR10599

<u>Location Addresses</u>	<u>Title References</u>	<u>Property Id</u>
410 SANDY BAY RD, SANDY BAY 7005 TAS	252493/1	2040735
410 SANDY BAY RD, SANDY BAY 7005 TAS	40214/1	2040735
410 SANDY BAY RD, SANDY BAY 7005 TAS		7588361
410 SANDY BAY RD, SANDY BAY 7005 TAS	40216/1	2040735



Former entrance gates and stone wall  
DPIPWE 2011



Rear elevation of the Riviera Hotel  
DPIPWE 2011



Wrest Point Casino from Sandy Bay Road  
DPIPWE 2011



Aerial view of Wrest Point Riviera Hotel c1960  
TAHO PH30\_1\_9075



Casino and Riviera Hotel from Sandy Bay Rd  
DPIPWE 2017



The peninsula and sea wall  
DPIPWE 2017



Riviera Hotel with additions  
DPIPWE 2017



Wrest Point Casino Tower & turning circle in front  
DPIPWE 2017



Stepped stone wall on Sandy Bay Road  
DPIPWE 2017



Wrest Point Riviera Hotel c1939  
TAHO PH30\_1\_5522



Wrest Point House c1928  
TAHO PH30\_1\_6748



Wrest Point Casino under construction c1972  
TAHO PH30\_1\_7384

**Statement of Significance:** (non-statutory summary)

Wrest Point Casino Tower is significant as the first legal purpose-built casino in Australia, one of very few developments in Australia that was so controversial it triggered a public referendum. The scale, bold cylindrical design and dramatic setting on the edge of the Derwent River established the Casino Tower as a landmark. The Casino Tower remains one of the most recognisable tourist symbols of Tasmania and (as of 2017) the tallest building constructed in the state.

Wrest Point Casino Tower, Riviera Hotel and remnant 1930s section of sea wall are historically significant in demonstrating the evolution of tourism and hospitality facilities in Tasmania over the past 75 years. The 1928 entrance gates and wall on Sandy Bay Road, provide a subtle demonstration of the earlier residential use of the point and occupation of the site by a grand private residence.

Wrest Point Casino Tower and Riviera Hotel has a special association with the Federal Group, one of the world's oldest hotel groups which has played a prominent role in hospitality and tourism in Tasmania, Federal having owned, developed and operated the site since 1956, including construction of the Casino Tower in 1973. The design of Wrest Point Casino Tower is largely attributed to Sir Roy Grounds, an iconic figure of Australian modernism. The Riviera Hotel and Sea Wall has a special association with Arthur Drysdale, a prominent entrepreneur and businessman in Tasmania's history, ...

**Why is it significant?:**

The Heritage Council may enter a place in the Heritage Register if it meets one or more of the following criteria from the Historic Cultural Heritage Act 1995:

**a) The place is important to the course or pattern of Tasmania's history.**

Wrest Point Casino Tower is significant as the first legal purpose-built casino in Australia, one of very few developments in Australia that was so controversial it triggered a public referendum .

Wrest Point Casino Tower, Riviera Hotel and remnant 1930s section of sea wall are historically significant in demonstrating the evolution of tourism and hospitality facilities in Tasmania since 1939. The 1928 entrance gates and wall on Sandy Bay Road, provide a subtle demonstration of the earlier residential use of the Point and occupation of the site by a grand private residence.

**b) The place possesses uncommon or rare aspects of Tasmania's history.**

No Data Recorded

**c) The place has the potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of Tasmania's history.**

No Data Recorded

- d) **The place is important in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of place in Tasmania's history.**  
No Data Recorded
- e) **The place is important in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement.**  
No Data Recorded
- f) **The place has a strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social or spiritual reasons.**  
No Data Recorded
- g) **The place has a special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in Tasmania's history.**

Wrest Point Casino Tower and Riviera Hotel has a special association with the Federal Group, one of the world's oldest hotel groups. The Federal Group has played a prominent role in hospitality and tourism in Tasmania, having owned, developed and operated the site since 1956 and developed the Casino Tower in 1973. The design of Wrest Point Casino Tower is largely attributed to Sir Roy Grounds, an iconic figure of Australian modernism. The Riviera Hotel and Sea Wall has a special association with Arthur Drysdale, a prominent entrepreneur and businessman in Tasmania's history, who established and operated the Riviera Hotel from 1936 to 1946.

- h) **The place is important in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics.**

The scale, bold cylindrical design and dramatic setting on the edge of the Derwent River established the Casino Tower as a landmark. The Casino Tower remains one of the most recognisable tourist symbols of Tasmania and (as of 2017) the tallest building constructed in the state. Images of the Casino Tower and its dramatic setting have featured extensively in tourism promotion, art and popular photography since 1973.

**Heritage approval is required for work that will result in changes to the nature or appearance of the fabric of a Heritage place, both internal and external.**

**Please refer to the Heritage Council's Works Guidelines ([www.heritage.tas.gov.au](http://www.heritage.tas.gov.au)) for information about the level of approval required and appropriate outcomes.**

**Heritage Advisors are also available to answer questions and provide guidance on [enquiries@heritage.tas.gov.au](mailto:enquiries@heritage.tas.gov.au) or Tel 1300850332**

**This data sheet is intended to provide sufficient information and justification for listing the place on the Heritage Register. Under the legislation, only one of the criteria needs to be met. The data sheet is not intended to be a comprehensive inventory of the heritage values of the place, there may be other heritage values of interest to the Heritage Council not currently acknowledged.**

#### **Setting:**

Wrest Point Casino Tower, Wrest Point Riviera Hotel, Entrance Gates and Sea Wall are located in Lower Sandy Bay, on the foreshore of the River Derwent where the small peninsula of Wrest Point projects north - eastward.

The Casino Tower is one of the most distinctive and readily identifiable Hobart landmarks. Visually, it dominates the Sandy Bay waterfront and is prominent in numerous vistas throughout the greater Hobart area, from points along both the eastern and western shore, from the Tasman Bridge and lookouts on Mount Wellington and Mount Nelson, from boating and shipping traffic entering or leaving Hobart and even aircraft flying a southern approach or departure to/from Hobart Airport.

#### **Description:**

The Wrest Point Hotel Casino complex comprises a number of buildings and structures of historic cultural heritage significance and a number of buildings and structures that have no historical cultural heritage significance, as defined by the *Historic Cultural Heritage Act 1995*.

**The features of historic cultural heritage significance within the registered area as defined on the CPR are as follows, and as depicted graphically on page 2 of the CPR:**

#### **Wrest Point Casino Tower (1973) – Exterior only**

Wrest Point Casino Tower is a dominating element and landmark in the Hobart landscape. The cylindrical tower sits

on reinforced concrete foundations topped by a circular plinth that measures approximately 60 metres (200 feet) across, with a smaller circular structure sited at the rear of the building. The structure of the Casino Tower is supported by a steel frame, with the circular form of the tower eliminating the need for pillars.

The Casino Tower measures 28 metres across and rises approximately 73 metres (240 feet). The chamfered circular structure is faced with white quartz concrete panels. Rectangular window openings have four large reflective panes with aluminium frames. The windows are aligned and evenly spaced up the height of the tower. Windows to the top floor, the Point restaurant, are larger to allow for panoramic views of Hobart. Each bay is defined by pilaster detailing which extends the height of the building. The tower is capped by a faceted dome like structure.

The main entrance to the Casino Tower is accessed via Drysdale Avenue which terminates in a tear shaped turning circle. A wide cantilevered portico overhangs the driveway and the entrance which features a substantial revolving door. The entrance and foyer area have been modified and modernised, however, the layout has remained the same.

Internally the tower has 21 storeys, consisting of four service floors, 16 accommodation floors, including 195 bedrooms and 15 VIP suites, and the revolving restaurant.

As the interior of the Casino Tower has been substantially altered over time, the Tower's historic cultural heritage significance lies in its exterior aesthetic qualities and intangible associations.

### **Wrest Point Riviera Hotel (1939) – Exterior only and noted internal features of historic cultural heritage significance**

(For the purpose of this description the former entrance of the Hotel faces west). Adjacent to the sealed car park is the Wrest Point Riviera Hotel. The Riviera Hotel is a four-storey rendered Moderne building with elements of Inter-War Art Deco ornamentation that incorporates parts of the former Wrest Point House. This large building features hipped roofs concealed behind parapets and large areas of smooth plain wall surfaces punctuated by extensive use of steel-framed glazing, including corner windows. The floor plan of the building is rectangular.

Unsympathetic additions have been made to the former entrance, at the western end of the Riviera Hotel, and northern elevation of the ground and first floors. The original form of the building on these levels is evident through the external staircase and remaining section of the glazed area off the original lounge where large porthole windows, consistent with Art Deco design, have been placed.

On the first floor of the south-western corner of the Riviera Hotel there are a number of timber-framed sash windows that are contemporary to the 1928 Wrest Point House. On the western elevation is a group of four sash windows with lead light upper sashes flanked by timber and stucco panels and timber eaves lining. On the southern elevation is a faceted bay window with timber-framed sash windows.

The former entrance of the Riviera Hotel has been covered by a wide porch, flanked on either side by additions to the structure. By 1965 the portico had been filled in with metal-framed glazing and central double doors. Two columns with horizontal banding that flank each side of the doorway are the only remaining feature of the original entrance. The large doorway features modern double timber doors with porthole detail.

A modern carport is located directly in front of the entrance. Adjacent to the carport is a single-storey c1960s building. The carport and c1960s building have no historic cultural heritage significance.

The upper floors and rear of the Riviera Hotel are intact, with the streamlined design elevated above the modern accretions. The building still expresses characteristics of the Moderne style through clean lines and asymmetrical massing. The building features metal-framed windows, plain wall surfaces, rounded corners, contrasting horizontal and vertical motifs and long horizontal spandrels and balconies with line detail.

The third level is a smaller area that is set back from the main roofline parapet and capped with an even smaller elevation, creating a stepped skyline silhouette, consistent with the streamlined design of the Art Deco style. The semicircular wing at the western end features corner windows and a centrally placed flag pole, another feature of Art Deco style. An additional flag pole is located on the eastern elevation.

The pedestrian bridges to the accommodation wings are of no historic cultural heritage significance, as is the glazed pedestrian bridge that links the Riviera Hotel, through what was the old dining room, to the Casino Tower complex.

The interior of the building has been substantially changed over time, and no internal elements are of historic cultural heritage significance except the following interior features:

- decorative plaster cornices, plaster and stucco wall and ceiling finishes, dados, decorative vents above the

doorways;

- fireplaces and surrounds in the foyer and dining room and Portlight Bar;

- timber floor (under carpet), columns, venting grills and highly decorative plaster cornices and ceiling detail in the dining room;

- original joinery, including timber skirtings, door frames, doors and a number of original door handles and locks, particularly on the third floor;

- timber staircase between the ground and first floor, contemporary with the 1928 Wrest Point;

- timber staircase with decorative wrought iron railing and timber handrail, between the first and second floors, contemporary with the 1939 Riviera Hotel;

- leadlight fanlight, timber architraves and three-panelled timber door to the rooms on the western end of the first floor, contemporary with 1928 Wrest Point House; and

- timber panelled room with fireplace on the ground floor, contemporary with 1928 Wrest Point House.

### **Peninsula and Sea Wall (1907, 1937-1939)**

The peninsula forms a prominent part of the site as an integral part of the setting of the Casino Tower and Riviera Hotel. Photos dating from the late nineteenth and early twentieth century show that the peninsula was a rocky promontory altered in 1907 with the initial construction of the present sea wall on the southern side of the peninsula, and was later reshaped into its current form, including sea wall with window openings, during the construction of the warm salt water pool with bathing pavilion on the point (1937) and Wrest Point Riviera Hotel (1939).

### **Wrest Point House Entrance Gates and Stone Wall (1928)**

Along Sandy Bay Road is a stepped sandstone wall constructed from rock-faced ashlar and pillars with moulded detail and capping, marking the c1928 entrance to Wrest Point House constructed by Major and Mrs Lucas. A large section of the sandstone fence and gate have been reconfigured with modern iron fencing and centrally placed elaborate hinged gates. A pedestrian gate is located at the southern end of the modern fencing. A row of three mature pine trees flank the sandstone wall close to the pedestrian gate. Combined with a number of other mature plantings, the pine trees create a green buffer between Wrest Point and Sandy Bay Road. Inside the former entrance to Wrest Point is a car park surfaced in bitumen. A wide service gate is located further down the stone wall, close to the boundary with Lords Beach.

### **Features of No Heritage Significance**

The registered area also contains the following built features that are of no cultural heritage significance in their own right, although major external changes to these features have the potential to impact the setting of the significant features;

- Mountain Side Accommodation (1952)

- Squash Court (1955)

- Waters Edge Accommodation (1965)

- Mini-golf course

The Hobart Convention and Entertainment Centre is outside the boundary of the registered area for Wrest Point Hotel Casino.

## **History:**

### **Chaffey's Point**

The peninsula at Lower Sandy Bay was granted to former convict Thomas Chaffey, a settler who had arrived in the colony from Norfolk Island in 1808. Chaffey took up one of the largest Norfolk Island grants of 120 acres in two lots in Queensborough that extended up the hillside, of the area now known as Sandy Bay, including the small peninsula (Sandy Bay Land Grants LTO). During the early nineteenth century the prominent site became known as Chaffey's Point. Thomas transferred six acres to his son William Chaffey in July 1839, who appears to have been farming part of the property as early as 1833 (DO Con 2/2677, Lewis 2013 p8). In the same year William Chaffey built an inn on the site known as Traveller's Rest (THR3056).

## **Dunkley's Point & St Helena**

The six acre parcel was purchased by Richard Cooke in August 1839 (LTO M2/2746). Two indentures of further charge for the property were recorded in 1841 and 1842 (LTO F/C 2/4389, 2/25787). David Dunkley purchased 1 acre, 1 rood and 21 perches from the widow of Richard Cooke in July 1845 (*The Courier* 23 July 1845 p1), and 3 acres 2 roods and 20 perches in November 1845 from Richard Cooke's estate (*The Courier* 29 September 1845 p2).

Dunkley was a prominent Hobart merchant and ironmonger, who arrived in Van Diemen's Land in December 1818 aboard the convict ship *Lord Melville*, sentenced to seven years transportation (*Mercury* 29 November 1845 p2, TAHO CON 31-1-9). Dunkley received his ticket of leave in March 1825. Convict conduct record shows that by June 1828 he had a business in Liverpool Street, where he was fined for profaning on the Sabbath by selling meat (TAHO CON 31-1-9, *Hobart Town Courier* 8 November 1833 p1). Dunkley established the Duke of Wellington Hotel c1840 (THR 2482), his name can still be seen in the stonework above the upper storey windows.

By 1848 Dunkley had constructed a substantial house, known as St Helena on the peninsula, with census records showing that he lived in a brick dwelling, with his wife, four daughters and two domestic servants (AOT CEN 1/1/90 p419). The area became known as Dunkley's Point.

In 1849 the first Sandy Bay Regatta was held at Dunkley's Point, with Dunkley opening his house "in the most hospitable manner" (*The Britania and Trades' Advocate* 4 January 1849).

David Dunkley died in April 1860, after being thrown from his chaise cart and sustaining spinal injuries (*Launceston Examiner* 31 March 1860 p2, *Mercury* 13 April 1860 p3). St Helena was managed by Dunkley's trustees, Charles Harbottle and George Luckman, for almost 40 years (DO Will 6/509, *Mercury* 10 September 1928 p5). Luckman had married Dunkley's daughter Esther in 1854 (Lewis 2013 p9).

During this period St Helena was let as a private residence and between 1863 and 1866 the building was used as a school for ladies run by Ms Ellen Skinner (*Mercury* 29 Dec 1863, Lewis 2013 p10).

In 1899 St Helena was offered for sale by tender, the *Mercury* advertising 'This delightfully-situated residence at Sandy Bay ... contains 10 rooms, with cellars, outhouses, also stabling and coachhouse. The area of land is 3 acres, 1 rood 20 perches, divided into a garden and paddocks, and is bounded by the main road, Queensborough, and the river Derwent ...' (*Mercury* 25 March 1899 p4).

## **St Helena & George Robertson**

Dunkley's trustees sold St Helena to George A Robertson and Mr T.W. Plowman in August 1899 (DO Con 10/694). In May the following year Plowman sold out his interest to Robertson (DO Con 10/1784). According to local history Robertson set about demolishing St Helena, and rebuilding a substantial new home (Goc 1997:254). The Robertsons were keen sailors, and constructed a jetty and boathouse off the point. Sea walls were constructed at the same time (*Mercury* 11 September 1907 p7, 10 September 1928 p5).

In 1921 an effort was made to revive the Sandy Bay regatta, "which was a popular function for many years". Robertson "placed St Helena Point at the disposal of the committee, which is an ideal position for a regatta" (*Mercury* 14 February 1921 p4). The Robertson family owned and occupied the property for 30 years. In 1927 the house was advertised to let, with nine rooms, kitchen, garage, an acre of fruit and vegetables, jetty and boat house (*Mercury* 8 November 1927 p1).

## **Wrest Point House**

In September 1928 the property was sold to Major Guy Minette Lucas and Mrs Ina Francis Minette Lucas, one of the wealthiest families in Tasmania at the time, for £10 200. The property was named Wrest Point after Major Lucas' family property in England.

The second St Helena was demolished when Major and Mrs Lucas commissioned local architect Albert Lauriston Crisp to design a grand Arts and Craft style residence on the peninsula. Crisp is responsible for the design of Lincoln House (THR11914, 1940) in Burnie and the Masonic Temple in Hobart (THR7490, 1936-8).

Wrest Point House was built by J Dunn and Son, constructed from 'superior' Tasmanian materials. The house cost £7300, without fittings, and provided employment for many Hobart contractors through the early years of the Depression. According to local history, the grand residence was 71 squares and included a wing to accommodate a

housemaid, nanny and other staff; a large playroom for a son, as well as a bathroom for Mrs Lucas and a sleep-out adjoining the servant's quarters. There is speculation that Wrest Point incorporated some parts of Robertson's St Helena (1900), which had possibly incorporated part of Dunkley's St Helena (Lewis 2013:15). The property also included a substantial entrance gate with pillars, stepped sandstone wall along Sandy Bay Road, and a substantial garden.

### **Arthur Drysdale and Wrest Point Riviera Hotel**

Arthur James Drysdale purchased Wrest Point House in 1936. Drysdale (1887-1971) was a farmer, financier, self-made entrepreneur, and businessman who was the tenth son of John Drysdale, mill-owner and storekeeper at Dover. As a young man Drysdale began what became a successful pattern of entrepreneurial activity of borrowing, buying, improving and selling. His first commercial venture was in livestock, then butchering. Drysdale established a number of butchers' shops in Dover and Hobart. He ran a butchery for many years on the corner of Liverpool and Elizabeth Street, where the current Commonwealth Bank is located (*Mercury* 3 December 1953 p5).

In 1927 Drysdale founded City Motors, and throughout the early twentieth century owned a number of large properties in the Southern Midlands, including Belgrove, Mount Vernon (THR 5485), Kelvin Grove, Meadowbank and the Grange (Ely & Beechey 1996:41, *Mercury* 3 December 1953 p5). Drysdale became involved in several large ventures in the hospitality industry, including the construction of Wrest Point Riviera Hotel.

Drysdale's application for a license to alter Wrest Point House was appealed, with one objector opposing the application on the grounds that the premises were not warranted by the requirements of the neighbourhood, alleging that he had seen 700 men enter one Hobart hotel and 200 enter another after trading hours (*Mercury* 18 May 1938 p5). The appeal was dismissed, and costs were awarded to Drysdale (*Mercury* 9 September 1938 p8). In October further legal action was instigated with an appeal lodged with the Full Court of the Supreme Court against the license granted to Drysdale, which was also dismissed (3 October 1938 p10, 22 November 1938 p10).

Construction work commenced, and by July 1939 it was reported that the "disappearance of a large, two-storey residence at Wrest Point, Sandy Bay, was not the work of house-wreckers. The house has become part of the hotel which is being built for Mr AJ Drysdale, and its lines have been merged in those of the new building. Construction of the hotel is proceeding rapidly, and it is hoped that it will be ready for opening in October. The plan provided for the house to become an integral part of the new building, and when alterations have been made the old part will not be distinguishable from the new. The roof and gables of the house were taken down...The construction of the walls is nearing completion. Hansen Yuncken, Melbourne are the contractors, with Philp and Wilson, Hobart, the architects" (*Mercury* 5 July 1939 p5).

Extant plans indicate that the whole two-storey portion of the house was kept, with little structural alteration, as the south-west corner of the new building (Lewis 2013 p21).

In 1937 Drysdale obtained a permit to construct two sea water baths beyond the low water mark at Wrest Point. Rocks were blasted and lorry loads of fill were dumped concealing the natural shore. Only one pool was constructed (*Mercury* 20 November 1937 p13, Lewis 2013:17-18).

At the eastern end of the pool was a rectangular bathing pavilion with rounded corners, reflecting the same design as the Riviera Hotel. Landscaped gardens and lawns surrounded the swimming pool. A brick and glass wall were constructed around the point of the peninsula, and later the pool was partially enclosed by a glass and brick screen around the edge. The swimming pool and enclosure were removed when the Casino tower was constructed, and the tennis court was relocated to this position. In 2016 the tennis court was removed and replaced with a grassed lawn.

### **Philp & Wilson, architects**

The partnership of Philp and Wilson produced key Inter-War Art Deco and early modern buildings in Hobart including the streamlined Moderne Ocean Child Hotel (1939), the Shamrock Hotel (1939) and the Sunray Flats (THR3441, 1938), which is widely acknowledged as the first modern building in Tasmania. In Launceston well known Inter-War Art Deco buildings designed by Colin Philp include Harrap & Sons (THR4085, 1931) and Duncan House (THR3884, 1934). A commercially successful and prolific practice, Philp and Wilson, later known as Hartley Wilson and Philp, were part of the new architects that were not aligned with established social organisations and were more willing to embrace new ideas (McNeill & Woolley 2002:67).

### **Official Opening**

Four hundred guests attended a dinner dance to open the Wrest Point Riviera Hotel in December 1939. The hotel was described by the *Mercury* as 'modern but dignified'. The article noted that the hotel was "Architecturally shiplike in appearance, and almost jutting into the harbour, the hotel commands a magnificent view and itself is a commanding

landmark." (*Mercury* 6 December 1939 p12). A supper room designed by Philp and Wilson was added to the hotel in 1942 (Lewis 2013:24). A number of alterations were also made to the hotel immediately after the construction of the Casino and tower in 1973.

In the years following the Depression, the Riviera Hotel provided jobs for many local men and women, becoming a social hub for Hobart's elite, servicemen and visitors during World War Two and the immediate post-war era (*Mercury* 1 January 1940 p4, 21 June 1940 p6, 26 June 1941 p6, 22 August 1945 p10).

### **Holyman & Sons/Australian National Hotels**

In December 1946 Drysdale announced the sale of Wrest Point Riviera Hotel to Australian National Airways, an enterprise of Holyman & Sons (*Mercury* 23 December 1946 p5). By March 1947 Wrest Point Riviera Hotel was taken over by Australian National Hotels, a company linked to Australian National Airways that later became Ansett Airways (*Mercury* 7 March 1947 p2). Australian National Hotels had been formed as a proprietary company with the principal objective of acquiring the Wrest Point Riviera Hotel (Sutton 1992:11, *Mercury* 16 November 1950 p6), as part of a national plan to link hotel facilities and air transport (*Mercury* 23 December 1946 p5). In March 1947 the license was transferred from Drysdale to Herbert Alfred Snelling, General Manager of Australian National Hotels (*Mercury* 21 March 1947 p7).

After selling the Riviera Hotel Drysdale purchased Hadley's Hotel (THR 2534) c1952 and began extensive renovations with the intention of running it as a "first-class hotel" (*Mercury* 3 December 1953 p5). Dissatisfied with the prohibitive costs associated, however, Drysdale ambitiously purchased Tasmanian Lotteries, later surrendering the license in 1961 (*Mercury* 3 December 1953 p1, 5, Ely and Beechey 1996:42). Hadley's was later purchased by Federal Hotels.

In July 1950 Ivan Nello Holyman, Managing Director, and Keith Cameron Holyman, General Manager converted Australian National Hotel to a public company with the shares being listed on the Melbourne Stock Exchange between 1952 and March 1956. In March 1956 Federal Hotels took over the majority of the issued capital of Australian National Hotels (TAHO SC331/3/256).

### **The Federal Group**

The Federal Group was established in Melbourne in 1885, forming part of the wider temperance movement. The group built an "elegantly furnished temperance establishment" (a "coffee palace") and formed a company to operate it, the Federal Coffee Palace Company Limited. The Federal Coffee Palace (now demolished) at 539 Collins Street, Melbourne opened in 1888, it was a seven-storey hotel with 450 bedrooms and the biggest dining room in Australia (*The Argus* 28 July 1888 p12, 31 July 1888 p5). During the 1890s the directors sought a liquor license, to attract a wider clientele and survive the difficult financial climate of the late nineteenth century. Throughout the early to mid-twentieth century the Federal Hotels, as it became known, expanded operations throughout Australia, operating 18 hotels by 1973 (Sutton 1992:15). The Federal Group is one of the world's oldest hotel groups ('Federal Group – About Us').

### **Further Development**

In November 1952 an accommodation wing, known as the Mountain Side Accommodation, was added to the Riviera Hotel at a cost that far exceeded the initial estimated cost (*Mercury* 6 November 1952 p3). The wing was designed by Stephenson & Turner of Melbourne, a firm that designed some of Australia's most significant hospitals (see Willis 2012:652-654).

By October 1954 the Nomenclature Board officially named the peninsula Wrest Point.

Squash Courts were built in 1955 to a design by D Graeme Lumsden & Ashton Architects of Hobart and Melbourne (Goad 2012:416-417). An additional rectangular building and adjoining tennis court were constructed c1940s-50s directly against the shoreline. The Waters Edge Accommodation wing, located on the southern side of the Riviera Hotel, was completed by 1965.

### **Wrest Point Casino Tower**

During the 1960s Federal Hotels began to consider means of attracting tourists to Tasmania, particularly during the Tasmanian winter. The Federal Group investigated the possibilities of establishing a casino in Tasmania, approaching the Government with the idea, and conducting research in Europe (Sutton 1992:28).

Following a period of international research by employee Mr John Haddad, Federal Hotels submitted a 26 page submission to the Tasmanian Government, 'A Plan for the Establishment of a Casino at Wrest Point Riviera Hotel', in August 1967. The submission outlined a four stage development: to update the old hotel and erect a casino alongside;

construction of an accommodation tower containing 196 bedrooms and a revolving restaurant, an extension to the existing south wing building and removal of the main building; to build a heated, enclosed pool and seating for private parties, functions and conferences; and the construction of a large convention centre (Sutton 1992:37-38). Federal's proposal for the development of an international hotel-casino promoted both tourism and economic benefits for Tasmania.

Throughout 1968 Federal negotiated with the Tasmanian Government, then led by Premier Eric Reece, to establish a world class hotel and casino at the Wrest Point site (Director's Report to Shareholders 30 June 1968 TAHO SC331/3/256).

Controversy surrounded Federal Hotel's application for a gaming license and proposal to establish a casino at Wrest Point, with objections voiced by community and church organisations. Premier Reece, facing a Cabinet split, only amassed the necessary legislative support subject to a successful referendum. An acrimonious parliamentary debate was followed by a positive tourism versus negative gambling campaign (Newman 2005:304).

A referendum was put to Tasmanian voters on 14 December 1968, "Are you in favour of the granting of a casino license to Wrest Point Hotel conditional on the proposed development of that hotel?". The referendum passed by a margin of 6%, with 53% voting Yes and 47% voting No ('Referendums in Tasmania').

By June 1969 the Director's Report stated that the "Company has finalised arrangements for the hotel-casino development at Wrest Point, the work on which has now been commenced. The new building, which is in addition to those existing, will cost \$3 500 000, excluding furnishing and equipping" (Directors Report to Shareholders 30 June 1969, TAHO SC331/3/256).

### **Design and Construction of the Casino Tower**

The building agreement was signed with the Tasmanian Government on 2 September 1969. AV Jennings Industries was to build the hotel-casino from a design by architect and Federal Director Kevin Curtin, of Kevin Curtin and Partners. Sir Roy Grounds was commissioned by Jennings as project architect, in conjunction with Philp, Lighton, Floyd and Beattie, formerly Philp and Wilson, and Hartley Wilson and Philp. Gutteridge, Haskins and Davey of Hobart were commissioned as design engineers (Sutton 1992: 113). Despite Curtin's and other architect's involvement in the design of Wrest Point Casino Tower, the design is largely attributed to Roy Grounds (Lewis 2013:34-36).

Victorian architect Sir Roy Grounds (1905-1981) is an iconic figure of Australian modernism. In Tasmania Grounds also designed the Alcorso family homes at Moorilla, the Round House (THR7089, 1955) and the Courtyard House (THR7088, 1965), now incorporated (and largely altered) as part of David Walsh's Museum of Old and New Art (MONA). Grounds also designed the workers' village at Glenorchy for Alcorso's Silk and Textile workers (1957-58) (Hamann). Nationally Grounds is responsible for the design of the National Gallery of Victoria, Victorian Arts Centre, and the Shine Dome at the Australian Academy of Science, Canberra.

During 1970 two issues threatened to delay construction. In early March 1970 Hobart City Council's Building Appeals Board rejected Grounds' application for the Casino Tower building to exceed the then maximum permissible building height of 130 feet. However, Federal was granted an exemption which was gazetted in 25 March 1970.

Further community debate emerged in March/April with the requirement to reclaim an area of the bay to the north of the peninsula. The issue sparked fierce debate in the press, with the Government passing legislation for the reclamation because of parking requirements enforced by the Government and Hobart City Council (HCC) (Sutton 1992:119, TAHO SC331/3/256).

Construction of the Casino Tower officially began on 14 October 1970, with Mrs Lyons, wife of the Minister for Tourism, breaking a bottle of champagne cider over a bulldozer. Excavation of the site was 15 feet below sea level and in February 1971 the concrete base was poured, requiring over 128 tons of reinforcing steel, beginning at 6am on 18 February and concluding at 11.30pm 19 February. The foundation stone was laid on 28 April 1971 by the Acting Premier Mr K Lyons. The foundation stone is Jurassic dolerite found on the site during excavations (Sutton 1992:129-130).

AV Jennings had a crew of 120 Tasmanian construction workers on site including bricklayers, carpenters, labourers, riggers and scaffolders. Work progressed steadily, with the tower block completed in July 1972 and fit-out commencing in September of the same year (Sutton 1992:131-132).

### **Completion and Opening of the Casino Tower**

The casino license was handed over from Premier Reece to the General Manager of Federal Pacific Hotels, Mr John Haddad, on 2 February 1973 (*Mercury* 3 February 1973 p1). A week later, on the 9 February, an unofficial opening or

"State Night" was attended by 350 guests (*Mercury* 10 February 1973 p1). Wrest Point Hotel Casino was officially opened on 10 February 1973.

The opening extravaganza featured the release of 5000 balloons and the biggest fireworks display staged in Australia to that date. It was telecast nationwide with Bob Rogers and Tony Barber hosting (*Mercury* 7 February 1973 p1, 8 February 1973 p2,15).

The *Casino Spectacular, Mercury Souvenir Supplement* (1973) documents the features and services provided by Australia's first legal casino; "Starting at the ground level the tower block rises 240 feet above the Derwent River, with a diameter of 200 feet at the base, tapering to 94 feet at the top of the tower. Twenty-one storeys faced with white quartz concrete panels, have a fantastic variety of facilities. One of the major features, of course, is the casino itself, in which 300 people at a time will be able to gamble to their heart's, or wallets' content in luxury surroundings. American or French roulette, chemin-de-fer, punto blanco, blackjacks and craps are available for the patrons. Above their heads is the 16 foot, 2 ½ ton grand chandelier from Menzies Hotel, Melbourne.

"Before taking any of the express lifts (700 feet per minute) to your suite, you can stop off at the cabaret theatre-restaurant...There's room for 350 diners and show business enthusiasts. Should you feel the need, you can use the indoor heated swimming pool on the ground floor...A total of 195 bedrooms, including 15 VIP suites, are furnished and decorated for the ultimate in comfort. Total accommodation is 650. Interior design has been handled by Australians Pru and David Grant, who travelled the world observing and noting all the major casinos.

"Topping the tower block is the revolving restaurant and cocktail bar, for 200 diners...The existing Wrest Point Hotel is connected to the tower by an enclosed glazed pedestrian bridge leading to the shopping arcade and administration offices..." (*Mercury Casino Spectacular* 13 February 1973 p6).

Internally the Casino Tower features works by two prominent Australian artists, including two exotic mural friezes in the Birdcage Bar by Charles Billich, originally from Croatia ('Billich'), and a floor to ceiling mosaic mural in the glazed atrium of the VIP gaming area by Vladimir Tichy, born in the Czech Republic ('Vladimir Tichy'). The theatre restaurant was later converted to Regines nightclub (Sutton 1992:132), which closed c2000. The casino also had a two-up ring.

During the early 1970s female casino croupiers, known as ladybirds, wore glamorous red and black gowns. These distinctive uniforms had splits up sides of the skirts and a peephole neckline. Ladybird mothers monitored the appearance and conduct of the ladybirds.

Wrest Point Hotel Casino continued to be a hub of social activity in Hobart and by 1978, after five years of operation, it had entertained more than five million visitors. Headline acts such as Shirley Bassey, Richard Clayderman, Tom Jones and Eartha Kitt, and cabaret attractions such as dancers from the Lido Theatre, with shows 'Merci Beaucoup' and 'Soir de Gala', drew large crowds (Sutton 1992:154).

Wrest Point Hotel Casino was subject to extensive additions in the later 20th century, including a conference centre built on reclaimed land and a multi-level car park. The Convention Centre was designed by Kevin J Curtin & Partners in 1981 (TAHO AE417/7/1943, PCS1/2/3, PCS1/2/2). (TAHO AE417/7/1943). The Convention and Entertainment Centre was opened in May 1984 with headlining acts Sir Harry Secombe, Colleen Hewett and Peter Regan (*Mercury* 16 May 1984 p17).

By the end of 1985 Australia had eight legal casinos, the first four, Hobart, Darwin, Alice Springs and Launceston, were built and operated by Federal (Sutton 1992:30). Kevin J Curtin and Partners were also involved in the design of these casinos (Lewis 2013 p34-5). Wrest Point undertook a number of promotional tours including Victoria (March 1976) and New Zealand (May 1986). In May 1982 Federal opened the Country Club Casino in Prospect, Launceston.

Internally the Wrest Point Hotel Casino complex has undergone a number of improvements and refurbishments to modernise facilities. In 1992 Federal began a \$10 million refurbishment program with an emphasis on public spaces such as the gambling area, pool and gymnasium, foyer and Birdcage bar (*Mercury* 15 December 1992 p13). The Boardwalk, including the Boardwalk Terrace, Riverview Terrace with various restaurants and cafes, was opened in 1996. Federal Hotels have been a major contributor to the tourism industry in Tasmania throughout the late twentieth century and early twenty-first century.

In 2017 Wrest Point Casino Tower is Tasmania's tallest building, at 73 metres tall (240 feet).

### **Comparative Analysis**

Wrest Point Casino Tower is the only example of a late twentieth century circular high-rise tower in Tasmania. It is believed that Wrest Point Casino Tower was influenced by an unbuilt 1954 design by architectural firm Ground, Romberg & Boyd (Lewis 2013:45).

Wrest Point Casino Tower has been compared with Australia Square, Sydney (1961-7) designed by Harry Seidler. Seidler was internationally recognised, and Australia Square is an earlier and larger design (Lewis 2013:45).

Its circular form has also led to comparisons with two contemporary octagonal towers; the MLC Building (1977) in Sydney, also designed by Seidler, and Nauru House (1972) in Melbourne, designed by Perrot Lyon Timlock Kesa & Associates (see Lewis 2013:45-48 for further discussion on this matter).

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