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MEDIA RELEASE

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WILBERFORCE ICONS STATE HERITAGE LISTED

The NSW Government today announced a former schoolhouse, chapel and cemetery established by Governor Lachlan Macquarie at Wilberforce had been given the State's highest level of heritage protection.

Minister for Planning Tony Kelly said a building originally used as both a schoolhouse and chapel, which was built in 1819, had been placed on the State heritage register.

Also placed on the register was the nearby Wilberforce cemetery, established in 1810, and the St John's Church which was designed by the renowned architect Edmund Blacket and built in 1859.

The listings are part of the NSW Government's thematic listings scheme for 2010, under which it is pursuing listings with a Governor Macquarie theme to mark the 200th anniversary of the beginning of his rule.

Mr Kelly said the listings protect the only surviving example of Governor Macquarie's vision to establish a church, school and burial ground close together in the five Hawkesbury River towns he established.

"This planning demonstrates Governor Macquarie's policy of improving the morals, conduct, religious observance and education of the small-scale ex-convict farmers of Hawkesbury settlements," he said.

"Macquarie had a particular interest in fostering the education of the colony's first generations of freeborn children.

"Governor Macquarie personally inspected the site for the establishment of the town of Wilberforce, its schoolhouse, burial ground and town square.

"The former schoolhouse/chapel is a largely intact and very rare example of an early Colonial Georgian designed building that has remained in use for nearly 200 years.

Mr Kelly said the cemetery was an excellent surviving example of one of the five burial grounds established by Governor Macquarie in 1810 in each of the Hawkesbury-Nepean towns.

"These burial grounds were an integral part of each of the Macquarie towns of the Hawkesbury-Nepean," he said.

"They gave force to his 1811 order that deceased persons must be buried in consecrated burial grounds and not on their farms.

Earlier this year, the NSW Government announced the listing of St John's Anglican Church at Parramatta, Richmond Park at Richmond Park and the CBD's Macquarie Park – all items associated with Macquarie.

The listings mean any major works for the items would be subject to decisions or advice from the Heritage Council of NSW as well as Hawkesbury City Council. The items now have increased access to ongoing State Government heritage funding and will be required to be maintained to certain standards of repair.