

Australian Capital Territory

Heritage (Decision about Registration of the Callam Offices, Phillip) Notice 2008 (No 1)

Notifiable Instrument NI 2008 - 354

made under the

Heritage Act 2004, s42 Notice of decision about registration

1. Revocation

This instrument replaces NI2007 – 264

2. Name of instrument

This instrument is the Heritage (Decision about Registration of the Callam Offices, Phillip) Notice 2008 (No 1).

3. Registration details of the place

Registration details of the place are at Attachment A: Register entry for Callam Offices, Phillip.

4. Reason for decision

The ACT Heritage Council has decided that the Callam Offices, Phillip meet one or more of the heritage significance criteria at s 10 of the *Heritage Act 2004*. The register entry is at Attachment A.

5. Date of Registration

21 August 2008.

The Secretary
ACT Heritage Council
GPO Box 158
CANBERRA ACT 2602

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Gerhard Zatschler
Secretary ACT Heritage Council
GPO Box 158, Canberra ACT 2602

22 August 2008



ACT Heritage Council

AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

HERITAGE REGISTER
(Provisional Registration Details)

Place 169

For the purposes of s. 33 of the *Heritage Act 2004*, an entry to the heritage register has been prepared by the ACT Heritage Council for the following place:

- **CALLAM OFFICES (Former Woden TAFE).**

DATE OF REGISTRATION

Notified: 22 August 2008 Notifiable Instrument: NI2008–354

The Secretary
ACT Heritage Council
GPO Box 158, Canberra, ACT 2601

Telephone: 13 22 81 Facsimile: (02) 6207 2229

IDENTIFICATION OF THE PLACE

- Place Callam Offices, Block 29, Section 80, Suburb of Phillip, ACT.

HISTORY OF THE PLACE

The growth of Canberra from Walter Burley Griffin's plan to the "Y Plan" is evident in the development of Woden and Belconnen in the 1960s to the 1970s. These two new town centres were planned to cater for the increase in Canberra's population and the provision of government office space was integral to the planning, both to house an expanding public service and associated services, and to assist in the development of the town centres.

The Callam Offices were the last major very large office building complex to be planned in Woden by the National Capital Development Commission (NCDC). While the complex was not completed it was originally intended to form a major part of the existing town centre plan conceived as a pedestrian focussed rather than a car-oriented town centre. The Callam Offices complex was originally designed to accommodate 6,000 public servants.

The cruciform urban plan of the Woden Town Centre, master planned by the NCDC in 1964, has a north/south lineal axis, more dominant today than originally intended, with development that stretches from the south end large indoor shopping mall, Woden Plaza, and associated car-parking facilities, across the town square, which is surrounded by commercial buildings to the north where various multi-storied public service buildings are situated. The east/west axis, which is less obvious today, extends across Callam Street from the Callam Offices across the town square to community facilities to the west.

Even though its urban aspirations have not been fulfilled, it is a major landmark in the Woden Town Centre and considered to be architecturally significant.

The NCDC chose John Andrews as the architect, mainly on the demonstrated ability shown by the firm in its design for the Cameron Offices in Belconnen. Andrews felt that the design for large office complexes in Canberra would best be met with an intensity of activity along pedestrian routes. The great horizontal spread of his designs was intended to bring a new dimension to the new town centres. Andrews wished to create buildings suited to Australian conditions; something that he believed had not been achieved. The structural engineer for the Callam Offices development was Ove Arup & Partners.

The complex was planned as a continuous element extending north and south along Callam Street between the Woden Town Centre to the west and what was intended to be new housing adjacent to the parkland of the Woden Cemetery to the east. The site area was 5.26 hectares. The complex was to be connected back to the town square via an elevated walkway along the east/west axis of the town centre plan. The level of this walkway was raised to be at the same level as the town square. Approaching the complex from the town square the walkway spanned across Callam Street and then split in two directions at 45 degrees forming the two main public access routes to the office pods. At the termination of the single main walkway a ramp lead on down to a large landscaped public garden.

The proposal for the Callam Offices development was for 26 three-storey hexagonal office pods elevated above the flood plain each with three separated functional spaces, the offices, utility service zones and

circulation connections. Two relatively large three storey, elongated buildings were to be located along Callam Street for additional parking.

The intended overall plan formed a symmetrical geometric plan in the form of an inverted “W”.

Construction of the complex was to begin in 1975, however, the Federal Government cut funding to most government projects and the project was cancelled. In 1977, the NCDC decided to build three of the pods to house the Woden TAFE Collage.

The plan for Woden Town Centre included a TAFE College to the north of the planned office complex and this was later constructed. The Callam Offices were then occupied by the ACT Planning Authority and later other ACT Government Departments.

The complex is one of two massive office complexes designed by John Andrews International in Canberra, the other being the Cameron Offices, 1972, Belconnen, It is one of five such complexes in Canberra commissioned by the NCDC in the 1960's and 1970's, the others are the Edmund Barton Offices, Barton, 1974, by Harry Seidler and Associates, the McLachlan Offices, Barton, 1980 by Daryl Jackson Evan walker Architects, and the Benjamin Offices, Belconnen, 1981, by McConnel Smith & Johnson. A large part of the Benjamin Offices has been demolished.

The “free form” horizontal walk-up design of four of these complexes was a departure from the normal tower office design of the time and can be contrasted with the more reserved rectilinear form of the Edmund Barton Offices which relies more on its lifts for vertical circulation.

John Andrews

John Andrews returned to Australia in 1969 after studying at Harvard University and conducting his own practice in Toronto, Canada from 1961 where he designed notable buildings such as the Scarborough College, Toronto, Harvard Graduate School of Design and the Miami Passenger Terminal. He also designed the Intelsat Headquarters, Washington USA, (1980). In Australia, his notable buildings are The American Express Tower, (formerly King George Tower), Sydney (1976), the internationally significant Cameron Offices, Belconnen, Canberra, (1976), Darling Harbour Convention Centre, Sydney, (1990), and various university buildings and residential works. There are examples of his student residential housing at Toad Hall ANU and Student Residence Group 2 University of Canberra, 1973.

John Andrews was awarded the RAI A Gold Medal in 1980, an Order of Australia in 1981, and a Centenary Medal in 2001. His work has attracted the academic attention and analysis which few Modern Australian architects have been given. Andrews was a member of the judging panels in the competitions for Australia's new Parliament House, and National Archives Building.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PLACE

The Callam Office complex located on the eastern edge of the Woden Town Centre in the Canberra suburb of Phillip was designed by the architectural firm John Andrews International for the NCDC. Design work began in 1973, (the actual working drawings are dated 1977) and construction was completed in 1981. The building is an example of the Late Twentieth-Century Structuralist style of architecture and exhibits the typical elements of the style: compression masts, thickened cable stays forming triangular steel supports to roof and floors, reinforced-concrete support structure and cover to anchorage of post-tensioned cables.

The Original Office Design

The original 1973 office complex proposal was for a total of 26 three-storey octagonal office pods elevated above the flood plain ground level, each pod with three separated functional spaces, namely the offices, utility service zones and circulation connections. The architecture of each single office pod was a clearly expressed “system” all set out on a combined 12m and 9m plan controlling grid and in the 1973 design each 30m wide office pod was to be indirectly linked by continuous expressed wide concrete walkways for the public elevated at the second (mid) level located between the pods. There were to be smaller separate “tube-like” enclosed elevated link-ways for the office workers running perpendicular to the wider public walkways and located at the first and third levels, as well as full width transition spaces between each paired pod also at the first and third levels. These links were all set out on the diagonal and also located between the pods. The architect’s intention was that the hierarchical differences in the public through-circulation and the private office connections were to show clearly through the design. At the first and third levels the full width transition spaces were to allow for variations in department sizes on the one level utilizing two pods. At the mid-level the transition spaces provided the public lobby off the walkway that linked to the offices. The lobby was a glazed circular space within the rectangular transition space leaving corner voids between levels.

The utility service zones, including toilets, tearooms, cleaner’s stores and vertical circulation, were designed in attached separate circular service tower structures between pods. This provided the access to the enclosed link-ways as well as a connection between pods in the opposite direction. Each office pod had direct access to the toilets while the location allowed the toilets to be naturally light and to have views to the outside.

Combined circular lift well and stair well towers were placed centrally between each group of four pods, linked back to the pods along the covered walkways via the circular service towers at the first and third levels. Separate circular concrete stair towers were attached along a short link to the end pods where a circular service tower was not required. Vehicle parking was located beneath the pods.

From 1977 to 1981 three of the office pods were constructed for the Woden Tertiary and Further Education (TAFE) facility. The complex of the reduced three pod design as constructed includes one transition space, one central circular lift well and stair well tower, three circular service towers and two circular concrete stair towers. With relocation of TAFE function the Callam Offices are presently used as first intended, as offices for public servants.

The “space-age” repetitive striking form of the pods clearly expresses the structural system. The waffle slab concrete floors of each three-storey pod are expressed on the façade and are supported in the central floor zone by four concrete columns that extend through to well above the roof forming compression masts. The concrete columns are located well in from the perimeter to form both a central support to each level and, above the roof level, to support the thickened suspension cables that extend diagonally out to the perimeter in a triangular form to support the eight perimeter corner suspension columns. Each mast supports two perimeter columns and is tied and braced back to the other three central columns. The anchorage of the post-tensioned cables is expressed at the junction of the suspension members at roof level. The suspension cables, suspension columns and stays are constructed with high tensile steel cables encased in grout filled circular hollow steel sections. The reduced diameter of the perimeter suspension columns as they extend down the façades to the lower floor level expresses their structural function where the load carried is reduced at each level.

The façades of the offices are fully glazed from floor to ceiling between the exposed slab edge beams and are shaded to the north, east and west by stainless steel framed glazing screens. Each blade of the screen is tilted so that about 50% of the screen is open letting in some direct daylight. This shading system was developed by John Andrew’s firm for their American Express Tower, Sydney, 1976, however, the glazing on that building was polycarbonate and not glass. The offices have particleboard false floors with a 700mm services zone. The covered walkways are glazed with curved acrylic in a light steel frame.

The soffits to the links and towers are curved fibre sheet. Internally the office areas are a combination of open plan and partitioned offices.

Other significant examples of the Late Twentieth-Century Structuralist style in Canberra are the Shine Dome, Acton, 1958, by Grounds Romberg & Boyd; Canberra Stadium, 1977 and Bruce Indoor Arena, 1981, Bruce, both by Philip Cox & Partners. Guardian House, Woden, 1969, by Ian McKay, has been demolished.

Like other buildings designed around a restrained, functional, construction aesthetic, the Callam Offices suffer superficially from the pragmatic and ad hoc changes made to them as part of the continual “adaptive re-use program” of support for occupation. The insertion of security doors; the concealment of exposed concrete floor structures (the soffits of the “waffle slab” system); the partitioning of work areas and the introduction of cables, wires and ducts over carefully cast in situ off-the-form features are examples of these changes. While some of these works may have been poorly considered, their surface-fixed nature will allow ready removal, and the building’s incorporation of service floors and ducting promises to assist their future concealment should this be possible and affordable.

Beneath these minor encumbrances the buildings appear sound and essentially intact, in a workable condition, supporting the use by the current occupants. Maintenance issues are reported to focus upon its air-conditioning system. Cleaning of the exterior has been postponed due to current water shortages.

The Callam Offices impressively convey their structure, design and overall intent, and the system of served spaces and serving elements of which they are comprised is readily comprehensible.

STATEMENT ABOUT THE HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PLACE

The Callam Offices are one of two large government office commissions in Canberra designed in the 1970s by the internationally eminent Australian architect John Andrews (the other being the Cameron Offices, Belconnen). Conceived as public service accommodation by the National Capital Development Commission to support the development of Woden Town Centre, the Callam Offices are the representative built fragment of an innovative and expansive modular office complex, unrealized due to changes in government planning.

Designed around a repetitive building system of office pods, service zones, and interconnecting pedestrian links segregating staff and public, the Callam Offices were skilfully designed and detailed in the Late Twentieth-Century Structuralist manner, and finely built in exposed off-form concrete, steel and glass. The buildings are of interest for their conceptual planning and styling, as well as for their radical construction method – in which the floors of the office pods are suspended via high tensile steel cables hung from central masts and columns, expressed above the roofs, allowing the pods to float above their site.

Acknowledged by the architectural profession, writers and critics alike as an important work of an important Australian architect, the Callam Offices are a landmark component of Woden Town Centre, and of Canberra.

ASSESSMENT AGAINST THE HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA

Pursuant to s.10 of the *Heritage Act 2004*, a place or object has heritage significance if it satisfies one or more of the following criteria:

(a) it demonstrates a high degree of technical or creative achievement (or both), by showing qualities of innovation, discovery, invention or an exceptionally fine level of application of existing techniques or approaches;

The Callam Offices complex is significant as one of the two most important works of architecture in Canberra by the leading internationally acclaimed architect John Andrews, the other being the Cameron offices, Belconnen, built in 1972. They were part of five such complexes in Canberra commissioned by the NCDC in the 1960 and 1970s and their horizontal walk-up design was a departure from the normal tower office design of the time.

The extra-ordinary technical ability and creative achievement of the internationally acclaimed Australian architect John Andrews is apparent in the design of the Callam Offices, which is innovative when compared with other office complexes built in Canberra in the mid 1970s. At the Callam Offices the extensive use of post-tensioned suspension cables to support the concrete structure was a relatively new building system that shows a high degree of technical achievement. The Callam Offices are the first and only known example of an office building in Australia where the complete perimeter structure is supported by suspension cables. This innovative structural solution enabled the complexity of the floodplain site to be resolved with minimal supports providing elevated office space and circulation routes. The conception of the Callam Offices as a hexagonal modular building system, reliant upon its repetitive distribution of office pods, service zones and connection pedestrian links, with incorporation of segregated public and staff circulation paths is also a technical and creative achievement. The fully glazed facades, composed of structural frames and integrated sunshields which achieve an articulate balanced pattern while maximising the occupants' outlook and facilitation natural passive climate control are another facet of the architect's technical achievement

(b) it exhibits outstanding design or aesthetic qualities valued by the community or a cultural group;

The Callam Offices are a significant example of the Late Twentieth-Century. Structuralist Style and are notable for displaying the high design skill of the architect John Andrews. Many of the main characteristics of the style are exhibited here: its compression masts, thickened cable stays forming triangular steel supports to roof and floors, reinforced-concrete support structure and covering to anchorage of post tensioned cables. The structural system using suspension members, which enable the offices, themselves made of heavy materials, to float above the site with "space-age" aesthetics, are recognized broad characteristics of the style.

The following design features are of additional significance; the full height and full width glazing with the glazed stainless steel sun shading façade system, the exposed waffle slab floors, the free standing setting, the lengthy expressed reinforced concrete slab edge beams, the reinforced concrete walkways and links, the cladding to the circulation bridges and utility service zones, circular lift well and stair well towers and circular concrete stair towers.

Those in the local Canberra community who value architecture and its contribution to the environment and the arts appreciate the innovative and visionary plan of which the Callam Offices were part. The location of the Callam Offices at a major entry to the Woden Town Centre has given the Callam Offices a degree of community recognition as a landmark because of its unusual and distinctive aesthetic values.

(c) it is important as evidence of a distinctive way of life, taste, tradition, religion, land use, custom, process, design or function that is no longer practised, is in danger of being lost or is of exceptional interest;

The Callam Offices are evidence of the 1970s expansion of Canberra under the management of the National Capital Development Commission and demonstrated by the construction of large office complexes to house government departments in new town centres. The building's departure from the normal office towers of the time to a "free-form" horizontal walk-up design is also of interest and is no longer the fashion in office design. Of particular interest is the planning and design of the building with its identical office pods linked to neighbours by continuous walkways whereby the structural capacities of the building materials were used to their full potential. The use of the high tensile steel suspended construction system at the Callam Offices was an important post World War II development in construction, but one which was rarely used in Australia.

The design of the Callam Offices complex demonstrates an important development in architectural style "Late Twentieth-Century Structuralist Style" in the second half of the 20th Century. Relatively few buildings were built in this style in Australia, and only a small number of these in Canberra. Modern architecture was the most important architecture of the 20th Century. Canberra is one of the few 20th Century designed cities in the world. That such an exceptional modern building could be designed and partly built in Canberra in the 1970s reflects on the preparedness of the National Capital Development Commission to support innovative Modern architecture and promote it in the community. The combination of modern architecture and urban design is of exceptional interest.

(d) it is highly valued by the community or a cultural group for reasons of strong or special religious, spiritual, cultural, educational or social associations;

Not applicable.

(e) it is significant to the ACT because of its importance as part of local Aboriginal tradition

Not applicable.

(f) it is a rare or unique example of its kind, or is rare or unique in its comparative intactness

The Callam Offices are a rare example of structuralist architecture in office design in Australia. The use of high-tensile steel suspension systems in office buildings was rare in Australia. John Andrews used a suspension system for part of the Cameron Offices but at the Callam Offices used it to support the entire perimeter of each office pod.

(g) it is a notable example of a kind of place or object and demonstrates the main characteristics of that kind

The Callam Offices are a notable example of the Late Twentieth-Century Structuralist Style.

(h) it has strong or special associations with a person, group, event, development or cultural phase in local or national history

The Callam Offices have a strong association with the period of the 1970s when the National Capital Development Commission pursued the development of large office complexes to house government departments within new town centres.

The offices also have a strong and special association with their designer, John Andrews AO, LFRAIA, who played a significant role in Australia's cultural history. He is one of the most important architects of the late twentieth century in Australia and his Callam Offices design is a major work from his Australian career and is featured in major national publications, including publications by Andrews himself. Professor Jennifer Taylor referred to John Andrews as providing: "a stimulating influence for Australian architecture". John Andrews was awarded the RIAA Gold Medal in 1980, an Order of Australia in 1981 and a Centenary Medal in 2001.

- (i) **it is significant for understanding the evolution of natural landscapes, including significant geological features, landforms, biota or natural processes**

Not applicable.

- (j) **it has provided, or is likely to provide, information that will contribute significantly to a wider understanding of the natural or cultural history of the ACT because of its use or potential use as a research site or object, teaching site or object, type locality or benchmark site**

The potential for the Callam Offices to support research and interpretation of their heritage values and that of Twentieth Century architectural design, history and social history is very high. The documentation which survives to place the buildings within their historical and social context is rich and comprehensive.

- (k) **for a place—it exhibits unusual richness, diversity or significant transitions of flora, fauna or natural landscapes and their elements**

Not applicable.

- (l) **for a place—it is a significant ecological community, habitat or locality for any of the following:**

- (i) **the life cycle of native species;**
- (ii) **rare, threatened or uncommon species;**
- (iii) **species at the limits of their natural range;**
- (iv) **distinct occurrences of species.**

Not applicable.

FEATURES INTRINSIC TO THE HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PLACE

Features intrinsic to the heritage significance of the place which require conservation include:

- The scale, form and fabric of the three-pod office complex as originally built (including specially designed finishes)
 - elevated walkways as indicated on the original working drawings including but not exclusively:
 - the full height and full width glazing with the glazed stainless steel sun shading façade system
 - the exposed waffle slab floors, the lengthy expressed reinforced concrete slab edge beams
 - the reinforced concrete walkways and links
 - the cladding to the circulation bridges and utility service zones
 - circular lift well and stair well towers and circular concrete stair towers
 - original fittings and finishes to the toilet areas and lifts.
- The free standing nature of the buildings which enables its scale and form to be appreciated including the open form of the landscape setting including the open undercroft.

Features not included as significant are the following:

- The original temporary steel and timber bridge, the external steel stair up to the elevated walkway, the ground level glazed entry lobby and lift below the “transition space”, the perimeter fence and associated car parking facilities.

REASON FOR REGISTRATION

The place has been assessed against the heritage significance criteria and been found to have heritage significance when assessed against seven criteria under the ACT Heritage Act – criteria a), b), c), f,) g), h) and j).

APPLICABLE HERITAGE GUIDELINES

The Heritage Guidelines adopted under s 27 of the *Heritage Act 2004* are applicable to the conservation of the Callam Offices.

The guiding conservation objective is that the Callam Offices shall be conserved and appropriately managed in a manner respecting their heritage significance and the features intrinsic to that heritage significance, and consistent with a sympathetic and viable use or uses. A conservation management plan (CMP) would help to guide conservation and future use. Any works that have a potential impact on significant fabric (and/or other heritage values) which are necessary prior to the development of a CMP shall be guided by a professionally documented interim assessment and conservation policy relevant to that area or component (i.e. a Statement of Heritage Effects - SHE).

BACKGROUND

1. CONSULTATION WITH STAKEHOLDERS

The ACT Heritage Council undertook public consultation in 2007 in accordance with the provisions of the *ACT Heritage Act 2004*.

2. REFERENCES

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Callam Street entrance view of the Callam Offices:



Callam Offices from Eddison Park:

