

Register of Significant Twentieth Century Architecture

RSTCA No: R079

Name of Place: Parliament House

Other/Former Names:

Address/Location: Capital Hill PARKES 2600

Block 2 Section 1 of Parkes

Listing Status:	Registered	Other Heritage Listings:	
Date of Listing:	October 1990	Level of Significance:	National
Citation Revision No:	2	Category:	Government
Citation Revision Date:	January 1991	Style:	Post Modern

Date of Design:	1979	Designer:	Romaldo Giurgola, Mitchell/Giurgola & Thorp Architects
Construction Period:	1981-88	Client/Owner/Lessee:	Commonwealth of Australia
Date of Additions:	Interiors have been altered since occupation by other organisations.	Builder:	Concrete Holland Joint Venture

Statement of Significance

The fundamental significance of Australia's new Parliament House lies within its concept of making a national place. It functions both as a working place for the Parliament and the Executive Government, and as a symbolic and ceremonial place for events of national importance: a symbol of national unity and commitment to the democratic process of government. The building with its integrated works of commissioned art, craft and specially designed furnishings, reflects the history, cultural diversity, development and aspirations of the nation.

The building's design and siting on the land axis creates a strong visual relationship and a linkage between the historic War Memorial and Provisional Parliament House. The building is pre-eminently sited on Capital Hill at the focus of Walter Burley Griffin's 1912 plan for Canberra and the Parliamentary Triangle. The building design re-states the original profile of the hill, and its curved walls reach out to encompass the radial avenues established by the 1912 Griffin plan as the primary axes of the city. The building, particularly the curved walls and flagpole, is a strong symbolic and sculptural element in the landscape. It was awarded the Sir Zelman Cowen Award and the Canberra Medallion in 1989, and the Civic Design Award in 1990.

Description

The site for Parliament House was established by the 1974 Parliament Act, and was a rounded hill at the apex of the Burley Griffin 1912 plan for the centre of Canberra. The building is the result of a design competition with 329 entries for Australia's foremost public building, and won in 1980 by Mitchell/Giurgola and Thorp ARCHITECTURE. The dedication of the completed building in May 1988 marked Australia's bicentennial. The design of the building accepts the circular site of the hill as the generating form of the Parliamentary complex. Within the circle a central linear sequence of formal meeting rooms is framed by two massive curvilinear walls which embrace within their arcs the offices and chambers of the Senate and House of Representatives. The complex has four major elements: the Senate, the House of Representatives, a central "forum" of public spaces, and a separate Executive Government area. The building has nearly 5000 rooms including dining

rooms, bars and cafeterias for members, staff and the public; recreational facilities; service facilities such as banks, post office, and shops; and underground parking for over 1800 cars.

The exterior form of the building follows the former natural profile of the hill and is surrounded by landscaped gardens and bosques containing recreational facilities and parking. At the apex of the complex, the Australian flag is supported by a mast structure rising from the building. The character of the architecture conveys the sense of a balanced horizontal nesting of built forms in a landscaped setting.

The extensive use of natural materials such as granite, Australian timbers, woollen fabrics, Australian leather, oil-rubbed bronze fittings and furniture. The high standard of craftsmanship throughout the building is an attempt by the architect to convey the importance and dignity of craftsmen in the community.

The Art/Craft program was an integral part of the building design and comprised of over sixty major site-specific commissions involving over 2000 works in a variety of media for use throughout the building.

Condition and Integrity

Excellent

Background/History

Analysis against the Criteria specified in Schedule 2 of the Land (Planning and Environment) Act 1991

(i) a place which demonstrates a high degree of technical and/or creative achievement, by showing qualities of innovation or departure or representing a new achievement of its time

(ii) a place which exhibits outstanding design or aesthetic qualities valued by the community or a cultural group

(iii) a place which demonstrates a distinctive way of life, taste, tradition, religion, land use, custom, process, design or function which is no longer practised, is in danger or being lost, or is of exceptional interest

(iv) a place which is highly valued by the community or a cultural group for reasons of strong or special religious, spiritual, cultural, educational or social associations

(v) a place which is the only known or only comparatively intact example of its type

(vi) a place which is a notable example of a class of natural or cultural places or landscapes and which demonstrates the principal characteristics of that class

(vii) a place which has strong or special associations with person, group, event, development or cultural phase which played a significant part in local or national history

(xi) a place which demonstrates a likelihood of providing information which will contribute significantly to a wider understanding of natural or cultural history, by virtue of its use as a research site, teaching site, type locality or benchmark site

References

Other Information Sources