

## State Government Offices

Address 20 Macarthur Street, East Melbourne 3002

Practice Yuncken Freeman Architects Pty Ltd

Designed 1966

Completed 1969

History & Description The State Public Offices, completed in stages in 1966 and 1969 by the contractor John R. & E. Seccull Pty Ltd to the design of Barry Patten of Yuncken Freeman Architects.

The scheme was unusual in its sensitivity to the historic context, and was chosen for this reason after a limited competition, despite not conforming to the brief which called for a tower directly behind Treasury Building, one of Melbourne's most admired 19th Century buildings. The design was uncompromisingly modern and grid-like, whilst at the same time being discrete and 'well mannered'. The small classically proportioned window openings and location of the tower to one side of the Old Treasury and off the Collins Street axis, was an unusually considered response to the urban context.

The buildings broke new ground with their innovative use of precast concrete cladding incorporated as load bearing elements supporting the floor slabs edges, thus allowing column free internal spaces. Heightened interest was created at ground to the two low rise buildings by elevating each on *pilotis* utilising a transitional slab. Yuncken Freeman Architects were one of the most highly regarded firms of their period, and were responsible for other significant buildings including the Sidney Myer Music Bowl (1959), Eagle House, Bourke Street (1971), BHP House (1972). When asked in 2001 which was his most important building, Patten replied the SGO because of the complex range of design issues that needed to be addressed and were eventually solved. In 1970 Yuncken Freeman was awarded the RIAA Victorian Bronze Medal for excellence in design for the State Offices.

Statement of Significance The State Public Government Offices are important as a unique modernist 'urban ensemble', consisting of three different but related buildings, set on a plaza (originally with minimal landscaping) on a sloping site, surrounded on each side by other significant government offices from the mid 19th and early 20th century. It was unusually sensitive design solution for a period known for its flashy high-rise towers and bulldozer mentality.

It is an important example of the work of distinguished architect Barry Batten (1927-2002) and the practice of Yuncken and Freeman, and was considered by Patten to be his most important work.

Technically the buildings broke new ground with their innovative use of precast concrete cladding used structurally to allow column free internal spaces.

Criteria Applicable N1 - Significant heritage value in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a particular class or period of design.  
N5 - Having a special association with the life or works of an architect of significant importance in our history.  
N6 - Significant heritage value in demonstrating a high degree of technical achievement of a particular period.



View across Gordon Reserve [Wikipedia Commons]



Model view from south, 1968, Wolfgang Sievers [NLA]



Placing pre-cast panels to rear building, 1967, by Wolfgang Sievers [SLV]



Model view of Treasury Place, 1968, photo Wolfgang Sievers [NLA]