

Canberra Stadium & National Indoor Arena (National Athletics Stadium & Indoor Sports Centre)

Address Batty Street & Leverrier Crescent, Bruce, ACT, 2617

Practice Philip Cox & Partners.

Designed 1974 & 1977 Completed 1979 & 1981

History & Description

The Canberra Stadium & National Indoor Arena are two structures linked aesthetically through the use of similar materials & structural systems, & combine to form a significant precinct partially surrounded by a natural bush setting. Both buildings are excellent examples of the Late Twentieth-Century Structuralist style designed as freestanding suspension structural systems exhibiting strength & boldness, expressing a fitting symbolism for their purpose. The structural systems incorporate the principle of the least amount of material doing the most work. High tensile steel cables support the slightly curved grandstand pre-cast concrete roof. The cables are suspended from 5 steel masts that are tied back to the concrete stadium structure providing bracing & stability. The western façade with its expressed curved concrete seating structure & cubic forms shows influences of early twentieth century Constructivism. The stadium can be compared with the Indoor Arena which was constructed when the Australian Institute of Sport was established. Due to its short construction program it was determined to construct the floor first & then the roof, before the non-load bearing walls & glazing. One hundred metre long high tensile cables spanning between 12 steel masts support the curved roof of the arena. The cables run at two levels. The upper cables support the pre-cast concrete roof while the thicker lower cables stabilize the system combined with perpendicular bracing trusses & steel struts. The treatment of the side glazing aesthetically reinforces the curve of the cables. The arena is naturally cooled with air drawn from underground.

The stadium & arena were important buildings in Cox's career in terms of their early date, size, prestige & because they express clearly the principles on which his architecture was based: function & structure that derives its visual strength from the uncompromising display of its construction and materials. Philip Cox was awarded the RAIA Gold Medal in 1984.

Statement of Significance

The Canberra Stadium & National Indoor Arena Precinct is a significant example of civic architecture in the Late Twentieth-Century Structuralist style of architecture by one of Australia's notable architects. The freestanding buildings, in a landscape setting (both natural and created), are shown here to good effect. The buildings are considered to be important works in the early career of the architect.

Criteria Applicable

N1. Significant heritage value in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a particular class or period of design.
N2. Significant heritage value in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics.
N3. Significant heritage value in establishing a high degree of creative achievement.
N5. Having a special association with the life or works of an architect of significant importance in our history.



National Athletics Stadium & Indoor Sports Centre c-1983 (Source: Philip Cox & Partners)



National Athletics Stadium c-1983 (Source: Philip Cox & Partners)



Indoor Sports Arena (Photo: Graeme Trickett c.2002)



Indoor Sports Arena (Photo: Jon Burchill c.2002)