


Architectural Heritage: RAIA REPORT FORMAT

This report is to be the outcome from the data entry.

This report follows the UIA format with some additional fields and full details that will be referred to from UIA.

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Date:	16 August 2000
Latest Update:	25 September 2000
Status:	
Project ID:	Cameron Offices, Canberra
Image:	<div style="text-align: center;">  </div> <p style="text-align: right;">Cameron Offices. Photograph by Graham Trickett</p>

CAMERON OFFICES, CANBERRA

NOTE:

This document presents details of heritage buildings developed for Internet searches. An indexing form on the internet allows the on-line submission of this information. This document is intended to let anyone who is willing to participate forward the RAIA information about buildings to be added to the system without using the Web.

Importance of the criteria column lets you to point at the particularly importance of one or several elements of description of the building. You can here indicate (decreasing order A,B,C,D,E, ie International, National, State, Regional, Local) whether an element of description appears to you as decisive in its selection for the index.

Name of the Criteria	Importance of the criteria	Your Building

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TABLE n° 1 : DESCRIPTION OF BUILDING / SITE

MODULE 1 : IDENTITY OF THE BUILDING / SITE		
Current name		Cameron Offices
Previous or other name(s)		Cameron Offices
Present owner		Department of Finance and Administration Federal Government of Australia
Status of the owner		Government
Materials and techniques		Off form reinforced and precast and post tensioned concrete with expressed structural frame and external walls.
Description		<p>Cameron Offices comprises 9 parallel office wings running east- west. The wings are linked at the eastern end by a north south pedestrian spine, comprising nine “mall” buildings. Each mall contains 3 levels of offices, toilets and kitchens with walkways, lifts and stairs. To the west of each mall are the main office areas, comprising three levels of offices over a basement. In wings 1 –7 these offices are divided into two modules, B and C, with floor levels in module C offset by half a story from module B.</p> <p>The malls are the principle communication routes for the complex vertically and horizontally. Also contained in the malls are two small shops and a cafeteria. A pedestrian bridge across Cameron Avenue links wing 3 and 4.</p> <p>The north and south facades of each office have full height and full length glazing.</p> <p>The floors are stepped northwards to permit sun to enter the courtyards but provide shade to the offices. A complex structural system including hanging columns permits this to happen.</p> <p>Each wing of the complex is separated by landscaped courts representing the landscape regions of Australia.</p> <p>An underground service tunnel links all wings at the midpoint of the wings. Corresponding elevated walkways link the modules on all levels (excepting between wing 3 and 4) .(CM & P 1998)</p> <p>The building presents a strong horizontal form through its low rise and the expression of the floor levels on the exterior. All external concrete has been left in an off form grey colour.</p>
Year of project design		1968 –1970
Year of beginning of construction		1970
Year of end of construction		1977 (progressively occupied fro 1973)
Initial Design (if differs from description)		

Changes to initial changes		<p>1987 – 88 Original roof gardens roofed over with metal roofing in an early attempt to resolve water leaks.</p> <p>1988 All courtyards replanted</p> <p>1992 25% of entry doors had been replaced by automatic entry doors.</p> <p>1993 Mall 1 and Mall 5 staircases and ceilings replaced</p> <p>1993 – 98 Exposed brickwork painted with Emerclad.</p> <p>1994 – 96 boilers and chillers replaced in District Thermal Station.</p> <p>1994 – 98 Walkway paving replaced on level 2</p> <p>1997 / 98 Modifications made to improve access for people with disability</p>
Documentation and References		<p>Conybeare Morrison & Partners, <i>Conservation Analysis – Cameron Offices, Belconnen, Canberra 1998</i></p> <p>RAIA (ACT Chapter) nomination of Cameron Offices to ACT Heritage Register</p>

MODULE 2 : BUILDING / SITE LOCALISATION		
Postal Address: street, n°		Chandler Street
Postal Address: town/suburb		Belconnen
Postal Address: Postal code		2617
Urban centre/city		Belconnen Town Centre
Local Government area		Canberra
Region (State)		Australian Capital Territory
Country		Australia
Regional Context (eg Coastal, urban, rural)		Within the urban town centre of Belconnen, located on a prominent ridge to the eastern side of the town centre
Urban context (ex: Port, new town, etc...)		Town centre, urban

MODULE 3 : AUTHORS		
Project Design:		
Name, first name, (dates), job, country of origin	A	<p>John Andrews International – (Australia/Canada) Design, Documentation 1968 – 1977</p> <p>John Andrews</p> <p>Peter Courtney (who later became PJ Courtney Architects)</p>
Information on the author / the team		
Engineering:		
Name, first name, (dates), job, country of origin	B	<p>Structural – P O Miller, Milston and Ferris P/L Sydney Peter Miller</p> <p>Mechanical – DS Thomas and Partners, Sydney Don Thomas</p>

		Electrical – McCredie, Richmond and Johns (later DR Lawson Associates, Sydney) Don Lawson
		Landscape Architects – Richard Strong and Associates, Toronto
		Design Architect – Steve Morehead
		Documentation – Morehead Strong and Sigsby Don Sigsby – Sydney Ray Margules – Canberra
Information on the author / the team		
Construction:		
Name, first name, (dates), job, country of origin	C	TC Whittle Pty Ltd, Canberra Australia
Information on the author / the team		
Contracting Authority:		
Name, first name, (dates), job, country of origin	C	National Capital Development Commission 220 Northbourne Avenue Braddon ACT Sir John Overall - Commissioner
Information on the author / the team		

MODULE 4 : TYPOLOGY		
Type (single building/complex)		Complex
Initial use		Office Building
Present use		Office Building
Planned use)		Site proposed for mixed use redevelopment, including partial demolition of the complex.
Architectural Style	B	Late 20 th Century International Style Late 20 th Century Brutalist Style

MODULE 5 : EVALUATION (Analysis of significance)

<p>Background</p>		<p>The Belconnen Town Centre was designed as one of the 3 principal independent Town Centres of Canberra</p> <p>The town Centre was planned to achieve; "Shopping and commercial facilities will be closely integrated with community facilities such as library, exhibition galleries,....." A permanent residential population of 10,000 was planned for the town centre.</p> <p>The Cameron Offices were conceived as an element of an urban proposal. Pedestrian movement became the primary generator of the physical and social framework of the scheme.</p> <p>The NCDC's initial proposal for the site included 5 fifteen storey towers, which were intended to create the 'urban environment'.</p> <p>The accepted solution provided by John Andrews was 9 wings of 4 storeys, which stepped with the contours of the site. The complex was proposed to link across roadways via pedestrian walkways, to adjacent residential and retail complexes</p> <p>Prior to completion of Cameron Offices, the Shopping mall which was to have been erected immediately to the north, was relocated to a site further to the west. This affected the fundamental design premise of pedestrian links on which the offices had been designed.</p> <p>Cameron Offices was the first building constructed in the Town Centre.</p>
<p>Technical</p>		
<p>Comments</p>	<p>A</p>	<p>The complex is constructed in situ concrete in much of the mall area. The Office areas are precast concrete (mostly post tensioned) The precasting was done on site.</p> <p>The structural system is complex yet logical in an effort to provide efficient and economical use of materials, column free office spaces with clear spans of 17 metres, sun shading to the north facing offices and a pleasing regular architectural rhythm to the overall complex.</p> <p>The 17metre long precast T beams which form the floors and roofs, overhang to the north and are picked up by edge beams, which are in turn supported by individual columns staggered for each floor.</p> <p>The southern ends of the T beams are supported by edge beams which are picked up by individual staggered hanging 'columns' from large 'gallows' beams which span across the landscaped courtyards. The gallows beams are in turn</p>

		<p>supported by large full height columns to the south of the hangers and the main structure of the offices to the north. To provide column free office spaces, the structural columns are located in the landscaped courtyards between each wing. <i>(AHC Citation)</i></p> <p>Cameron Offices are air conditioned by a District Thermal Station (DTS) which also provides heating and cooling to the neighbouring Benjamin Offices. It was originally designed to service the proposed retail centre that was to be located north of Cameron Offices. <i>(CM & P 1998)</i></p> <p>The DTS draws cooling water from the adjacent Lake Ginninderra, to which it is returned passing through the cooling plant. <i>(CM & P 1998)</i></p>
Social		
<p>Comments</p>	<p>B</p>	<p>The urban aspirations of the project to connect via an internal pedestrian street the residential, commercial and retail sectors of a town centre, and the attempt to improve the workers environment by allowing each person a landscaped view, changed the NDCs' approach to the planning of new buildings. <i>(CM & P 1998)</i></p> <p>Cameron Offices has become an architectural icon of the Belconnen Town Centre although not always appreciated.</p>
Aesthetic		
<p>Comments</p>	<p>A</p> <p>B</p> <p>C</p>	<p>The Cameron Offices exhibit particular architectural elements specific to the Late 20th Century International Style, with its cubiform rectangular forms, structural frame expressed, large sheets of glass, Corbusian ribbon windows and the Late 20th century Brutalist Style with strong masses boldly composed and large areas of off form concrete.</p> <p>The Cameron Offices have a landmark quality within Belconnen and have been a major identifying feature since their construction in 1968-1977</p> <p>The courtyard landscaping themes represent an attempt to create a uniquely Australian Concept in office landscapes.</p> <p>These included recreating the landscape themes of the Monaro Plains and Australian Continent in each of the six courtyards ranging from the high plains to dry desert themes.</p>
Contextual		
<p>Comments</p>		<p>The office complex is Canberra's' and possibly Australia's' first and the only true architectural example of "Structuralism", where buildings are integral and contributing elements of an overall urban form rather than separate and individual elements. Although the town plan for Belconnen was later altered during construction of the complex,</p>

		<p>it still exhibits to a high degree this theory. (<i>RSTCA Citation</i>)</p> <p>The strong and forthright architecture of Cameron Offices and its innovative planning and partially achieved urban aspirations make it one of the most important buildings of its time.</p>
Historical		
<p>Comments</p>		<p>The Cameron Offices were the first buildings constructed in the Belconnen Town Centre</p> <p>The majority of the building has been occupied by one government tenant since construction (Australian Bureau of Statistics)</p> <p>Cameron Offices were designed by significant Australian Architect John Andrews, and is regarded by him and many other professionals as his most significant work in Canberra and possibly Australia.</p> <p>John Andrews was awarded the Royal Australian Institute of Architects Gold Medal in 1980.</p> <p>The design concept developed for the Cameron Offices was influential on the design of later office buildings in Canberra.</p>
Originality		
<p>Comments</p>		<p>The planning concept for Cameron Offices was an innovative approach to offices design of its time. It was a unique example of the integration of the residential, commercial and retail sectors of an urban complex through internal pedestrian 'streets'.</p> <p>The structural system developed demonstrates a high degree of originality and creativity.</p> <p>The extensive use of post tensioned concrete was a relatively new and innovative building system for its time.</p> <p>The integration of a structural system, landscaped courts and the office interiors as an integral feature is rarely seen in office complexes</p> <p>The interiors of the offices were innovative for their time by integrating structure and services</p>

AWARDS FOR EXCELLENCE		

TABLE n° 2: STATE OF BUILDING / SITE

MODULE 1 : ANALYSIS OF CURRENT STATE		
Building Condition		The building is generally in quite good condition. A number of areas of fabric deterioration have been identified externally and internally. These are presently of a minor nature
Evaluation of danger (decreasing order A,B,C,D,E)	B	
Nature of danger		
Comments		Cameron Offices have recently been sold to a private developer and portions of the complex are likely to be demolished in the redevelopment of the site

MODULE 2 : PROTECTION		
Current Heritage Listing		Australian Government Heritage Register (Register of the National Estate)
Administrative level of protection (Statutory or Non-Statutory)		Statutory
Authority / Institution providing listing		Register of the National Estate, Registered 26/10/99;
Registration Reference		Database No 101084, File No 8/01/000/0501
Planned restoration		Nil
Current Heritage Listing		Royal Australian Institute of Architects National Register of Significant 20 th Century Architecture
Administrative level of protection (Statutory or Non-Statutory)		Non-Statutory
Authority / Institution providing listing		RAIA
Registration Reference		(TBA)
Planned restoration		Nil

**TABLE n° 3 : CHARACTERISATION OF THE BUILDING / SITE
(Significance of the building under the Stated Criteria)**

Categories of Criteria		
MODULE 1 : PERIOD OF DESIGN / CONSTRUCTION		
Outstanding national importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a particular class or period of design.	A	Cameron Offices are an example of the Late 20th Century International Style and the Late 20th Century Brutalist Style.
	C	They were the largest office complex in Australia at the time of construction
	B	Cameron Offices were the first major buildings constructed in the Belconnen Town Centre, and have become a landmark of the area. The technology employed in its construction was relatively new at the time, in the use of post – tensioned precast concrete. The T floor/roof beam system used is now rare in Australia.
MODULE 2 : FORMAL ARCHITECTURAL VALUE		
Outstanding national importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics.	B	Cameron Offices are a rare example of Late 20 th Century International Style and Late 20 th Century Brutalist style office complex in Locally and nationally.
	B	The complex is significant as an early example of the move to create an integration of the residential, office and retail sectors of a town centre as a large complex connected by pedestrian 'streets'
	B	The building is a rare example of its time in the integration of internal office space with external landscaped courts and the use of building structure to provide sun control to office areas
	A	Cameron offices demonstrates a high level of innovative design in its planning and massing concept, its integration with the hillside and the complex yet elegant structural system developed.
MODULE 3 : RELATION TO THE LOCATION		
Outstanding national importance in establishing a high degree of creative achievement.	C	Cameron Offices is a landmark building within the Belconnen Town Centre, due to the size of the complex and its prominent ridge top location.
	B	The building is a rare example of its style in Canberra
	C	The design of Cameron Offices influenced the design briefs for future office complexes commissioned by the NCDC in the 1970's and 80's.
	C	The Cameron Office complex is one of the first examples of an office building in Australia where the designer has attempted to give architectural expression to the nature of the topography. <i>AHC</i>

		1999
MODULE 4 : MONUMENTAL OR SYMBOLICAL SIGNIFICANCE		
Having outstanding monumental and symbolic importance to the development of architecture and the history of architecture.	B	The buildings are representative of a period of significant growth in Canberra and a period when the Federal government was financing, constructing and occupying office buildings
	B	Cameron Offices is the most significant ACT and possibly National work of the prominent Australian Architect John Andrews. They were also his first major building complex in Australia.
	C	Cameron Offices were the first major office complex commissioned by the National Capital Development Commission and set the framework for future office briefs
MODULE 5 : ATYPICITY		
Having a special association with the life or works of an architect of outstanding importance to our history.	A	Cameron offices are a rare example of their Architectural style in Canberra and Nationally. They demonstrate a high degree of originality in the translation of a brief for three 16 level towers on a ridgeline to a low rise environmentally integrated complex.
	A	The structural and construction systems employed are also rare and demonstrate a high level of originality
MODULE 6 : CONSTRUCTION / STRUCTURE		
Outstanding national importance in demonstrating a high degree of technical achievement of a particular period.	A	The structural design of Cameron Offices is innovative in the use of single span, precast, post tensioned T beams to provide column free office space. The beams are supported by columns to the north and hung from Gallows beams to the south. The use of the stepped structural form to provide sunshading to the large expanses of office glazing is also innovative. (AHC 1999) The structural system was designed by Peter Miller, one of Australia's most creative structural engineers of the time.

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE	
<p>The Cameron Offices, located along Chandler Street, Belconnen Town Centre, is an example of significant architecture and an educational resource. The office complex is a very good example of the Late Twentieth-Century International Style (1960-) and the Late Twentieth Century Brutalist Style (1960-). The design incorporates most of the features which are specific to the styles including:</p> <p>Late Twentieth-Century International Style (1960-) cubiform overall shape, structural frame expressed, large sheets of glass, and plain, smooth wall surface.</p> <p>Late Twentieth-Century Style (1960-) strong shapes, boldly composed, expressed reinforced-concrete, large areas of blank wall. and off form concrete.</p>	

The following design features are of additional significance; the precast post tensioned 'T' floor beams with the integration of the lighting and air conditioning, the landscaped courtyards with native Australian plants and water features, the structural system for the office wing's floors where the Gallows beams support the floors by hanging 'columns', the stepped floors at half levels, overhang of the upper floors for shading to the north, Corbusian (ribbon) window motif, assertive cantilever and lengthily expressed reinforced concrete balustrades along the 'Mall'.

The office complex is Canberra's, and it appears Australia's, first and possibly only true architectural example of "Structuralism" where buildings are integral and contributing elements of an overall urban order rather than separate and individual elements. Although the town plan for Belconnen was later altered during construction of the complex, it still exhibits to a degree this theory making it significant.

The structural system incorporated in the office wings where the floors are supported by columns to the north and are hung from "Gallows" beams to the south is a technically innovative solution. The use of post-tensioned precast concrete for much of the structure was a relatively new building type.

The architecture of this office complex may contribute to the education of designers in their understanding of Late Twentieth-Century Architectural Styles.

John Andrews is recognised as one of Australia's leading architects of the modern movement. He was awarded the Royal Australian Institute of Architects Gold Medal in 1980.

This office complex was his first and is his largest project in Australia. It is one of the two most important buildings designed by him in Australia, the other being the American Express Tower, Sydney.

IMAGE and PLAN

Image:



Cameron Offices, Canberra
Photograph by Graham Trickett

