

Wickham Terrace Car Park

Revised date 27/06/2011

Address	Wickham Terrace, Brisbane, Queensland.		
Practice	Brisbane City Council's Architectural Branch. James Birrell Chief Architect		
Designed	c1959	Completed	1961
History & Description	The Wickham Terrace Car Park was the first multi storey car park built by the Brisbane City Council & was funded from Council parking revenues. Located just north of the Central Railway Station the design took advantage of the sloping site to combine a spiral down ramp with 6 to 7 ramped split-levels; a hybrid type based on the latest studies. The whole is expressed in a bold concrete aesthetic with distinct treatments to the individual facades.		

Attached to the eastern façade, formed with wide slotted openings that express the column & slab edge-beam structure, is a wide semi-circular spiralling continuous exit-ramp combined with a sweeping flyover on-ramp. In contrast to this open semi-circular form the western facade, at the Edward Street corner, has an expressed solid cubic lift tower. The insitu concrete walls to the tower feature a full-height off-form bas-relief mural, designed by artist James Meldrum, & which is repeated across the wall surfaces. Open cantilevered external stairs project from the tower at four levels. Extending the length of the long sloping facades, at each level, are pre-cast concrete exposed aggregate safety-barrier panels, shaped like car rear-view mirrors. Contrasting with these 'solid' panels both end facades of the parking levels have steel open railing, similar to the handrails of the cantilevered stairs. The original railing throughout has been replaced.

The parking levels are constructed with waffle slabs. A tensioned stainless-steel rod screen formed a perimeter safety-barrier that extended from the ground level up to the second level.

Birrell first worked for the Commonwealth Works Department, in Melbourne before being transferred to Canberra, then Darwin & finally to Brisbane. In 1955, at the age of 27, he was appointed Chief Architect of the Brisbane City Council Architectural Department & in this capacity oversaw more than 150 projects up until 1961. The Wickham Terrace Car Park was Birrell's largest project & one of his last for the Council. From 1961 until 1966 he was the University of Queensland Staff Architect. James Birrell was awarded the RAI A Gold Medal in 2005.

Statement of Significance	The Wickham Terrace Car Park demonstrates a theme of modern architecture in a civic building with planning of a cubic form combined with boldly composed contrasting non-rectangular shapes all in an expressed reinforced concrete structure incorporating strongly textured off-form concrete & precast concrete panels by one of Australia's notable architects. The freestanding building in an urban setting is shown here to good effect. The building is considered to be an important work in the early carrier of the architect.
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Criteria Applicable	N1 – Significant heritage value in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a particular class or period of design. N3 – 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 society.
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SE view of the semi-circular ramp & parking levels. Source: R. Riddel.



Early 1960s views of the west façade lift shaft bas-relief walls & cantilevered stairs. Source: wall R. Stringer, stair J. Birrell.



NE view C1960s.
Source: Brisbane City Council



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