



The Australian Mutual Provident (AMP) Building

Address 33 Alfred Street, Circular Quay, Sydney, NSW, 2000

Practice Peddle Thorp & Walker

Designed 1958 Completed 1962, 2004

History & Description

The Australian Mutual Provident Society (AMP) headquarters building, fronting Alfred Street at Circular Quay, was the tallest building in Australia when constructed & the first truly high-rise building in Sydney at 25 storeys. It was also one of the earliest tall buildings in Australia to incorporate a curtain-wall façade, though not the first. The site, chosen in 1957, was a consolidation of building lots. The AMP first applied to the NSW Chief Secretary for permission to exceed, by 30m, the existing 45.72m building height limit. A second development application for the proposed 116m tower, covering only 55 percent of the site, with the rest given over to an urban plaza, was submitted in 1958 with the building application submitted in 1959. A public debate accompanied the construction of the AMP building with objections not restricted to the impact of its height on the Quay but also to its curved façade.



AMP Building, 1960s

The steel framed & concrete encased free-standing 25 storey office building was planned as two back to back concave slabs connected by a central core placed off centre. The curtain wall façades are placed between stone clad vertical terminating planes planted onto the ends of each slab. The northern tower facade is divided into two main sections above the ground level pedestrian plaza; a 5 storey podium stepped forward of the column line, & a tower above a recessed colonnade level, while the southern tower extends down to the ground level plaza. The curved tower curtain walls are divided by expressed continuous marble-clad columns into 7 bays with the end columns inset one glazing module. Each bay has five panels of curtain wall in bronze mullions & panelled transoms. The two narrower side panels to each bay are adjusted for the interior modular planning system. Unusually the size of the transoms is noticeably greater than the area of glazing. The north tower observation level glazing is set back & the roof cantilevered as a framing element to the tower. The smooth wall surfaces & curtain walling are typical features of modern architecture in the second half of the 20th Century. The high and low rise passenger lifts were innovative at that time.



Lobby before refurbishment (Source: PTW Architects)

A comprehensive refurbishment of the 1960s building was undertaken in 2002-2004 with a new ground floor lobby. Advances in technology allowed the removal of air conditioning services which had dominated the facade.

Though Peddle Thorp & Walker was a celebrated practice prior to their design of the AMP Building its realisation confirmed the firm's reputation for high-rise commercial buildings.

Statement of Significance

The AMP Building, Circular Quay, is an outstanding example of modern architecture in a high-rise office building with its curtain walling & smooth wall surfaces. It is distinguished by the quality & consistency of its massive curved forms & finishes. It was the tallest building in Australia at the time of its completion in 1962. It was constructed as the head office of one of Australia's pre-eminent financial institutions, the Australian Mutual Provident Society, & has continued to serve this role.



Lobby after refurbishment (Photo: S Rees 2005)

Criteria Applicable

- N1.** Significant heritage value in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a particular class or period of design
- N6.** Significant heritage value in demonstrating a high degree of technical achievement of a particular period