



MLC Building

Address 105-153 Miller Street, North Sydney, NSW, 2060

Practice Bates, Smart & McCutcheon in association with Hennessy, Hennessy & Co.

Designed 1956 Completed 1957

History & Description The MLC Building was constructed as the NSW head office of Mutual Life & Citizens Assurance Co. Ltd & is the architect's & Australia's first true post-war office block in respect of its design, materials & mode of construction. It was constructed one year before the internationally significant 21 storey office block ICI House, Melbourne, designed by the same firm. The fully air-conditioned office building for 5,000 workers with a total floor area of 41,800sqm was set within an urban plaza with street-level retail spaces & public art. The design incorporated innovation in the use of modular systems with standardisation of the fitting out to the 14 storeys; curtain wall façade & fully rigid steel frame structure combined with light weight construction of hollow steel floors resulting in reduced construction loads, cost & time. The steel frame was fire rated with vermiculate plaster instead of the usual concrete encasement. The double glazed curtain wall system, combined with anodized aluminium spandrels, consisted of heat-resisting glass to the outer side & venetian blinds inside a 250mm cavity, is considered to be the first example of a true curtain wall façade in Australia. The end walls were clad in glazed ceramic tiles while terracotta & stone was used elsewhere.

The planning of the MLC Building also incorporated a number of innovative functions that were representative of trends in modern office building design. The then corporate world's concern with staff welfare was exhibited through the provision of a cafeteria, lounge & dining room serviced by a fully equipped kitchen, a pair of squash courts & a billiards room, theatre, roof gardens & external covered recreation space. It was the largest office building in Australia for a number of years after construction & influenced subsequent high-rise design in Sydney.

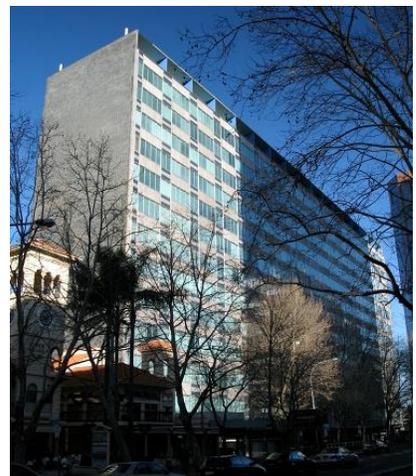
The partner in charge of the project was Sir Walter Osborne McCutcheon who during WWII was Chief Architect of the Corps of Engineers of the US Army, South Pacific Area. It was during this period it is believed he learnt of repetitive building systems, prefabrication, dry systems of construction & the co-ordination of specialist teams. After the war he introduced office teams with architects & engineers combining within the firm. ICI House Melbourne is considered to be his most important building. McCutcheon was head of Architecture at RMIT from 1935-42. He was awarded the RAIA Gold Medal in 1965 & was knighted in 1966. The structural engineer for the project, within the firm, was Harvey H. Brown. The building was refurbished in the 1990s. (Conservation Plan, 1998).

Statement of Significance The MLC Building is an outstanding example of modern architecture in Australia in the post-World War 11 period being the first high rise office building incorporating light weight construction, curtain wall façade & modular design.

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.



Early 1960s photographs of the MLC Building
Source: www.jacksonteece.com



M.L.C. Building
Source: 20th Century Heritage Society of NSW