

1 Chifley Square (former Qantas House)

Address Chifley Square, Crn Hunter & Phillip Streets

Practice Rudder, Littlemore & Rudder

Designed 1955 Completed 1957

History &
Description

As the new company headquarters of Qantas Airways, Qantas House symbolised Australia's progress in aviation in the 1950s & reflected the increasing importance of international travel to the increasingly affluent middle class in Australia. In following the curve of Chifley Square, the building's plan respects the semi-circular form which was proposed for the northern side of the square in its original design of 1908. Built to the maximum height limit at that time of 46m the building is distinguished by its graceful curved façade of a double glazed curtain wall of green glass with enamelled blue-green steel spandrel panels & elliptical aluminium mullions; an aeronautical reference. Completed one year after the MLC Building in North Sydney & four years before the AMP Building, Circular Quay, the curtain wall of Qantas House was the second 'genuine' curtain wall façade built in Sydney, the first in the CBD, & is otherwise a refined example of a fully glazed office façade.

The main ground level incorporates a mezzanine floor within a double-height foyer, the volume of which is differentiated from the upper levels by bronze framed glazing between black polished granite clad columns. The lower ground level that extends along Hunter Street has bronze framed individual windows & is clad in dark green granite. The green granite extends around to clad the base along Phillip Street. At the northern end of the building, abutting the Wellington Hotel is a slot of full-height glazing, separated from the main curtain wall by a narrow sandstone faced full-height wall. The sandstone facing returns in a long band to frame the façade at the bottom of the curtain wall & a long band at the top. The top band provides a demarcation against the recessed upper floor facade. This recessed skyline, with a cantilevered roof, was similar to the design of the MLC Building & was later adopted for the design of the AMP Building. The reinforced concrete framed building was planned with two end service cores abutting each of the adjoining buildings & a light well to the rear, to the northwest. The original fit out featured the use of Australian timbers & was considered innovative at the time. Qantas House was one of the earliest buildings in Sydney to have a fully ducted air conditioning system. The project architect was Felix Tavener. Qantas House was awarded the Royal Institute of British Architects Bronze Medal in 1959.

The exterior of the building generally retains its original appearance, except that the original cantilevered entrance awning & the external signage have been lost.

(Adapted from NSW SHR database #5049926)

Statement of
Significance

Qantas House is an important landmark in the development of the modern office building in Australia & is an outstanding example of post-war modern architecture with its curtain walling & smooth wall surfaces. The curved façade is an important theme but less common in this period of architecture. It was constructed as the head office of Qantas Airways, at the time Australia's government owned international airline, to signify Australia's advancement in aviation.

Criteria
Applicable

N1. Significant heritage value in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a particular class or period of design

N3. Significant heritage value in establishing a high degree of creative achievement

N6. Significant heritage value in demonstrating a high degree of technical achievement of a particular period



View from the south c 1958.
Source: *Architecture in Australia*, March 1958, p. 56.



Ground floor lobby, c 1958.
Source: *Architecture in Australia*.



Under construction, note buildings on Chifley Square.
Source: Sydney Architecture Images.