

Register of Significant Twentieth Century Architecture

RSTCA No: R026

Name of Place: Shine Dome

Other/Former Names: Becker Building, Australian Academy of Science

Address/Location: Gordon Street CANBERRA CITY 2601

Block 25 Section 75 of City

Listing Status:	Registered	Other Heritage Listings:	
Date of Listing:	May 1984	Level of Significance:	National
Citation Revision No:	7	Category:	Institutional (Scientific)
Citation Revision Date:	May 1985	Style:	Structuralist

Date of Design:	pre 1956	Designer:	Roy Grounds of Grounds, Romberg & Boyd, Architects WE Bassett & Assoc. (Mechanical), Bolt, Geranek & Newman (USA)(Acoustics) , Rider, Hunt & Partners (Quality Surveyors), WL Irwin & Assoc. Design Development (ANU), Department of Engineering (Univeristy of Melbourne)
Construction Period:	1958	Client/Owner/Lessee:	Australian Academy of Science
Date of Additions:		Builder:	Civil & Civic Contractors Pty Ltd

Statement of Significance

Displays, in a most innovative manner, an exemplary understanding of the time, place and requirements for Canberra. A significant example of Australian architectural achievement which has become a symbol of Canberra. A finely conceived and executed synthesis on an uncompromising envelope and a specific function. The careful detailing is of a very high quality. Internal details are designed specifically for the function contained, and the carefully detailed furnishings and fittings contribute to the good acoustics. The design complements its setting and reflects its Canberra environment of rounded hills. Won the 1959 Sir John Sulman Award, RAI NSW Chapter, and the 1961 Canberra Medallion, RAI ACT Chapter (the only ACT building to win two awards).

Description

A shallow arcaded concrete dome, sheeted in copper. Peripheral arches in the dome spring from a moat which serves as a ring beam. Integral, formed plywood seating reflects the circular interior. Auditorium (Becker Hall) seats approximately 156. The Adolph Basser Library is situated in the top of the dome. The copper-sheathed concrete dome, 46 meters in diameter, weighs 710 tonnes and rests on 26 arches. When opened, the building was described as being of "unconventional, futuristic design". The Academy of Science was established by Royal Charter in 1954. Its Fellows are eminent scientists in physical or biological sciences. An original notice described the building as "Conference Chamber and Offices".

Condition and Integrity

Building; sound. Some staining showing. Interior; reasonable.

Background/History

Analysis against the Criteria specified in Schedule 2 of the Land (Planning and Environment) Act 1991

(i) a place which demonstrates a high degree of technical and/or creative achievement, by showing qualities of innovation or departure or representing a new achievement of its time

(ii) a place which exhibits outstanding design or aesthetic qualities valued by the community or a cultural group

(iii) a place which demonstrates a distinctive way of life, taste, tradition, religion, land use, custom, process, design or function which is no longer practised, is in danger or being lost, or is of exceptional interest

(iv) a place which is highly valued by the community or a cultural group for reasons of strong or special religious, spiritual, cultural, educational or social associations

(v) a place which is the only known or only comparatively intact example of its type

(vi) a place which is a notable example of a class of natural or cultural places or landscapes and which demonstrates the principal characteristics of that class

(vii) a place which has strong or special associations with person, group, event, development or cultural phase which played a significant part in local or national history

(xi) a place which demonstrates a likelihood of providing information which will contribute significantly to a wider understanding of natural or cultural history, by virtue of its use as a research site, teaching site, type locality or benchmark site

References

Other Information Sources