

# Register of Significant Twentieth Century Architecture

**RSTCA No:** R060

**Name of Place:** ANZ Bank Building

**Other/Former Names:**

**Address/Location:** 17 London Circuit CANBERRA CITY 2601

Block 1 Section of City

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|-------------------------|------------|--------------------------|---------------|
| Listing Status:         | Registered | Other Heritage Listings: |               |
| Date of Listing:        | 1986       | Level of Significance:   | State         |
| Citation Revision No:   |            | Category:                | Commercial    |
| Citation Revision Date: | June 2002  | Style:                   | International |

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|----------------------|---------|----------------------|--|
| Date of Design:      | 1961-63 | Designer:            | Stuart McIntosh                                      |
| Construction Period: | 1963    | Client/Owner/Lessee: | ANZ Banking Group Ltd & General Insurance Co Ltd Pty |
| Date of Additions:   |         | Builder:             | AV Jennings Construction Company Canberra Pty Ltd    |

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## Statement of Significance

The former ANZ Bank designed by Stuart McIntosh in 1961-1963 is an elegant commercial building combining influences of the International style with a bold abstract sculptural design. The composition is dominated by the horizontal closely spaced planes which appear to hover unsupported, separated by continuous horizontal window panes and the use of a predominantly white and black colour scheme. The horizontal planes are an exaggerated expression of the period interest in 'brise soleil' sun shading.

The building exhibits certain characteristics of the Late Twentieth Century International style (1960-) with its cubiform overall shape, overhangs and external sun-control device integrated in the design, assertive cantilever, and strong horizontal lines. It also exhibits a powerful abstract and sculptural form.

The building is significant in Canberra's Civic Centre, dominantly sited on a key corner site, it is a distinctive example of 1960's commercial architecture on London Circuit and University Avenue. The building not only represents a shift away from the two storey designs of the Sydney and Melbourne Buildings to a more larger commercial scale, but also shifted the aesthetic expression away from historical forms to a modern and functional approach modified by location specific responses. It also represents an innovative and sophisticated response to the bank as a building type in the 1960s.

The building was advanced, and technically innovative for its time, conserving energy with the use of a heat pump, and shading of the windows provided by the closely spaced projecting horizontal planes.

In 1996 the building was awarded the RAI ACT Chapter 25 Year Award for a Public-Commercial Building.

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## Description

The former ANZ Bank building, located prominently on the corner of London Circuit, University Avenue and Darwin Place was designed (1961-63) by Stuart McIntosh (head of the architectural department of the ES&A Bank), with Yuncken, Freeman Architects as the supervising architects. The building, as a branch of the English Scottish and Australian Bank (ES&A) and built by the Bank in association with Legal and General Assurance Society Limited. The main contractor for its construction was A. V. Jennings Construction Company Canberra Pty Ltd and it was erected as part of a group of privately built commercial buildings located near the Hobart Place pedestrian mall.

The building was opened on 26 July 1963 by the Prime Minister Sir Robert Menzies. Mr A. E. Brown was the manager of the branch and was located in a ground floor office. Legal and General Assurance Society Limited had their Canberra Office, managed by Mr John Bishop, on the first floor. The remaining floors were separately tenanted.

The building has certain characteristics of the Late Twentieth Century International Style (1960-) with its cubiform overall shape, overhangs and external sun-control device integrated in the design, assertive cantilever, and strong horizontal lines. It also exhibits a powerful abstract and sculptural form.

The five storey building is constructed of precast concrete, lightly textured and sand coloured to the exterior walls contrasting against the black South Australian granite of the ground floor columns facing University Avenue.

The most striking feature of the building is the projecting white horizontal planes or sun hoods which occur on three sides, rising from first floor level and of varying thickness, width and spacing. There are triple layers of hoods for each floor, the thicker hoods at floor level. The horizontal planes are separated by continuous horizontal window panes. The intentions being to harmonise with the Canberra landscape of low hills and rolling plains and to create bold sun and shadow effects<sup>1</sup>.

The horizontal planes provide a striking visual affect and function practically shading the interior from the glare of the sun and heat and reducing traffic noise, they are an exaggerated expression of the period interest in 'brise soleil'<sup>2</sup> sun shading. Smaller horizontal planes on the western corners define the outline of the building as well as providing a sun control function. The edge of the hoods were faced with white glass mosaic tiles, and the tops lined with blue tiles to give soft interior reflection. Some of the tiles have been removed.

The main banking area on the ground floor 24 x 8 metres had many unusual features when constructed and the horizontal theme continued through into the chamber, as it still does today with the lowest horizontal plane running into the internal space of the chamber, the edge still faced with white glass mosaic tiles. A 13 x 3.6 metre light fitting was suspended from the ceiling and swept over the banking chamber, providing an abundance of evenly distributed light. The chamber ceiling is of concrete. Counter space was ample with each teller's section set-off by two-inch thick solid slabs of green marble.

The manager's office and visitors' rooms were located at the University end of the building panelled in Blackwood. The strong room and staff amenities and extra work-space were separated from the banking chamber by a wall finished in off-white vinyl panelling. The banking chambers original volume remains although the original fit-out has changed including the location of the entry door.

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<sup>1</sup> ANZ Archives 'Official Opening E.S & A. Bank, Canberra Branch Hobart Place' Pamphlet 1963.

<sup>2</sup> Sun baffle outside the window extending over the entire face of a building's facade. Traditional methods have existed for reducing the sun's glare and in 1933 Le Corbusier designed a more substantial baffle. The brise-soleil has affected the design of buildings being an outer covering to the facade which often produces an interesting patterned effect.

The windows of the banking chamber facing London Circuit are in clear glass, framed in black anodised aluminium. Grey glass is used for the upper floors. Airconditioning was included in the building at construction.

The building retains its original open stair and vertical timber boarding to the lift lobby and corridor on all levels except level 3. The lift lobby and entry area floor is of carpet and black granite with the lift framed in black granite. The materials used internally appear to be functional and serviceable. All service areas have been upgraded, the general office areas have been re-partitioned and a false ceiling added (or upgraded) but it has been kept back from the window line to keep the high level glazing effective.

The ES&A Bank merged with the ANZ Bank on 1 October 1970. The ANZ relocated out of the building on 7 May 2001 and a number of the floors are currently vacant (May 2002).

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### **Condition and Integrity**

The mosaic tile cladding was removed from the ends of the projections on most levels prior to November 1986. The building is in good condition externally and internally. All service areas have been upgraded, the general office areas have been re-partitioned and a false ceiling added (or upgraded) but it has been kept back from the window line to keep the high level glazing effective. The location of the entry door has been changed. The ANZ banking function relocated from the building on 7 May 2001 and a number of the floors are currently vacant (May 2002).

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### **Background/History**

The building was designed by Stuart McIntosh. McIntosh was born in 1924 in Adelaide and educated in Corowa, NSW. He served in New Guinea and Borneo in the 2/6 Field Regiment. McIntosh studied architecture at Melbourne University and after graduating worked in the architectural firm of Yunken, Freeman Bros, Griffiths and Simpson. He joined the staff of the architectural department of the ES&A Bank in 1952 and from 1954 was in charge of the department. He was married and had two children.

During his time as the bank architect he primarily designed small banks for which he noted he had to search for design ideas 'if my endeavour is to produce individual buildings and not mere variations'<sup>3</sup>. He did not like boxes for buildings and therefore sought new ideas for their design finding his inspiration in paintings including those by Delacroix. His method of sketching was to draw a number of diagonal lines at random, he then elaborated on the images formed. This led him to the Surrealist painters and their method of painting including the work of Yves Tanguy.

He developed his sketches and used them in structural design, firstly, designing the Traralgon Branch of the ES&A Bank, followed by the Parkdale Branch and then the Malvern Branch all in Victoria. The Malvern Branch, completed in 1959, along with the Canberra Branch are amongst the finest of the series of banks designed by McIntosh. These buildings are innovative and sophisticated architectural responses to the bank as a building type and represented a fresh and progressive image sought at this time by the Bank. Both buildings use cantilevered horizontal plans to achieve a bold abstract sculptural design as well as providing sun protection and contrast the use of black and white coloured materials in their construction.

The precursors of McIntosh's designs for the ES&A Bank at Malvern and Canberra are difficult to trace but he may have been influenced by the work of Frank Lloyd Wright particularly Wrights Usonian house style and Guggenheim Museum, New York (1957-60). The designs have some characteristics of the cubism found in the de Stijl movement combined with the stark veneer walls and strip windows found in Mies van der Rohe's early pavilion designs. One possible and more direct source for the designs is a Sterns department store building in Boston of 1955 by the well known firm Walter Dorwin Teague Associates, which was published in at least one book in 1956. The building features a corner entry with deep sunshade fins. The strong horizontal elements or

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<sup>3</sup> Architecture Today, 'Technique for Design Ideas', Stuart McIntosh, February 1960 p. 15-17.

layering has also been used by Sir Denys Lasdun in London, particularly the National Theatre London (1967).

The importance of McIntosh's architectural work was recognised early on with Neil Clerehan highlighting the importance of a Darwin house by McIntosh in 'Best Australian Houses: Recent Houses Built by Members of the Royal Australian Architects', in 1961.<sup>4</sup> Cuffley discussing the Darwin house writes 'An outstanding example of modern functionalist ideals expressed in a regional style was a house built in Darwin in the Northern Territory in the late 1950s'<sup>5</sup>. More recently Goad and Bingham-Hall have noted of McIntosh 'Stuart McIntosh's designs for the ES&A Bank in the late 1950s around Australia were similarly a remarkable series of sculptural forms which derived from McIntosh's experiments with surrealist design techniques'<sup>6</sup>.

In 1996 the building was awarded the RAI ACT Chapter 25 Year Award for a Public-Commercial Building. The citation notes 'The RAI Architectural Guide to Australia's Capital Canberra stated that the building was "a sophisticated exercise in proportion and illusion by deep, closely spaced horizontal planes controlling the sun in and the view out'.

In Canberra another example of the Late Twentieth Century International style is the Edmund Barton Building by Harry Seidler & Associates (1974).

Other buildings by McIntosh include: house (Darwin); ES&A Banks, Traralgon, Parkdale, Malvern, Moe.

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### **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*

The former ANZ Bank building was advanced, and technically innovative for its time, conserving energy with the use of a heat pump, and shading of the windows provided by the closely spaced projecting horizontal planes.

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

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*(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*

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<sup>4</sup> Clerehan, N. (ed) 'Best Australian Houses: Recent Houses Built by Members of the Royal Australian Architects', F. W. Cheshire, Melbourne, 1961.

<sup>5</sup> Cuffley, P. 'Australian Houses of the Forties and Fifties', The Five Mile Press, Melbourne, 1993.

<sup>6</sup> Goad, P. & Bingham-Hall, P. 'New Directions in Australian Architecture', Pesaro Publishing, Sydney, 2001.

*(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*

In 1996 the building was awarded the RAI ACT Chapter 25 Year Award for a Public-Commercial Building.

*(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*

The building is significant in Canberra's Civic Centre, dominantly sited on a key corner site, it is a distinctive example of 1960's commercial architecture on London Circuit and University Avenue. The building not only represents a shift away from the two storey designs of the Sydney and Melbourne Buildings to a more larger commercial scale, but also shifted the aesthetic expression away from historical forms to a modern and functional approach modified by location specific responses. It also represents an innovative and sophisticated response to the bank as a building type in the 1960s.

*(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*

In 1996 the building was awarded the RAI ACT Chapter 25 Year Award for a Public-Commercial Building. The architecture of the building may contribute to the education of designers in their understanding of the development of modern architecture in the second half of the twentieth century.

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## References

- 1 Apperly, R. Irving. R. & Reynolds, P. 'A Pictorial Guide to Identifying Australian Architecture' Angus and Robertson Publishers, Sydney, 1989.
- 2 Architecture Today, 'Technique for Design Ideas', Stuart McIntosh, February 1960 p. 15-17.
- 3 Cross Section, January 1960 & August 1963.
- 4 Cuffley, P. 'Australian Houses of the Forties and Fifties', The Five Mile Press, Melbourne, 1993.
- 5 Goad, P. & Bingham-Hall, P. 'New Directions in Australian Architecture', Pesaro Publishing, Sydney, 2001.
- 6 National Trust of Australia (Victoria) 'Classification Report: Former ES&A Bank, Malvern', nd.
- 7 The University of Chicago 'The New Encyclopaedia Britannica' Vol 2 1987.
- 8 Watkin, D. 'A History of Western Architecture'

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## Other Information Sources

ANZ Archives 'Official Opening E.S & A. Bank, Canberra Branch Hobart Place' Pamphlet 1963.

Australian Heritage Commission, Register of the National Estate File 8/01/000/0458.

Royal Australian Institute of Architects File.

Victorian Heritage Register Citation, 'Former ES&A Bank: 1057 High Street and corner Glenferrie Road Malvern' H1691.

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