

Australian Institute of Architects ACT Chapter
Register of Significant Architecture

RSA No: R79

Name of Place: BUILDING R8, RUSSELL PRECINCT

Other/Former Names: Building 14, Block A

Address/Location: Kelliher Drive RUSSELL ACT

Block 1 Section 89 of RUSSELL

Listing Status:	Registered	Other Heritage Listings:	Commonwealth (2004)
Date of Listing:	1986	Level of Significance:	Territory
Citation Revision No:	2016	Category:	Government
Citation Revision Date:		Style:	Inter-War Stripped Classical

Date of Design:	1969	Designer:	Collard, Clarke & Jackson
Construction	1970	Client/Owner/Lessee:	NCDC for Department of Defence
		Builder:	

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE:

Building R8 is an important office building constructed in 1970 within the Russell Precinct, a Defence campus which is a refined urban landscape of a grand scale, designed for visual articulation of the highly significant eastern apex of Canberra's Parliamentary Triangle and to give prominence to the Defence component of the Federal Government. Building R8 was recognised by the ACT Chapter of the RAI A when the building was awarded the Canberra Medallion for meritorious architecture in 1971. Building R8 is a very good example of the Late Twentieth Century International Style, with the characteristic cubiform overall shape, expressed reinforced concrete frame in response to structural forces, and external sun control devices.

Description

Building R8 is a 12 storey, plus basement, reinforced concrete framed building with a heavily modelled precast structural grid providing sun screening to the facades. The basement occupied an area of 21,300 sq ft and the typical floors about 9,200 sq ft. The central core was slip formed in two parallel lifts, and the basement and lower floors were cast in situ. The upper office floors were constructed of pre-cast floor units supported internally on the core wall and externally on open-frame pre-cast concrete units. The east and west walls were constructed from load bearing pre-cast concrete panels. The longer north and south walls were closed with continuous aluminium-framed glazed walling set back behind the pre-cast concrete units to form balconies which facilitate window cleaning, and with the open-frame wall units, provides effective sun protection. The roof, which is a copper deck, was supported on pre-cast concrete beams and purlins. All external exposed concrete was bush-hammered. The office arrangement was a long corridor with many offices leading off two central hallways.

Condition

Externally, the building is largely unchanged. Most of the original internal building fabric was removed to create an open plan during refurbishment in 1998. An entire basement level was added with a clerestory window facing the new front elevation to the North West. The facades and the central lift core fabric remain.

Background/History

Early in the 1960s the long-awaited decision was taken to move Defence headquarters from Melbourne to Canberra. Planning, more or less following Griffin's early intentions, sited the new Defence complex on

Russell Hill. The National Capital Development Commission planners were very conscious that the Australian American Memorial should be the focus of the entire site. All the early to mid 1960s plans emphasised the dominance of the plaza. The Master Plan of 1963 envisaged some 7500 people working in the 'military zone'. Much exterior architectural planning turned on the intended horizontal nature of the buildings. The Master Plan architects Skidmore, Owings and Merrill and Buchan described the 'strong horizontal plane which in turn integrates the lower level buildings (R3 and R4) composition on either side'. Building continued and by 1965 an NCDC report stated that eight buildings would be a major group to give architectural form to the precinct. The planners were pleased with the composition of the Russell offices and suggested creative designs free of cliches. Expansion continued and Block A (now know as R8), of a new design intended to visually close off the southern precinct, was constructed in 1969. The building was designed by Collard Clarke & Jackson for NCDC as agents to the Department of Defence. The engineers Ove Arup & Partners proudly photographed the 35 foot perimeter base columns (poured in one operation) the demountable partitions and the 15 inch concrete basement roof. It was an early example of a reinforced concrete framed building with heavily modelled precast structural grid providing sun screening to the facade. The quality of Building R8 has been recognised by ACT Chapter of the RAI A by being awarded the Canberra Medallion for meritorious architecture in 1971. A major refurbishment was carried out in 1998.

The architect Max Collard LFRAIA BCE BARCH (1909-2008) graduated in civil engineering before completing a degree in architecture in 1937 in Melbourne. After war service he moved to Sydney and formed the Collard, Clarke and Jackson partnership, often utilising his engineering knowledge and demonstrating clear affinities with the emerging Sydney School ideas. In 1960 the firm opened an office in Canberra, where they developed good relationships with the ANU and NCDC. The Defence building project proved an excellent opportunity for him to exercise his long-held interest in modular construction and rigorous structural rationality. Collard was RAI A national president (1963-4) when he oversaw the move of the national headquarters from Sydney to Canberra.

ANALYSIS AGAINST THE HERCON CRITERIA ADOPTED IN THE ACT IN SEPTEMBER 2014:

a. Importance in the course or pattern of the ACT's cultural or natural history

Building R8 is important in the course of the ACT's cultural history as a key office building constructed in 1970 within the Russell Precinct, a Defence campus which is a refined urban landscape of a grand scale, designed for visual articulation of the highly significant eastern apex of Canberra's Parliamentary Triangle and to give prominence to the Defence component of the Federal Government.

c. Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of ACT's cultural or natural history.

The building has potential to provide information on the ACT's architectural history.

d. Importance in demonstrates the principal characteristics of a class of cultural or natural places or objects

Building R8 is a very good example of the Late Twentieth Century International Style, with the characteristic cubiform overall shape, expressed reinforced concrete frame in response to structural forces, and external sun control devices.

f. Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement for a particular period

The building is important for demonstrating a high degree of achievement in creating a reinforced concrete framed building with heavily modelled precast structural grid providing sun screening to the facade.

REFERENCES:

- AUSTRALIAN HERITAGE DATABASE - Commonwealth Heritage List - Place ID 105621.
- Russell Offices, Building 14, in *Architecture Australia* October 1971, p 834-840.

- Cameron Logan, 'Collard, Max' in *The Encyclopedia of Australian Architecture*, Cambridge UP, 2012.