



Warringah Shire Council Civic Centre & Library precinct, Warringah. (formerly Dee Why Library)

Address 725 Pittwater Road, Dee Why, NSW, 2099

Practice Edwards, Madigan, Torzillo & Briggs

Designed 1965 & 1970 Completed 1966 & 1973

History & Description

The partially wooded steep site interspersed with sandstone rock outcrops was chosen as a new acropolis for Warringah Shire Council. The new civic complex located above the Dee Why shopping district. An active municipal complex was envisaged that would include a civic centre, library, large auditorium with gymnasium, art gallery, historical museum, public plaza & war memorial. The library was constructed first, conceived as a pulled-apart box where the functions of the light-filled interior spaces determined the strong shapes of the external form. The cubic overall form created by the exposed-aggregate perimeter precast-concrete wall-panelling floats above a continuous shallow glazing band. This was then modified, & made more complex, with directional forms to provide the desired levels of natural light to the interior; firstly with long, flat-roofed, highlight structures that protrude above the flat roof, & secondly, by the attaching onto the form of full-height brick structures with contrasting diagonal roof forms. The theme of complexity & contrast is enhanced with vertical glazing; to articulate the abutment of the attached brick structures at the precast panels & as lone narrow slots in the precast. The central entrance to the library is at mid-point of the sloping site via a stair & ramp. The library was awarded The Sulman Award in 1966.

The Warringah Shire Civic Centre & Administration Offices, completed in 1973, is predominantly an in-situ-concrete structure. The projecting upper level, supported at the eastern end by tall blade columns, was conceived as an assertive form to be viewed from the lower shopping streets. Entry was from the lower street or alternatively from the top of the site. The elongated central full-height foyer of the civic centre was naturally lit from above with circulation between the office levels via a returning ramp. The foyer roof was framed with exposed steel CHS-section Vierendeel-trusses. Highlight glazing extended between the truss ends & exposed A/C ducts extended through & between the structural. Concrete waffle slabs were used to areas of greater loading & were left exposed. The complex was a precursor to the architects' designs for the High Court of Australia, 1980, & the Australian National Gallery, 1982, Canberra.

Colin Madigan was the partner in charge of the library while Madigan collaborated with project architect Chris Kringas in the design of the civic centre. Madigan's endeavour was to engender a sense of freedom & purpose based on his humanist concern for people & man's purposeful tendency to become more complex & more free. Colin Frederick Madigan was awarded the RAI Gold Medal in 1981.

Statement of Significance

Warringah Shire Council Civic Centre & Library precinct is a significant example of modern architecture with planning of strong shapes, boldly composed & expressed in precast & off-form in-situ-concrete, & unadorned brickwork. The open setting is distinctive of the planning intentions of the authorities at the time. The setting & the architecture combine to produce a precinct of integrity, illustrative of modern architecture. The library has additional significance being designed by one of Australia's notable architects while the precinct as a whole was a precursor to the design, by the same firm, for the internationally significant High Court of Australia & Australian National Gallery Precinct, Canberra.

Criteria Applicable

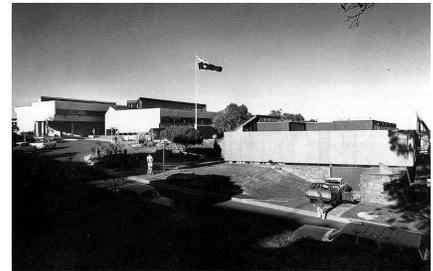
N1. Significant heritage value in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a particular class or period of design
N5. Having a special association with the life or works of an architect of significant importance in our history



SW view of the library prior to the construction of the civic centre beyond to the NE. Source: D Moore.



Precinct viewed from Pittwater Road, with the civic centre to the right, 1973.



West view of the precinct.



Civic centre interior central ramp. Source: Above three photos Max Dupain