

Bowali Visitors Centre

Address Kakadu Hwy, Kakadu National Park, NT

Practice Glenn Murcutt in association with Troppo Architects

Designed 1991 Completed 1994

History & Description The complex, including the visitor information centre, administration offices & a ranger's residence, sits within its bush setting to the west of the town of Jabiru responding to its site & climate. Bowali derives from the indigenous name for the local creek. Two years were spent on consultation with the local indigenous community, planning & design.

Approached along a meandering natural path the centre combines Murcutt's typical domestic roof forms with a 168 m long linear organisation connecting diverse spaces. Placed along a NE & SW axis the public display, presentation, craft & library/shop spaces are centrally located under steel-framed vaulted & skillion metal roof forms & are linked through a distinct external linear space along the NE side which is terminated at the at the south by the administration offices. As Murcutt stated "The building retains alluring visibility from the Kakadu highway, but more firmly focuses outward and westward to the bush." The administration office in contrast is a compartmentalised plan organised along a central corridor under a triple vaulted roof form. The carefully detailed & interconnected spaces are raised slightly above the ground with walls formed from rammed earth, corrugated steel fixed horizontally & glazing protected by "undulating" timber batten screens on steel frames. Floors are ironbark & the circular concrete columns to the open link are coloured to match the rammed earth walls.

Troppo's Adrian Welke signifies the Bowali Visitor Centre as a milestone collaboration of like minds. Glenn Murcutt was awarded the 1992 Australian Institute of Architects Gold Medal & the 2002 Pritzker Prize. The 2014 Australian Institute of Architects Gold Medal was awarded to Adrian Welke & Phil Harris of Troppo Architects. Troppo Architects were awarded the Global Sustainable Architecture Award in 2010. The Bowali Visitors Centre was awarded the RAI A Sir Zelman Cowen Award for Public Buildings in 1994.



View towards the display space from the north.



Aerial view from the north. (All photos: Celebrating Australian Architecture)



Bridge to the display space across the "billabong" with the library/shop beyond & open link to the right.

Statement of Significance

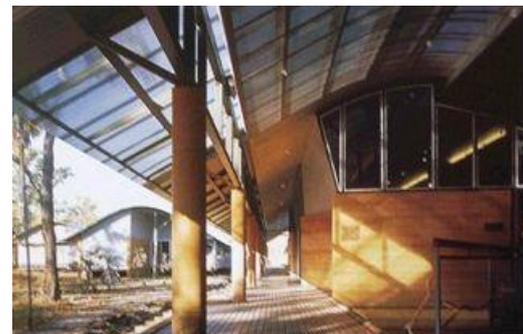
The Bowali Visitors Centre is an excellent example of a public building that reflects the analytical process undertaken by the architects of the tropical landscape site & climate, in conjunction with the local indigenous community. It is recognized as a significant work by the internationally notable architect Glenn Murcutt & the internationally notable Troppo Architects. The centre expresses the architect's interest in the need for harmony between man and nature, and the importance of designing for the climate within a carefully detailed logical plan form.

Criteria Applicable

N2. Significant heritage value in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics.

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

N5. Having a special association with the life or works of an architect of significant importance in our history.



View along the open link looking from the "billabong" towards the administration offices.