

Callam Office (Woden TAFE College)

Address Callam Street, Phillip, ACT, 2606

Practice John Andrews International

Designed 1973 Completed 1981

History & Description

The Callam Offices are east of the Woden Town Centre. In the 1970s five large horizontal walk-up Commonwealth Government office complexes were planned for Canberra; Cameron Offices & Benjamin Offices, both in Belconnen (both partially demolished); Edmund Barton Offices (extant) & McLachlan Offices (demolished), both in Barton, & the Woden Government Offices. The design for Woden was for 26 three-storey, 30m wide octagonal office pods extending north & south along Callam Street, elevated above the flood plain with three separated functional spaces; the offices, utility service zones & circulation connections. The architecture was a clearly expressed 'system' all set out on a combined 12m and 9m planning grid. Two three-storey, elongated car park buildings & two nine-storey octagonal office buildings were to be located symmetrically along Callam Street. Each of the octagonal office pods was to be indirectly linked at the mid level by elevated concrete walkways for the public. There were to be smaller 'tube-like' enclosed links for the office workers running perpendicular to the public walkways at the first & third levels, on the diagonal. At these levels transition spaces were to allow for variations in office sizes & at the mid-levels to provide glazed public lobbies. The utility services & vertical circulation were placed in attached separate circular service towers between the pods. The complex was to be connected to the Woden civic square via an elevated walkway raised above the street.

Due to government budget cut backs the complex was not built, however, from 1977-1981 three pods were constructed for the Woden Tertiary & Further Education (TAFE) facility. The structural system is clearly expressed; waffle slab floors supported centrally by four concrete columns that extend above the roof forming compression masts. Above the roof the columns support suspension 'cables' that extend diagonally out to the perimeter in a triangular form to support 8 high tensile perimeter suspension 'columns'. These reduce in diameter as they extend down the façades expressing their structural function. The fully glazed façades are shaded by stainless steel framed tilted glazing-screens.

The Woden TAFE is an important building in John Andrew's career being one of two large office complexes he designed in Australia, the other being the Cameron Offices, Belconnen ACT, recognised as having international significance. John Andrews was awarded the RAIA Gold Medal in 1980.

Statement of Significance

The Callam Offices are a significant example of an office building designed in the Late Twentieth-Century Structuralist style of architecture by one of Australia's notable architects. The open setting is distinctive of the planning intentions at the time in Canberra. The setting & the architecture combine to produce a building of integrity, illustrative of modern architecture. The offices demonstrate a theme of modern architecture with planning of modular offices incorporating a building system with repetitive distribution of office pods, service zones & connecting pedestrian links. This is combined with floors suspended from above incorporating encased high tensile steel suspension cables. This approach was innovative at that time in Australia.

Criteria Applicable

N1. Significant heritage value in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a particular class or period of design.
N3. Significant heritage value in establishing a high degree of creative achievement.



Photomontage of planned Woden Office Complex. (Source: Aust. Architecture Since 1960; Jennifer Taylor, RAIA)



Woden TAFE College. (Source: Aust. Architecture Since 1960; Jennifer Taylor, RAIA)



Callam Offices (Photo: Graeme Trickett c.2005)