

Register of Significant Twentieth Century Architecture

RSTCA No: R001

Name of Place: Old Parliament House

Other/Former Names:

Address/Location: King George Terrace PARKES 2600

Block 1 Section 39 of Parkes

Listing Status:	Registered	Other Heritage Listings:	
Date of Listing:	June 1984	Level of Significance:	National
Citation Revision No:	3	Category:	Government
Citation Revision Date:	February 1987	Style:	Stripped Classical

Date of Design:	1924	Designer:	JS Murdoch (Commonwealth Architect for Federal Capital Advisory Commission)
Construction Period:	1924-27	Client/Owner/Lessee:	Commonwealth of Australia, owner, FCAC, client, Dept of Education
Date of Additions:	1937, 1938, 1942-43, 1948, 1949, 1952, 1958, 1968, 1972, 1974.	Builder:	

Statement of Significance

Australia's first purpose-built Federal Parliament building, its design is an architectural expression of the Westminster system of government with the two chambers projecting above the roof symmetrically. It was built as the grandest, although provisional, element of the new planned capital city and the central focus of both Canberra and Federal politics. It embodies a rich social and political history. The design of the building is understated, yet its scale and character are imposing, reflecting the aspirations and capabilities of Australia in the twenties. Designed by government architects, headed by J.S. Murdoch, its gleaming white masses and terraced roof structures were most innovative, inspired by New Delhi and demonstrating important characteristics of Federal Capital Architecture. Much of the original design has survived despite major office additions. The original interiors, most prominent of which are King's Hall, the Parliamentary Chambers, the Library, the Dining room and the Lobbies and furniture constructed of Australian timbers are significant. With the opening up of Camp Hill and the construction of the New Parliament House, it will maintain the importance placed on its siting and the original design, and remain a major landmark in the Parliamentary Triangle.

Description

It was built as a provisional Parliament House and when opened by the Duke of York was one of the first public buildings in Canberra. A large two storied brick building with basement area and five important internal areas, Kings Hall, the House of Representatives Chamber, the Senate Chamber, the Library and the Dining Room. Externally the balanced masses of the Houses of Representatives and the Senate rise above the balconied suites and offices. The horizontality of the pure white facade is relieved by slightly projecting bays, each with an arched bronze window.

In addition, there are two attractive internal courtyards, and impressive Tasmanian blackwood doors, sashes, frames and panelling. Constructed of Australian timbers, all interior furniture and many original furnishings remain. The new Parliament House has been designed in relation to the existing provisional building.

Condition and Integrity

The building has numerous additions and alterations, unsympathetic to the site although relating to the building in colour and construction.

Background/History

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

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

(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

(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

(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

(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

References

Other Information Sources