

Register of Significant Twentieth Century Architecture

RSTCA No: R021

Name of Place: Hyatt Hotel Canberra

Other/Former Names: Hostel Canberra

Address/Location: Commonwealth Avenue YARRALUMLA 2600

Block 1 Section 40 of Yarralumla

Listing Status:	Registered	Other Heritage Listings:	
Date of Listing:	1984	Level of Significance:	National
Citation Revision No:	3	Category:	Residential
Citation Revision Date:	April 1987	Style:	Garden Pavilion

Date of Design:	1921-22	Designer:	John Smith Murdoch, Chief Architect Commonwealth's Department of Works & Railways
Construction Period:	1923-25	Client/Owner/Lessee:	Hyatt Hotels (formerly C of A)
Date of Additions:	various since 1945	Builder:	

Statement of Significance

The Hotel Canberra is one of four original hostels designed by significant government architect J.S. Murdoch. One of the first public buildings erected after Griffin's garden city plan had been laid out, the design of the building is significant for its relation to Griffin's plan with its innovative series of garden pavilions, extending into the landscape with paths and planting following the building axes. The design of building and site adheres to Beaux Arts principles in its symmetry, axes and radiating lines while still domestic in scale, with references to the F.L. Wright's Prairie Houses, Australian Colonial styles, and Griffin's domestic buildings; horizontality, symmetry, wide eaves and stucco work. The building is of social and historical importance as the principal official hostel of the Commonwealth, accommodating Members of Parliament, and visiting dignitaries from overseas. It is a significant example of the early Federal Capital Architecture.

Description

The building was designed as a government hostel to accommodate 200 people, and later became the Hotel Canberra and then government offices. The plan is centred on the midpoint of the site and two diagonal axes dictated the design of ten accommodation buildings, garden pavilions, of one and two storeys, radiating from the two inner, sunken garden courtyards which were formed by linking covered ways to the loggias of the main two storey central block which contains the entrance, lounges, dining room and billiard room. To the rear (west) were two later staff accommodation buildings of two storeys, symmetrically placed, and further west still on axis, a single storied building. These buildings were built after the second world war. Materials used in the building are red unglazed terracotta Marseilles roof tiles, pebble dash walls with brick base and banding, timber gables, stained timber and plastered brickwork internally.

Condition and Integrity

Substantially altered by the hotel redevelopment during 1986-1987. (Project Manager - Pak/Poy Kneebone). Awarded RAIA Interior Design Award in 1989.

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