# Register of Significant Twentieth Century Architecture

## RSTCA No: R128

## Name of Place: Paterson House

**Other/Former Names:**

**Address/Location:** 7 Juad Place Aranda BELCONNEN

Block 10 Section 43 of Aranda

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| Listing Status: | Registered | Other Heritage Listings: | |
| Date of Listing: | 2010 | Level of Significance: | National |
| Citation Revision No: | 0 | Category: | Residential |
| Citation Revision Date: | | Style: Late Twentieth-Century Organic | |

Date of Design: 1968 - 1969

Designer: Enrico Taglietti

Construction Period: 1969 - 1970

Client/Owner/Lessee: Dr Mervyn & Mrs Katalin Paterson

Date of Additions:

Builder: Meli and Eglitis Pty Ltd

**STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE:**

The house at 7 Juad Place, Aranda, is an exceptional creative and innovative achievement by its architect, having a sculptural form based on his geometry for architecture. It is a rare example of a late 1960's house incorporating stepped and interlocking geometric forms. The natural setting adjacent to the rear open reserve combines with the architecture to produce a place of integrity.

7 Juad Place is well sited and exhibits functional domestic planning as well as the principal characteristics of modern residential architecture in a planned low-density neighbourhood suburb. It has special interest as a design by one of Australia's notable architects in the Late Twentieth-Century Organic style of architecture, which is an accomplished example in Canberra of this modern ideal.

The house is aesthetically significant for its asymmetrical interlocking massing and stepped planning juxtaposed with fine detailing. This is all expressed with a bold sculptural street façade combined, off the living level, with an affinity to, and close relationship with, the site.

The house is important for its association with its architect Enrico Taglietti who played and still plays a significant role in Canberra's cultural history. It is also important for its association with the life and work of Professor Mervyn Paterson, one of Australia's most notable geophysicists, who over the last fifty years has led Australian research into rock mechanics and pioneered scientific instrument development.

The place has been acknowledged by the architectural profession as a distinctive example of architecture. It continues to fulfill its original purpose and its planning demonstrates innovation and soundness to this day.

**DESCRIPTION**

The house at 7 Juad Place, Aranda was designed by Enrico Taglietti in 1968-1969 for Dr Mervyn and Mrs Katalin Paterson, construction being completed in March of 1970. 1 The house is an example of the Late Twentieth-Century Organic Style (1960-) with its free, asymmetrical massing and natural setting retained. 2

The Paterson house is located at the end of a cul-du-sac abutting bushland and a cycle path, and is set in a mature garden of native plants providing a bush setting. The house closes the vista at the top of the steep cul-de-sac and is located centrally on the sloping triangular block with views to the east and the nature reserve to the west. The split four-level residence, with its imposing battered brick front and horizontal roof planes, is distinctive in a street of predominantly brick and tile-roof 1960s and 1970s houses. The entry is out of sight from the public domain and is approached along a curved path which leads past the fortress-like

cement-brick walls and the trapezium window of the kitchen. The steep driveway is on the lower side of the site providing side-on entry to the basement garage, hidden when viewed from the street.

The house is cavity brick construction and has clear-finished western red cedar timber-framed glazing with infill panels of western red cedar cladding. The two metal-deck roofs have wide overhanging eaves lined in pine, with deep splayed fascias clad in tallowwood horizontal boards, left to weather, matching the colour of the masonry as well as the trunks and branches of the eucalyptus trees. The front wall is pierced by three precast-concrete overflow spouts. The upper roof splayed fascia is pierced by a central fabricated-metal overflow spout. The fireplace brick chimney extends well above the lower roof level. The internal walls are bagged and painted and the ceilings are lined in square sheets of clear-finished caneite to the mid levels, plasterboard to the bedrooms, and timber lining to the terrace. Deep timber beams support the roof at openings and change of roof levels, recessed above the bagged brickwork, cantilevering out from the house to support the wide eave overhangs. The two roofs are framed in opposing directions to make possible the desired extended eaves to the front terrace and the courtyard. The lower front roof beams span in the east-west direction and the upper rear roof beams span in the north-south direction.

Connected volumes over four split levels form the residence; compacted to minimise the size of the house and limit its impact on the natural bush setting. The house is comprised of two adjacent double-height rectilinear forms, incised by off-set half-circle forms creating interlocking volumes. The entry, protected by the overhanging eaves of the front roof, is placed in the middle of the southern facade allowing the visitor to arrive at the centre of the house. The entry passage steps up two steps to the lower mid-level just five steps below the living area. On this lower mid-level, along a short passage to the west, are two children's bedrooms and the bathroom, each with windows to the south, and a large laundry opening out to the north. The stair to the garage extends down off the entry passage to the right, below the kitchen, with the slope of the ceiling to the stair enclosed within the kitchen bench space.

The open plan upper-mid-level living area is approach up five steps placed at 45° to the passage. The living, dining and kitchen are all combined in an open plan along the eastern side of the house. In plan, the combined spaces are based on a double square with the living room extending just slightly beyond the centre of the two squares. The kitchen extends along the southern side and part of the western side of the room. The timber cupboards, some set within dwarf height bagged-brick walls, and the ample range hood were all designed by Taglietti. Johnston River hardwood strip flooring extends throughout the main floor. The spaces overlook and open onto the wide front terrace which faces out towards the cul-de-sac and views of trees and distant hills to the east. The front wall of the terrace has a wide central trapezium opening forming the balustrade wall, concealing the terrace from the street. The terrace is closed at the ends. The living room opens onto the north-west courtyard through French doors in the convex half-circle wall. A bagged-brick open fireplace with a cantilevering terrazzo hearth is located where the curved wall abuts the north wall of the living area, set at 45°, mirroring the angled stairs leadi ng up from the entry. The eastern wall is fully glazed except for a built-in bookcase off the living area. The glazing extends above the bookcase for the full extent of the façade.

A curved cantilevered stair with open timber treads of Johnston River hardwood supported on steel plates and small steel sections placed on their sides, radiating from the curved courtyard wall, leads up to the parents' bedroom and study, one level above the children's bedrooms. The continuous timber handlerail is curved both in plan as well as in side view to match the stair and wall surface. From the entry and upper-level stairs there is a sense of the play of space between the split levels. The main bedroom is entered off the dressing room and is compact, being only 2.9m wide. The study is an irregular shape, with the curved courtyard wall forming a convex surface on the north-east side. The glazing has been placed to vantage, with five windows; to the north in an angled wall; to the west and south overlooking the bush, and two long slit windows associated with the curved wall, one in the wall and the other located between the two off-set split-circle walls, each overlooking the courtyard.

The off-set split-circle northern walls of the house extend to encircle the courtyard. The heights of the courtyard walls vary and combined with the off-set arrangement create a calming space with views out to the garden and on to the reserve.

**Condition**
The house is well maintained and in good condition.

**Design Comments**
Other architectural elements of the Late Twentieth-Century Organic style (1960-) displayed by the building that relate to the external forms are:

- clearly expressed timber structure, the exposed roof beams;
- horizontal roof planes, and
- horizontal boarded fascias. 3

The following design features are of additional significance: the terrace; curved courtyard walls; trapezium openings; large areas of glass; open planning; fireplace, and original finishes and details.

The Paterson house can be compared with three other significant houses in Canberra designed by Taglietti in the Late Twentieth-Century Organic style; the McKeown house at 109 Irvine Street, Watson, built in 1965; the house at 19 Downes Place, Hughes, built in 1966, and the Evans house in Cook, 1971. [4] These have similar layered architectural compositions with dominant horizontal roof forms that create deep shadowing under the eaves, supported by exposed timber beams. The Evans house also displays an imposing battered brick wall, while the split-level planning of the house in Hughes exhibits a similar play of space between the various levels.

The dominant roof form of the Paterson house can be contrasted with that of the significant Late Twentieth-Century International style (1960-) house designed by Dirk Bolt, the Butler house, at 44 Beauchamp Street, Deakin, 1965. Here the cubic massing of the spaces and the elevated site is similar to the Paterson house, however, the roof form plays a less significant role in the arrangement of architectural forms. The area of roof overhang to the Butler house extends between masonry end walls where sun protection to the continuous glazing is needed, accentuating the cubic massing.

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**BACKGROUND AND HISTORY**

Residential settlements such as Aranda were an integral part of the creation and planning of Canberra. Peter Harrison AO as National Capital Development Commission Director and First Assistant Commissioner of Town Planning from 1959-67 coordinated the design of Canberra's new low-density neighbourhood suburbs in a series of new 'satellite' towns. [5]

Aranda was the first residential suburb built in the new town of Belconnen and to this day is predominantly made up of individual houses set in amongst native gardens.

The new suburbs designed by the National Capital Development Commission (NCDC) were generally based on 'Radburn' planning, with the segregation of traffic and pedestrians; their size determined by primary school catchments. The segregated pedestrian paths were often set in parkland or nature reserves linking the residential blocks with shops and schools, often passing under or bridging the roads. The pedestrian path in Aranda extends from the Aranda Bushland through a nature reserve linking into the Aranda Primary School, shops (now closed) and playing fields. This planning was a departure from the earlier planning authorities' Garden City suburb planning of inner Canberra.

Dr and Mrs Paterson lived in Abbott Street, Yarralumla, when in 1968 they engaged Enrico Taglietti to design their new home in Aranda. The client's brief was for a private open-plan home, open to the north but not permitting the uninvited to intrude on their privacy, with two storeys at the rear taking advantage of the sloping site. They had visited buildings designed by Taglietti prior to engaging him, including the McKeown house at 109 Irvine Street, Watson; the house at 19 Downes Place, Hughes, and the Dickson Library. Taglietti first designed the house with the front two levels constructed with concrete floors and off-form in-situ concrete walls, and included a wide layered timber balustrade to the terrace, 350mm thick. The rear two levels were to be constructed in bagged brickwork with concrete slabs. The fireplace and heater were to be flued through tall stacks. Nine months after construction commenced plans were submitted to the planning authorities with variations to the originally approved plans; the walls were amended to bagged brickwork; the terrace balustrade was amended with the brickwork continuing up to balustrade height; rainwater spouts were added; the flue and chimney stacks were deleted and a brick chimney added to the fireplace; additional garden walls and retaining walls were added to the entry and in front of the garage. When the house was completed an amendment was submitted to the planning authorities to not bag the brickwork as specified but to leave it as fair-faced.

Meli and Eglitis Pty Ltd constructed the house. [6] Hans Meli was a good friend of Professor Paterson prior to him tendering on the house. The house was approved for occupancy in March 1970.

The house received a Twenty Five Year Award in 2006 from the ACT Chapter of the Australian Institute of Architects.

Professor and Mrs Paterson still live in the house.

The house is included in the Australian Institute of Architects National Register of Significant Twentieth Century Architecture (RSTCA) being highly valued by the Institute as a nationally significant work of the architecture of Enrico Taglietti, a renowned Australian architect. In December 1971 the house was featured in an article by David Saunders in *CROSS-SECTION*, an authoritative news sheet sent to most architects by the University of Melbourne's Department of Architecture.

**Twentieth-Century Organic Architecture and Influences on Taglietti's Architecture**

Organic architecture is imbued with the principles and teachings of Frank Lloyd Wright. Wright is one of the most important figures in modern architecture and influenced architects throughout the world during the 20th Century. His "Prairie" style of the first 20 years of the 20th Century emphasized the horizontal using

cantilevering forms, extensive roof overhangs and open free planning with extensive areas of glazing, often crafted with leadlight designs. The most celebrated of his Prairie style houses is the Robie house, Chicago, Illinois, 1909.

Predominantly a domestic style where buildings blend in with the site and take advantage of the topography, the earliest example of the Organic style in Australia is probably the Audette house, Castlecrag, Sydney, designed by Peter Muller and designed in 1953, but not completed until the mid 1950's. 7 The Paterson house has some similarities with the Audette house; in its horizontal boarded splayed fascias and roof planes and terrace.

Another culturally significant house, and possibly the first house in Canberra to be designed in the Organic Style of architecture is the house at 13 Canterbury Crescent, Deakin, 1960, designed by the notable Melbourne architecture firm of Chancellor and Patrick. The Canterbury Crescent house is considered by the Australian Institute of Architects to be the best example in Canberra of the interpretation of Frank Lloyd Wright's Usonian house principles and is on the Institutes ACT Chapter RSTCA. 8

The use of geometric forms and extensive cantilevers, while based on Wright's early work, is also a theme in modern Italian architecture and can be seen in the work of Valle, Sartago and Moretti. 9 At the base of Moretti's apartment and office building in Via Rugabella, Milan, the tower sits into the lower-level with the lower-level wall cut at an angle similar to Taglietti's angled cuts into perimeter walls to some of his buildings, such as the Dickson Library and the trapezium openings to many of his designs.

Enrico Taglietti is considered a key practitioner in the Late Twentieth-Century Organic style in Australia. 10

**Enrico Taglietti**

Taglietti (1926-) studied architecture at the Milan Polytechnic between 1947 and 1953 and graduated with a *Laurea* (Doctorate) degree, subsequent to spending much of his youth in Eritrea. The Milan Polytechnic architectural training methods were basically in the Bauhaus tradition, an approach to design whereby art and craft were united. Gio Ponti was a senior lecturer at the Polytechnic, a Bauhaus modernist and one of Italy's most important architects and founder, in 1928, of the journal Domus. Taglietti believes he was an excellent teacher who influenced him in these early years, however, it was the ideas of Bruno Zevi at the School of Rome that had the greatest influence on Taglietti. Zevi had recently returned from the USA and brought with him the knowledge of F L Wright and his 'natural' or organic architecture as opposed to 'rational' architecture. Zevi headed the Istituto Nazionale di Architetettura in Rome and also edited the journal L'Architettura. Taglietti found himself being educated in Milan but his preferred philosophy of architecture was being taught in Rome. The work of the BBPR was also an early influence on him with its style referencing to tradition and local environment. 11

Enrico Taglietti came to Australia from Italy to design the Italian promotional display for a department store in Sydney. While in Australia he was appointed as project architect for the Italian Ambassador's residence, designing much of the interior. 12 He established his own architecture practice in Canberra in 1955 and has constructed some of Canberra's most dynamic buildings including; the Town House Motel, 1961, (demolished); Centre Cinema, Civic, 1966,(now extensively altered internally); `ACMA Conference Centre, Barton, 1967, (altered); Dickson Library, 1969; Italian Embassy Chancery Building, 1974; the Giralang Primary & Infants School, Child Health Clinic and Pre-School, 1976; Apostolic Nunciature and Chapel, Red Hill, 1977; Australian War Memorial Repository, Mitchell, 1979. 13 The house at 7 Juad Place, Aranda, is one of a number of residences Taglietti designed in Canberra, and is one of four he considers to be of importance in his Canberra work. The other three are the McKeown house at 109 Irvine Street, Watson, built in 1965; the house at 19 Downes Place, Hughes, built in 1966, and the Mijuscovic house at 61 Sullivan Crescent Wanniassa, completed in 1983. 14

There are important buildings by Taglietti in Sydney, including the Smith house, Pennant Hills, 1965 and the St Anthony's Church, Marsfield, 1968. He also produced work in Hobart and Melbourne. Howard Tanner wrote about Taglietti's buildings in *Australian Housing in the Seventies* "The use of hovering cantilevered planes of roof and deck, have given his work a distinct character and individuality." 15

Associate Professor Jennifer Taylor believes "The freedom of his work contrasts with the functional rigidity of much of Canberra's architecture." "Baffle walls and mouldings, stepped and curved forms, come not from the rational dictates of structural determinism, but from his abstract patterning of the shapes of the building to create interest through striking visual spatial effects." 16

Taglietti has written of his architecture: "Architecture is the Art of making spaces work for people, is human made environment on which the lives of our children will unfold, is the Matrix that transforms static places in to a dynamic assembly of voids that excites emotions alive with users. Is "Piazza del Palio", "Central Park", "Chartres", the Opera House… is the "Invisible Canberra" of my dreams." 17

Enrico Taglietti was made a Life Fellow of the RAIA in 2001 and his career reached a climax when he was awarded the Gold Medal of the Australian Institute of Architects in 2007, the highest honour the Institute can bestow. He is a Papal Knight of St Gregory the Great and Knight Officer of the Italian Republic.

Taglietti's buildings have received many awards from the Australian Institute of Architects ACT Chapter,

including Twenty Five Year Awards for the Dickson Library and the Paterson house, the Canberra Medallion and a Twenty Five Year Award for the Giralang School, and nine Architectural Merit awards. The Chapter considers him to be one of its two most eminent members still practising in Canberra, the other being Romaldo Giurgola who is semi-retired. 18

**Professor Mervyn Paterson**
Professor Paterson (1925-) was born in South Australia. He is a geophysicist who has led Australian research into rock mechanics and pioneered instrument development over the last fifty years. He began his career at the CSIR Division of Aeronautics working on the physics of metal fatigue. He studied at Cambridge, England, under an Angas Engineering Scholarship, and received a PhD from The University of Cambridge on x-ray diffraction effects of deformation metals, and later pursued postdoctoral studies in Chicago, USA, where he met his Hungarian wife Katalin. Professor Paterson often walked past the Robie house, designed by Frank Lloyd Wright in 1909, on his way to the university. He also visited another of Wright's houses in Oak Park.

He returned to work at the newly-named CSIRO for a short period before in 1953 being appointed to the Australian National University, where he stayed for 31 years in the Research School of Earth Sciences. He was elected to the Australian Academy of Science in 1972 and appointed Professor of the Research School of Earth Sciences in 1987. During his career he received a number of international and national awards in recognition of his work; notably in 2003 the Centenary Medal for service to Australian society and materials science and in 2004 the Walter Bucher Medal from the American Geophysical Union.

While at the ANU he developed instruments to test rock deformation, which subsequently led to a 'second career' as owner and manager of Paterson Instruments P/L, a company specializing in building scientific instruments. He developed the Paterson High-Pressure High-Temperature (HPT) testing system, a stand-alone gas-medium test apparatus for rock deformation studies at high pressure and high temperature. Professor Paterson and his wife established the Mervyn and Katalin Paterson Endowment at the ANU College of Physical and Mathematical Sciences in 1998. The endowment provides assistance and support to postgraduate students pursuing their studies at the ANU Research School of Earth Sciences.

Professor Paterson wrote his book *Experimental rocks deformation: the brittle field* , published in 1978, as well as the 2005 revised edition, in the house, specifically in the upper level rooms which were both used as his study at various times. 19

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**ANALYSIS AGAINST THE CRITERIA PURSUAMT TO S.10 OF THE *HERITAGE ACT 2004,*:**

**(a) it demonstrates a high degree of technical or creative achievement (or both), by showing qualities of innovation, discovery, invention or an exceptionally fine level of application of existing techniques or approaches;**

The creativity of the architect Enrico Taglietti is apparent in the design of the house at house at 7 Juad Place, Aranda, completed in 1970, which was innovative when compared with other houses built in Canberra.

The house is of outstanding architectural merit. The design solution, incorporating split-level planning to take advantage of the sloping site and views, with an open-plan interior, demonstrates an innovative architectural response to the needs of a late 1960s family lifestyle. The intricate sequence of spaces and sculptural forms, where geometric shapes share the interlocking portions of their volumes, allows a impressive play of three-dimensional space. Open-plan interiors and the play of three-dimensional space were fundamental themes of modern architecture.

The house is unaltered and remains the home of the original owner.

**(b) it exhibits outstanding design or aesthetic qualities valued by the community or a cultural group;**

The house at 7 Juad Place, Aranda, is an excellent example of the Late Twentieth-Century Organic style (1960-). The building exhibits the two particular architectural elements specific to the style; free, asymmetrical massing and natural setting retained. It is notable for displaying the high design skill of the architect Enrico Taglietti.

The following design features are of additional significance; the grey cement brick plain smooth wall surfaces; the horizontal roof planes and splayed timber horizontal boarded fascias; the trapezium openings to the walls; the terrace; open planning and relationship to the off-set half circle walled courtyard; large areas of timber framed glazing; the exposed timber beams; clear finished caneite ceiling to the main level; brick fireplace and terrazzo hearth, and original finishes and details.

The house was carefully planned within geometric forms to achieve a high sense of privacy as well as an affinity to and close relationship with the site. The division of sleeping areas from the open-planned living and dining areas has been achieved in a three-dimensional composition of asymmetrical massing.

The house is included in the Australian Institute of Architects National Register of Significant Twentieth Century Architecture, being highly valued by the Institute as a nationally significant work of the architecture of Enrico Taglietti, a renowned Australian architect. The house has been featured in national publications.

**(f) it is a rare or unique example of its kind, or is rare or unique in its comparative intactness**

This house has a degree of rarity by virtue of being one of Taglietti's most successful domestic designs incorporating stepped and interlocking geometric forms.

**(h) it has strong or special associations with a person, group, event, development or cultural phase in local or national history**

The house at 7 Juad Place, Aranda, is important for its association with Enrico Taglietti who played and still plays a significant role in Canberra's cultural history. He is one of the most important architects to practise in Canberra and this is an important house design in his career. Taglietti was awarded a Life Fellow of the RAIA in 2001 and was awarded the 2007 Gold Medal of the Australian Institute of Architects for producing work of great distinction, mainly in the Canberra region, resulting in the advancement of architecture.

The house has a special association with Taglietti being considered by him to be one of his more important works.

The house has additional significance as the home of Professor Mervyn Paterson and his wife since 1970. Professor Paterson is an eminent geophysicist who has led Australian research into rock mechanics and pioneered instrument development over the last fifty years. In 1953 he transferred to the Australian National University Research School of Earth Sciences where he was appointed professor in 1987. He was elected to the Australian Academy of Science in 1972. During his career he received a number of international and national awards in recognition of his work, notably the Centenary Medal for service to Australian society and materials science, in 2003, and the Walter Bucher Medal (Award) from the American Geophysical Union, in 2004. During the time he was an academic at the ANU he developed instruments to test rock deformation, including the Paterson High-Pressure High-Temperature (HPT) testing system. Professor Paterson and his wife established the Mervyn and Katalin Paterson Endowment at the ANU College of Physical and Mathematical Sciences in 1998.

The house, specifically the upper level rooms, has a special association with Professor Paterson as the place where he wrote his book *Experimental rocks deformation: the brittle field*, published in 1978, as well as the revised edition, published in 2005.

**(j) it has provided, or is likely to provide, information that will contribute significantly to a wider understanding of the natural or cultural history of the ACT because of its use or potential use as a research site or object, teaching site or object, type locality or benchmark site**

The architecture of the house at 7 Juad Place, Aranda, is of educational worth for students of architecture and may contribute to an understanding of twentieth-century modern architecture. Experiencing heritage buildings enables the visitor to locate the building in its historical and environmental contexts. These experiences readily enable the establishment, understanding and interpretation of the building's heritage value and significance. This house is an excellent example of mid-twentieth-century modern architecture, in this case an example of the Late Twentieth-Century Organic style, based on free, asymmetrical massing incorporating roof planes with horizontal emphasis in a natural setting. Its innovative planning contributes to its significance and educational heritage.

**REFERENCES**


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