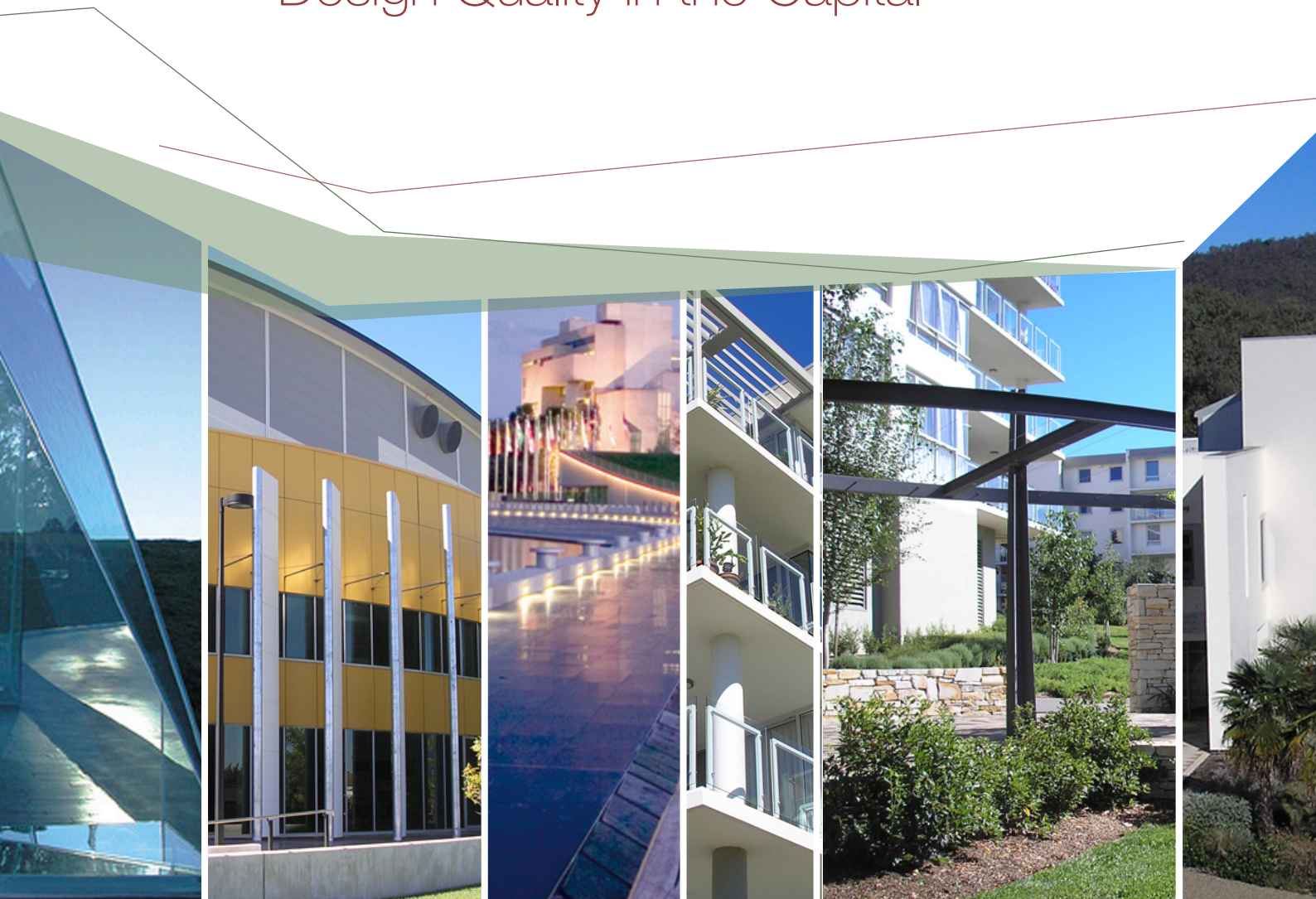




Australian Government
National Capital Authority

National Capital Authority

Design Quality in the Capital



Design Quality in the Capital

Foreword

Urban design excellence is a defining factor of great cities. As the national capital, Canberra has a special role of showcasing urban environments and landscapes that are not only uniquely Australian but also exemplify international best practise in urban design.

Since Canberra's beginnings, the expectations of the Australian people to build a capital worthy of their pride have been high. The world wide competition for the design of the capital for the Commonwealth of Australia, won by Walter Burley Griffin in 1912, set a high standard for others to follow.

Almost a century later, as Canberra moves into the 21st century, it is imperative that it continues to fulfil its potential as a cosmopolitan city and exemplar of contemporary living. Design and development must not only enhance the visual environment, but be sensitive to the ecology of the region and meet the needs of the local community.

This review emphasises that good city design is about more than just buildings. It is about the creation of a quality public domain that is attractive, accessible and pedestrian-friendly. The procurement of good design outcomes depends upon more than just good designers. It must have an intelligent planning and approval process, conducted by skilled development assessors. It also needs enlightened clients and active stakeholder cooperation, and at all times it must have the capacity to foster and respond to innovation and excellence. *Design Quality in the Capital* highlights recently built projects that can be considered exemplars of good urban design.

Canberra is renowned for its quality of life. Fine buildings, parks and places continue to grace the most important areas of the capital. It is a uniquely beautiful, efficient and livable city. Good urban design will ensure such qualities are enhanced and protected and that Australia's capital will continue to be planned and developed in accordance with its national significance.

Introduction

The National Capital Plan includes provisions that require:

'...planning and development in Canberra Central in particular and generally throughout the Territory, should have high aesthetic and environmental quality. Planning controls should seek to ensure that development in all forms, including landscaping in urban and non-urban areas, complements and enriches its surroundings'.

What is good urban design

In order to better understand what constitutes high aesthetic and environmental quality it is necessary to identify a working definition of quality urban design. The Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment defines urban design as

'...the art of making places for people. It includes the way places work and matters such as community safety, as well as how they look. It concerns the connections between people and places, movement and urban form, nature and the built fabric, and the process for ensuring a successful city. Urban design is a key to making sustainable developments and the conditions for flourishing economic life, prudent use of natural resources and social progress. Good design can help create lively places with a distinctive character, streets and public spaces that are safe, accessible, pleasant to use and human in scale; and places that inspire because of imagination and sensitivity of their designers.'

Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment,
By Design – Urban Design in the Planning System: Towards Better Practice May 2000

Set out in the following table are the key urban design principles that should guide the design of development, including buildings, landscape and public spaces.

Case studies

A range of building and landscape projects have been selected as case studies. These case studies provide a tangible demonstration of the following urban design principles and how consideration of these principles can result in successful projects and high quality outcomes. High quality buildings and landscape projects make a lasting contribution to the quality of the public domain, provide more pedestrian friendly streetscapes and result in a more sustainable and attractive city.

The case studies provided in this publication will assist and encourage an ongoing commitment from industry and government to high quality design.

The National Capital Authority is seeking to promote quality design and to give recognition to the successes of industry in their contribution to achieving a more attractive and sustainable national capital.

Urban design principles

Principles	
Context or Future Desired Character	Does the design address the key natural and built features of the site in terms of: colour and type of material used, the urban fabric and the important vegetation.
Scale	Does the design relate well in terms of: bulk, height, relationship with the street and surrounding buildings?
Built Form	Does the building relate well in terms of: building alignment, proportions, building type and the manipulation of building elements?
Density	Is the density appropriate for the location in terms of: reinforcing public transport, creating the desired level of social and commercial activity? Does the site make efficient use of infrastructure?
Landscape	Is the landscape design appropriate in terms of: strengthening the relationship between the built form and the landscape? Reflecting the cultural and natural importance of the site?
Amenity	Does the design provide for: amenity through the physical, visual, spatial and aesthetic quality of a development?
Safety and Security	Does the design relate well internally and externally in terms of: surveillance, legibility, adaptability and accessibility, including for the disabled?
Aesthetics	Is the visual quality appropriate in terms of: the composition of building elements ie: the texture and colour?
Quality of the Public Domain	Does the design contribute to the public domain in terms of: creating spaces and routes that are attractive, safe, uncluttered, active and easily identifiable?
Ease of Movement	Does the design relate well in terms of: pedestrian movement, creating connections between buildings, creating permeability in buildings at the local level, and promoting accessibility to all including the disabled?
Legibility	Is the site legible by being easily understood by its users?
Adaptability	Does the design respond to: changing technology, social, economic, and market forces?
Diversity	Does the design provide for: a mixture of uses, vital and viable places?
Durability	Are the materials used appropriate in terms of: contributing to the life of a development and a low level of maintenance.

Case Studies

- 1.0 Public/institutional buildings
 - 1.1 National Film and Sound Archive Extension, Acton
 - 1.2 Centre for Arabic and Islamic Studies, The ANU
- 2.0 Commercial buildings
 - 2.1 Brindabella Technology Centre
- 3.0 Residential buildings
 - 3.1 Landmark, Barton
- 4.0 Public domain and landscape
 - 4.1 Commonwealth Place and Forecourt
- 5.0 Special Purpose structures
 - 5.1 Baldessin Square Carpark, The ANU
 - 5.2 Qantas Maintenance Hangar, Brindabella Park, Canberra International Airport

Location plan



National Film and Sound Archive Extension

Liversidge Street
Acton, Block 1, Section 21



Description

This extension to the National Film and Sound Archive, a heritage listed building located within the Australian National University, is a benchmark development. Planning principles, policies and siting criteria have been successfully implemented to produce a quality building complex.

Architect

Gutteridge Haskins & Davey

Landscape Architect

Dorrough Britz and Associates

Cost of Project

\$14 million

Site Area

23070 m²

Gross Floor Area

4284 m²

Development Conditions

Site specific Development Conditions prepared by the Authority in consultation with the Australian Heritage Commission.

External Consultation

Australian Heritage Commission

Works Approval Date

15 July 1998

National Film and Sound Archive Extension



The early involvement of the Australian Heritage Commission contributed to a successful heritage outcome.

The architectural style, colours and materials used in the new extension complement and harmonise with those of the existing building. The extension enabled the continued use of the historic building.

The use of appropriate building forms, high quality materials and landscaping has resulted in a development that contributes positively to surrounds.



Use of high quality and durable materials contribute to the architectural quality of the development and the public domain.

Preservation and integration of historic trees provides a significant landscape setting for the extension.



The development has good street definition. Scale and proportions provide an appropriate edge to pedestrian thoroughfare and streets.

The new entrance is highly visible and legible. It gives both the Film and Sound Archive and Liversidge Street a higher profile, improving accessibility to facilities and enhancing the public domain.

The planning of the parking area has been handled well and contributes to the ease of vehicle and pedestrian movement.

The siting of the extension and associated new car parking is integrated well with the existing landscape setting. Additional new landscaping is complimentary.



The disability access on Liversidge Street is well designed and integrated with the entrance providing a dignified and safe access for all potential users of facilities.

Integration of services and careful detailing contribute to the architectural quality of the development and consequently the public domain.



The interior courtyard provides a positive outdoor space for students, staff and the public. The courtyard is sunny and enjoyable and includes quality landscaping and water elements.



Centre for Arabic & Islamic Studies

Ellery Crescent
The Australian National University



Description

Located within the Australian National University, the new Centre for Arabic and Islamic Studies is a good example of how the use of clean forms, simple landscaping and a restrained palate of materials can deliver a development of high quality that contributes positively to its surrounds.

Architect

Daryl Jackson Alastair Swayn

Landscape Architect

Clouston

Cost of Project

\$1.8 million

Site Area

Not applicable.
Sited within the ANU Campus.

Gross Floor Area

767 m²

Works Approval Date

15 November 2001

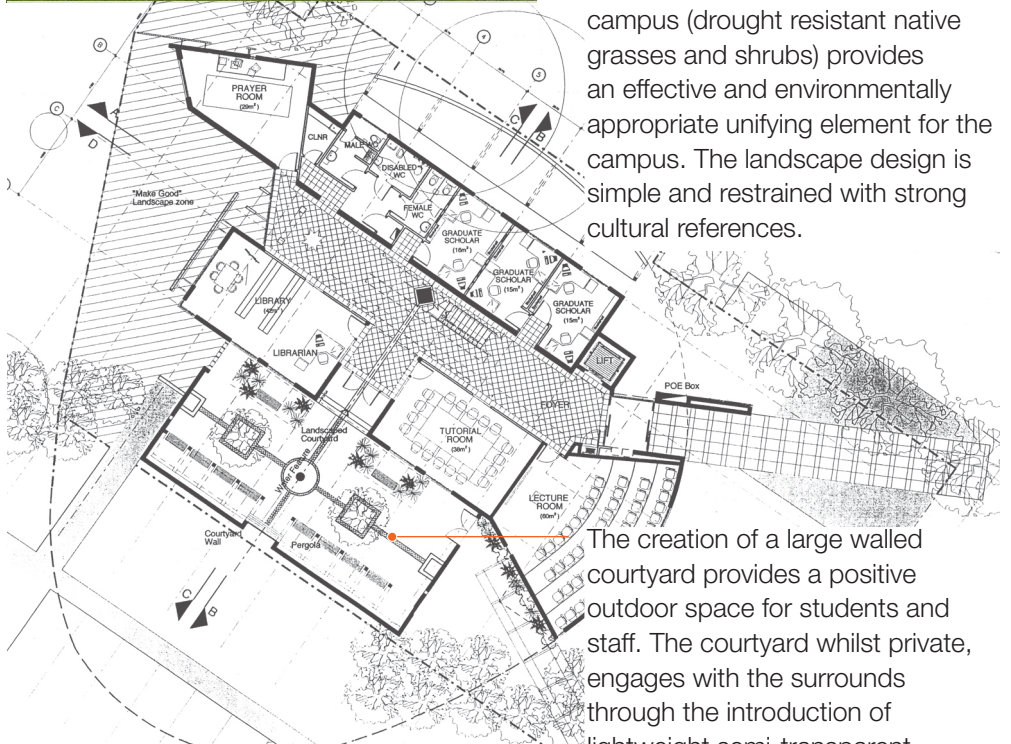
Centre for Arabic and Islamic Studies The Australian National University



Overall scale, massing and colour of building sympathetic to adjoining buildings.



Integration of services and careful detailing contributes to architectural quality of the development and the public domain.



The use of Olive trees in grass and palms which blend into the recent public domain landscape of the campus (drought resistant native grasses and shrubs) provides an effective and environmentally appropriate unifying element for the campus. The landscape design is simple and restrained with strong cultural references.



The creation of a large walled courtyard provides a positive outdoor space for students and staff. The courtyard whilst private, engages with the surrounds through the introduction of lightweight semi-transparent screens in enclosing masonry walls. It includes quality landscaping and water elements.

Sunshading elements deliver improved environmental performance as well as being effective articulation elements.

Skilfully sculptured and articulated building form contributes positively to the surrounding environment of diverse architecture and land use.

The development has good street definition. Building scale and proportions provide an appropriate edge to pedestrian thoroughfare and streets.

The development reinforces the importance of pedestrian movement corridors by responding to the existing pedestrian networks of the campus.



Use of strong articulation elements provides visual interest and variety to facades. This articulation is created through the use of sculptural forms, punched window openings, sunshading elements and a strong base (dark glazed bricks) to the building. This brick has been extended into the western façade of the building to form a pattern that is evocative of Islamic decorative motifs.



Office Development at Brindabella Business Park

Fairbairn



Description

Atrium commercial building located within the Brindabella Office Park. The building fronts central recreation facilities and addresses a major pedestrian spine running through the office park.

Architect

Daryl Jackson & Alastair Swayn

Landscape Architect

Envirolinks

Cost of Project

\$9.68 million

Site Area

7333 sqm

Gross Floor Area

6037 sqm

Development Conditions

Airport Design Guidelines

Works Approval Date

2 November 2002

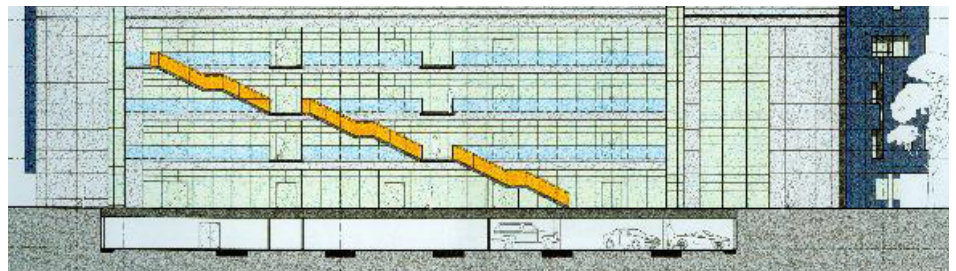
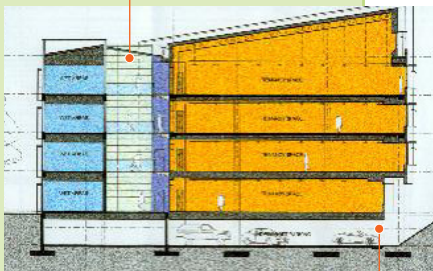
Brindabella Technology Centre Canberra International Airport



- Bold use of colour integrated with sculptural forms
- Skilfully sculptured and articulated building form designed to be viewed in the round.
- Facades are highly articulated with sunscreens, light shelves and deep reveals.
- High quality and durable materials used



- Innovative atrium building type which achieves improved energy efficiency and natural daylighting.
- Use of the atrium as the major organising feature as well as the main public entry and vertical circulator space with heightened volume.



Undercroft parking is well concealed and integrated into surrounding public domain, providing for natural ventilation



Quality integrated public art program

Landscape treatment complements the building design.

Well resolved detailing including integrated services (downpipes, plantrooms and air intake grills)



Well designed staff outdoor areas, courtyards and water features.

Good relationships between buildings within the Business Park with positive outdoor spaces.

Landmark Apartments

Blackall Street, Barton
Block 22 Section 6



Description

Located on Blackall Street in Barton, this medium rise apartment complex of 3 to 6 storeys is a good example of how the use of a simple architectural expression combined with high quality landscaping enhances the public domain.

Architect

Mitchell Guirgola Thorp (MGT)

Landscape Architect

James Pfeiffer

Cost of Project

\$47 million

Site Area

36,665 m²

Gross Floor Area

29,332 m²

Development Conditions

NCP (Appendix U) – Detailed Conditions of Planning, Design and Development

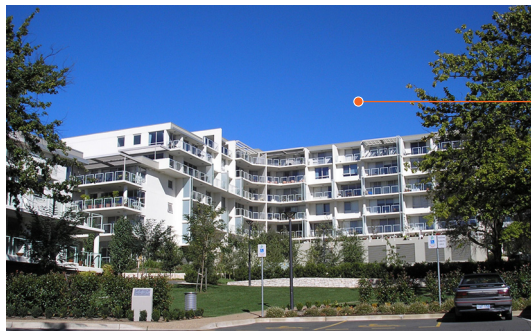
External Consultation

ACT Roads and Canberra Urban Parks and Places

Works Approval Date

14 May 2002

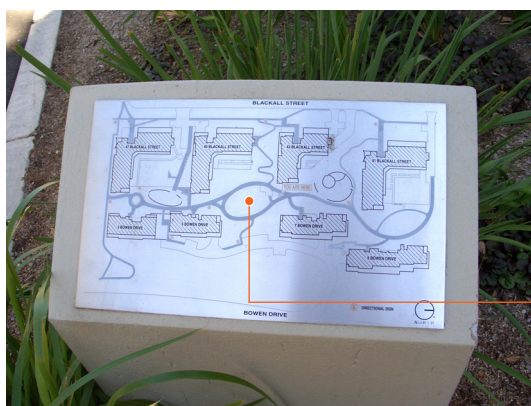
Landmark Apartments Barton



The project displays a high level of integration between a contemporary architectural expression, integrated services and landscape design resulting in high quality urban design outcomes.



The landscape and pathway network has been well developed with clear and simple circulation for pedestrians and cars.



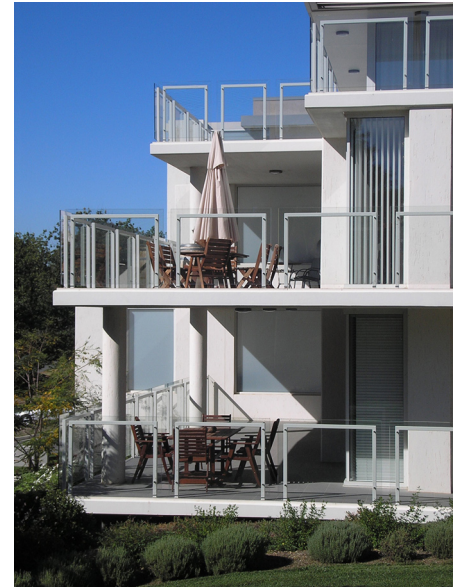
The project incorporates significant investment in landscape both within the public and semi-public domain including Blackall Street verge. Retention of existing trees, landscape design of podiums (including use of deep planters for trees and shrubs and trellises), stone retaining walls, pedestrian lights and well detailed seating areas significantly enhance the urban design of the precinct.



Site planning and 'L' plan form of the apartment blocks has optimised views for residents, minimised site cover for increased landscape opportunities, established an open uncrowded character for a relatively dense development and achieved good amenity for residents.

A diverse range of open spaces provide multi-purpose outdoor activity areas for several user groups at any one time.

Integration of services and careful detailing contribute to architectural quality of the development and the public domain.



Balconies and sun shading devices provide articulation to building facades.

Generous balconies are highly functional providing space for outdoor dining and recreation.



The development has good street definition. Scale and proportion of the building is an appropriate to the scale of the street.

Overall scale and massing of buildings is sympathetic to adjoining buildings.

Highly visible public entries are provided along street frontages resulting in a legible and articulated building.



Commonwealth Place Parkes



Description

Commonwealth Place was the subject of a national design competition conducted by the National Capital Authority for a major public space on the foreshore of Lake Burley Griffin. It includes a grassed-cupped square of approximately 100 by 50 metres, a multi-use public space, a restaurant, an annexure to the National Portrait Gallery and a walkway linking Commonwealth Place to Reconciliation Place. The result is a careful and sensitive insertion into this important precinct that thoughtfully integrates building, landscape and public art.

Architect

Durbach Block Architects
with Sue Barnsley Design

Cost of Project

\$9.585 million

Site Area

Not Applicable

Development Conditions

Design Competition

External Consultation

Australian Heritage Commission

Works Approval Date

Stage 1 works 13 November 2000
Materials & Finishes &
Services Pavilion 17 April 2001

Commonwealth Place Parkes

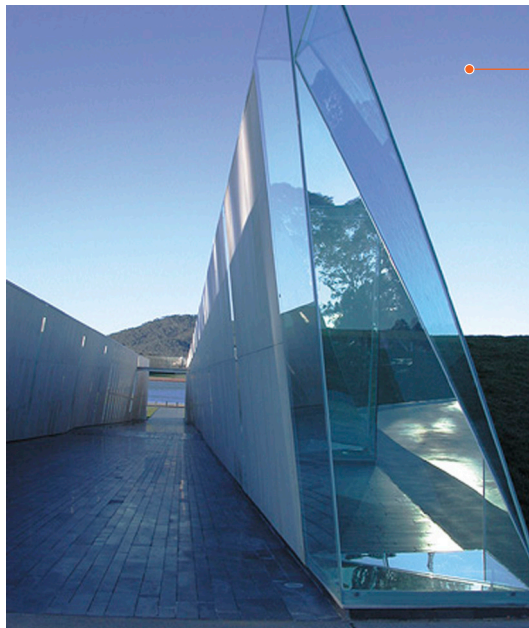


Skilfully sculptured and articulated building form contributes positively to the surrounding environment.

The dominant 'dish' form enhances views of Old and New Parliament House from viewing platforms across the lake.



High quality design, construction detailing and materials contribute to the architectural quality of the development and the public domain.



Big picture spatial outcomes combine with fine architectural detailing to produce high quality urban design.



The project physically and visually links major national institutions within the National Triangle.

The multi-use public space is equally suitable for major events or family gatherings and provides a focal space for celebrations and ceremonies.

The project activates and frames activity along the lake edge encouraging the public to make greater use of Lake Burley Griffin foreshore.



The project creates a habitable and captivating outdoor place, capable of engaging and sheltering one or twelve thousand people.

The incorporation of commercial uses into the building has been handled in such a way as to render them almost invisible whilst allowing those spaces natural light and views across the lake. The development responds positively to heritage requirements, commercial needs and the public sensitivity of the site.



The project respects and reinforces the views and discipline of the dominant Land Axis and the structure of Griffin's plan for Canberra.

Multi-level Carpark at Baldessin Square

Ellery Crescent
The Australian National University



Description

Located within the Australian National University, this multi-level carpark exhibits well considered design solutions to meet both its functional requirements as well as providing a suitable design for its context.

Architect

Colin Stewart Architects

Landscape Architect

Dorrough Britz & Associates

Cost of Project

\$5 million

Site Area

Not applicable. Part of the broader ANU campus

Gross Floor Area

494 car spaces

Works Approval Date

8 September 2000 &
6 December 2000
(fifth level and landscaping)

Multi-level Carpark

Baldessin Square

The Australian National University



Open character and clean horizontal lines result in reduction in apparent size of the building and a strong yet respectful neighbour to adjacent buildings, streets and public spaces.



Successful treatment of façade utilising a simple range of materials, long horizontal lines and open staircases as 'bookends'.



Associated landscaping complements the building design and existing context, responding to security and maintenance issues.

Responds well to public safety issues with views of the whole floor and open stairwells.

Meets functional requirements and in addition is generous in circulation spaces, ceiling heights and spacious in character.

Organisation of column grid provides a sense of generosity in circulation and parking spaces as well as an articulated façade through cantilevers and deep reveals.



Development has good street definition. Scale and proportions provide an appropriate edge to pedestrian thoroughfare and streets.



Qantas Maintenance Hangar

Brindabella Business Park
Canberra International Airport



Description

Located at the Canberra International Airport, The Qantas Hangar is an example of how a idiosyncratic functional building can be well designed to respond to its surrounds.

The development utilises innovative design solutions to provide functional and efficient solutions to specific brief requirements.

Architect

Daryl Jackson & Alastair Swayn

Cost of Project

\$8 million

Site Area

15281.00 m²

Gross Floor Area

6878.30 m²

Development Conditions

Airport Design Guidelines

External Consultation

Commonwealth Department of Transport and Regional Services (Airports Division);

Airport Environment Protection and Building Control Office;

Pialligo Residents Association.

Works Approval Date

14 September 2000

Qantas Maintenance Hangar Canberra International Airport



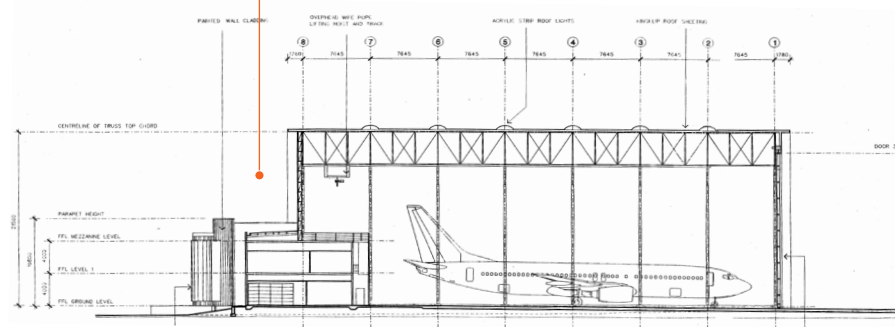
The development has good street definition. Scale and proportions provide an appropriate edge to surrounds.



Development provides a good internal working environment and high level of amenity for users with light airy spaces and a stable temperature.



Stepping of built form along the west façade (which incorporates two storeys of office accommodation) provides appropriate scale to the building façade addressing the adjacent public street.



Use of high quality materials and palette of colours successfully integrates the building within the Brindabella Business Park.

Although building height is dictated by functional requirements the development is located in an appropriate context and relates well to the scale of surrounding buildings, reducing its apparent bulk and scale.

External pedestrian and vehicle circulation is efficient and comprehensive.



Integration of services and careful detailing contributes to architectural quality of the development and subsequently the public domain.



Development incorporates high quality landscape materials to identify the main public forecourt.

Landscaping complements the general landscape quality of the Brindabella Business Park.



Northcott Drive Passive Security Works Russell



Description

Traffic management devices on Northcott Drive and associated security measures and landscape works.

Client

Department of Defence

Design and Documentation

National Capital Authority's
Urban Design Team

Landscape Architect

John Easthope & Associates

Civil Engineer

Hughes Trueman Pty Ltd

Cost of Project

\$4 million approx.

Site Area

Not Applicable

Gross Floor Area

Not Applicable

Development Conditions

Nil

Works Approval Date

25 January 2005

Northcott Drive Passive Security Works Russell



The design resolves a complex perimeter security brief for the Defence Headquarters integrating a range of security barriers and traffic management devices utilising crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED) techniques in a manner which enhances rather than diminishes the public domain. The design was approved by the Defence Security Committee and satisfies ASIO security requirements.

The traffic management solution successfully slows traffic and prevents front on vehicle attack.

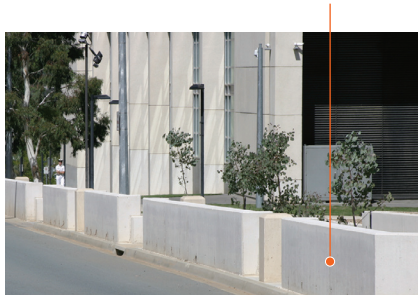


The design responds to the formality of this important entry to the national triangle and heritage values, creating a new ceremonial space adjacent buildings R1 and R2.

The overall treatment and quality of materials reflects the significance of this vicinity as the gateway to the Russell defence precinct and the apex of the national triangle.

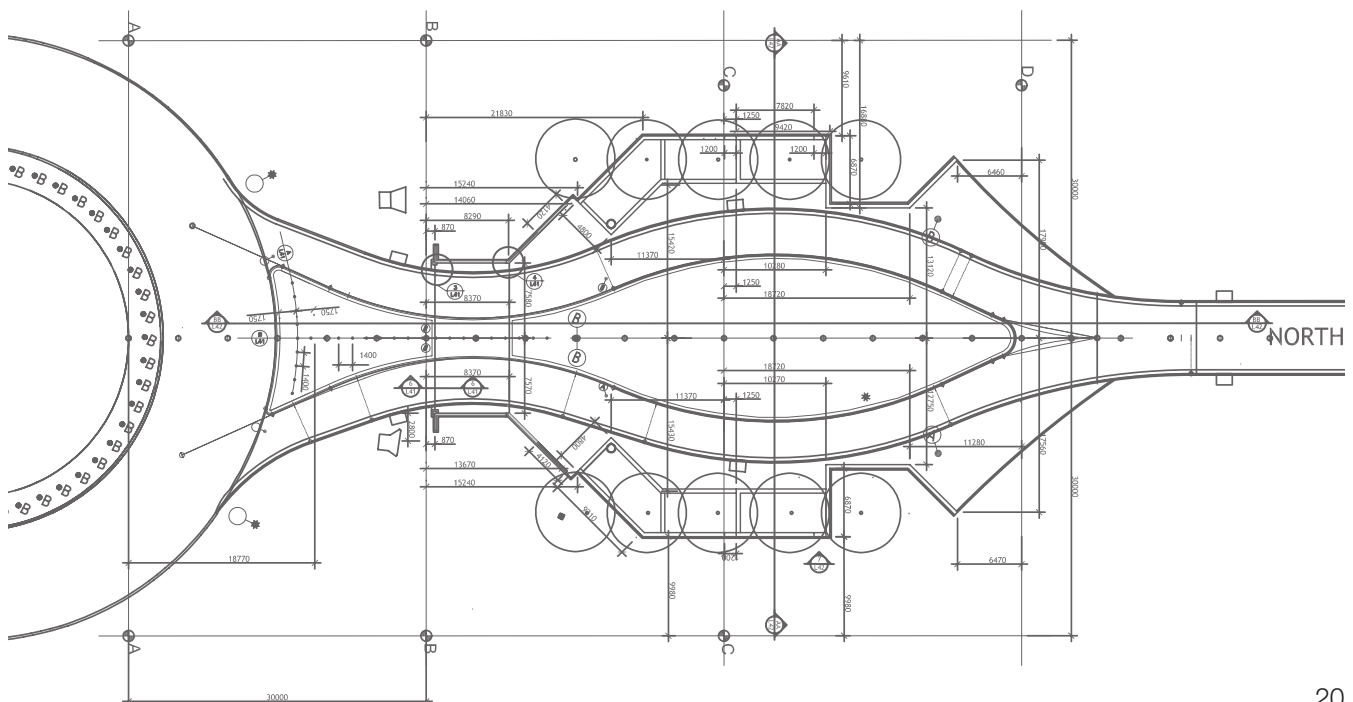
The associated landscape works visually integrate with the surrounding bushland landscape of Mt Pleasant. Use of native grasses is highly appropriate.

The concrete security walls and bollards fit well with the overall architectural language of the R1 and R2 Buildings. Providing pedestrian thoroughfare at regular intervals.



Potential future sites for small scale memorials could be accommodated in the associated landscape works.

The provision of perimeter security in a manner that does not impede pedestrian mobility, or operational use of footpaths.





Australian Government
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The National Capital Authority was established under the
Australian Capital Territory (Planning and Land Management) Act 1988

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