

Australian Capital Territory

Heritage (Decision about Registration of Dickson Library, Dickson) Notice 2008 (No1)

Notifiable Instrument NI 2008 - 481

made under the

***Heritage Act 2004* section 34 Notice of decision about registration**

1. Revocation

This instrument replaces NI2008 – 305

2. Name of instrument

This instrument is the Heritage (Decision about Registration for Dickson Library, Dickson) Notice 2008 (No 1).

3. Registration details of the place

Registration details of the place are at Attachment A: Register entry for: Dickson Library, Dickson.

4. Reason for decision

The ACT Heritage Council has decided that the Dickson Library, Dickson meets one or more of the heritage significance criteria at s 10 of the Heritage Act 2004. The register entry is at Attachment A.

5. Date of Registration

14 October 2008.

The Secretary
ACT Heritage Council
GPO Box 158
CANBERRA ACT 2602

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Gerhard Zatschler
Secretary ACT Heritage Council
GPO Box 158, Canberra ACT 2602

14 October 2008



ACT Heritage Council

AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

**HERITAGE REGISTER
(Provisional Registration Details)**

Place

For the purposes of s. 33 of the *Heritage Act 2004*, an entry to the heritage register has been prepared by the ACT Heritage Council for the following place:

- **DICKSON LIBRARY at Dickson**

DATE OF REGISTRATION

Notified: 17 October 2008 Notifiable Instrument: NI2008–481

Copies of the Register Entry are available for inspection at the ACT Heritage Unit. For further information please contact:

The Secretary
ACT Heritage Council
GPO Box 158, Canberra, ACT 2601

Telephone: 132281 Facsimile: (02) 6207 2229

IDENTIFICATION OF THE PLACE

- Dickson Library, Dickson Place, Section 30, Block 13, Suburb of Dickson, ACT.
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STATEMENT OF HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

The Dickson Library is significant in being the earliest civic building to demonstrate the National Capital Development Commission's (NCDC) move to introduce modern architectural styles to Canberra. Built in the Late Twentieth-Century Organic style of architecture, its 'free' design is an important architectural style development in 1960s Canberra, that contrasts with more rationalist architecture of that time. Its urban setting is distinctive of the modern style and combined with the building's external design produces a place of modern architectural integrity.

The library is significant as an innovative and significant work by Enrico Taglietti, one of Canberra's noted architects, in his first commission from the NCDC. Its design significance is widely recognised by professional bodies and architecture critics in listings and publications on significant architecture.

As a relatively rare and externally well-preserved example of a 1960s civic library, it continues to fulfil its original purpose, remaining sound yet innovative.

FEATURES INTRINSIC TO HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

The physical features of the Dickson Library that particularly reflect its heritage significance are:

- Site plan where the building is a sculptural form in an urban setting, incorporating a small piazza and courtyard walls, and including the original scale, form and fabric.
 - The library, specifically the angular geometry; deep horizontal fascias (but not the present green 'colorbond' replacement material); in situ board patterned off-form concrete walls, plastic covered steel glazing frames, face brickwork, courtyard stormwater treatment, what remains of the original clear timber finish internally, open planning, and varied ceiling heights.
 - The setting of the place that enables its scale and form to be appreciated including the open form of the urban setting from all four sides.
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APPLICABLE HERITAGE GUIDELINES

The Heritage Guidelines adopted under s27 of the *Heritage Act 2004* are applicable to the conservation of the Dickson Library, Dickson.

The guiding conservation objective is that the Dickson Library, Dickson, shall be conserved and appropriately managed in a manner respecting its heritage significance and the features intrinsic to that heritage significance, and consistent with a sympathetic and viable use or uses. A conservation management plan (CMP) would help to guide conservation and future use. Any works that have a

potential impact on significant fabric (and/or other heritage values) which are necessary prior to the development of a CMP shall be guided by a professionally documented interim assessment and conservation policy relevant to that area or component (i.e. a Statement of Heritage Effects - SHE).

REASON FOR REGISTRATION

The Dickson Library, has been assessed against the heritage significance criteria and been found to have heritage significance against 5 of the heritage criteria under the ACT Heritage Act.

ASSESSMENT AGAINST THE HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA

Pursuant to s.10 of the *Heritage Act 2004*, Dickson Library is regarded to have heritage significance by satisfying the following:

- (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 'organic' design of the library was innovative at that time in Canberra and demonstrates a high degree of creative achievement by Taglietti, leading local and nationally significant architect. The free form and abstract patterning of the shapes of the building to create interest through striking visual spatial effects contrasted with the more functional based rational designs of much of Canberra's late twentieth-century significant modern architecture.

Built in 1969, the design resolves its urban setting with an accomplished methodology through the use of walled courts and cantilevered forms. The design treatment of the facades with their deep overhanging roof forms, sculptural walls and mouldings, and stepped forms, are carefully composed to give abstract patterns and shapes to create interest through striking visual spatial effects.

Dickson Library was awarded the inaugural RAIA ACT Chapter Twenty Five Year Award for a public building in 1995, which is awarded to places of architectural significance that deserve heritage protection. Taglietti has been recognised by the RAIA ACT Chapter as one of the two most eminent members still practising in Canberra, the other being Romaldo Giurgola who is semi-retired. The innovative qualities of the Dickson Library have been further acknowledged in national publications including Associate Professor Jennifer Taylor's, *Australian Architecture Since 1960*, RAIA, 1990.

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

The Dickson library was carefully planned to achieve a sculptural character of lively patterns in an urban context and was conceived as a peninsular attached to the shopping complex with a small town square to the front of the building. It exhibits outstanding architectural elements of the Late Twentieth-Century Organic Style, including complex, angular geometry complementing nature, and horizontal roof planes. It is notable for displaying the high design skill of the architect Enrico Taglietti.

The following design features are of additional significance; the deep horizontal sculptured fascias, in situ board patterned off-form concrete walls, plastic covered steel glazing frames, face brickwork, clear timber

finish internally, open planning, courtyards with their associated stormwater elements, and varied ceiling heights.

The library's excellence in exhibiting the design qualities of Late Twentieth-Century Organic Style by a leading local and nationally renowned architect is recognised by the RAIA ACT Chapter in its Register of Significant Twentieth-Century Architecture. It was awarded the RAIA ACT Chapter Twenty Five Year Award in 1995, (prior to the mezzanines' removal) an award given to ACT buildings over 25 years old for the design, construction and integrity, which serve their users and society well.

(c) it is important as evidence of a distinctive way of life, taste, tradition, religion, land use, custom, process, design or function that is no longer practised, is in danger of being lost or is of exceptional interest;

Canberra is one of the few 20th Century designed cities in the world. Relatively few public buildings designed in the Late Twentieth-Century Organic style were built in Canberra, and Dickson Library was the first. The Twentieth-Century Organic design demonstrated by the Dickson library represents an important and rare development in architectural style. Modern architecture, including Organic architecture, was the most important architecture style of the 20th Century and the Dickson library represents an excellent and relatively intact example of this desirable period of Canberra's architectural history. The combination of modern architecture and urban design is of exceptional interest.

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

The architect Enrico Taglietti LFRAIA has 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 a major work in his career, his contribution being recognised by being awarded a Life Fellow of the RAIA in 2001.

The library was Taglietti's first commission for the National Capital Development Commission and is considered one of his most innovative and significant works of architecture. He is considered a key practitioner in the Late Twentieth-Century Organic style in Australia. The Dickson Library has a special association with him being specifically referred to in publications and he has stated that the library has a special significance for him.

The following criteria were found not to be applicable: (d), (e), (f), (g), (i), (j), (k), (l).

CONSULTATION WITH STAKEHOLDERS

Draft provisional registration entry was released for public comment on 21 July 2008 and period for public comment closes on 18 August 2008.

SUMMARY OF THE PLACE'S HISTORY AND PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

History

The Dickson Library was designed by Enrico Taglietti in 1968 for the National Capital Development Commission (NCDC), construction being completed in 1969 as part of the new suburb of Dickson.

After the establishment of the NCDC, in 1958, the ideal of distinctive, innovative architecture was expressed as part of the character of the new capital. The NCDC selected architectural firms that had shown they could produce innovative buildings. A rectangular site was chosen for the library that was already enclosed by street paving. The site determined the overall dimensions of the building perimeter. The library 'hand over' was on 7 November 1969 and it opened on 1 December 1969.

Description

The library is located within the Dickson Centre, the main retail and business centre to the inner north of Civic. The library is sited on the northeast side of the centre surrounded by pedestrian paths, a small public square to the south, a secondary street to the north and carparks to the east and west resulting in all facades to the building being prominent.

The original Dickson Library had a strongly symmetrical plan. The entry lobby was to the south as it is now, however, it extended nearly the full width of the building and opened onto a wide central front counter. The public passed either side of the front counter and through a narrower central opening into the library proper. At the centre of the open planned library was a mezzanine structure raised up above the main floor level approximately 1200mm. The central mezzanine reading area was a fundamental component of the initial open plan design where it separated the varying areas; for children, adults and display.

The design solution, a sculptural building form in an urban context, was conceived as a 'peninsular' attached to the shopping complex with a "piazza" or "town square" in front of the building, to the south. This open urban setting enables its scale and form to be appreciated from all four sides. It has "off form" concrete perimeter walls, 48.8m x 30.5m, and spreading deep fascia cantilevering flat roofs which define the building's form. These walls are incised with slots and angled cuts to create a dialogue with the surrounding urban centre. The tall corner angled forms of the walls define the rectangle of the plan as well as enhancing visual protection to the semi-private courtyards. The four walled corners are left open to create small landscaped courtyards where water is collected from large open spouts into concrete draining pools.

The Dickson Library is celebrated for its Late Twentieth Century Organic Style architecture which was largely due to the influences of Bruno Zevi (School of Rome) on Italian born and trained Taglietti, by introducing him to the 'natural' and 'organic' architecture of FL Wright. The features of the organic style demonstrated in the Dickson Library include its horizontal roof planes, complex, angular geometry, cantilevers emphasizing the horizontal, extensive roof overhangs and open free planning with large areas of glazing. Of additional significance is the deep sculptural form of the fascia alluding to off form concrete; the surrounding sculptural horizontally boarded in situ grey concrete perimeter walls; face brickwork, the remains of the original clear timber finish internally; open planning; courtyards with their stormwater features, and varied ceiling heights.

Taglietti (conversation with Taglietti) describes the library as being "conceived as a totality and is comprised of related elements that are essential in defining the spatial experience", ie the architectural volume and emotional response; these elements were:

- The mezzanine (the heart of the building);
- The four supports;
- The roof;
- The four courts, and
- The external walls.

By comparison with other architectural styles, the library sets itself apart with its low horizontal emphasis and complex angular geometry, typical of the organic style (RSTCA).

Condition

The building is in good condition externally. The green colour of the new fascia instead of the original light grey colour detracts from the original concrete aesthetic implied by the natural colour of the fibre sheet fascia. Internally much has been altered. The removal of the raised central reading area has had a major effect on the architectural space of the interior, however, it is believed that the structure and fabric

are in store and can be reinstalled when its heritage value is more appreciated. Internally the mezzanine reading area and associated lower level has been removed and toilet facilities have been located near the entry.

References

Royal Australian Institute of Architects (1982) *Canberra Architectural Guide to Australia's Capital*.

Royal Australian Institute of Architects – *Register of Significant Twentieth Century Architecture*. ACT Chapter.

Taylor, J. 1990. *Australian Architecture since 1960*. Royal Australian Institute of Architects; 1990

PHOTOGRAPHS AND PLANS



Figure 1. Dickson Library, N façade (Truscott 10/4/08)



Figure 2. Dickson Library, N façade (Truscott 10/4/08)



Figure 3. Dickson Library, NW corner (Truscott 10/4/08)



Figure 4. Dickson Library, NW corner (Truscott 10/4/08)



Figure 5. Dickson Library, W façade
(Truscott 10/4/08)



Figure 6. Dickson Library, SW corner
(Truscott 10/4/08)



Figure 7. Dickson Library, SW corner
(Truscott 10/4/08)



Figure 8. Dickson Library, S 'court'
(Truscott 10/4/08)



Figure 9. Dickson Library, S side - entrance
(Truscott 10/4/08)



Figure 10. Dickson Library, E façade
(Truscott 10/4/08)

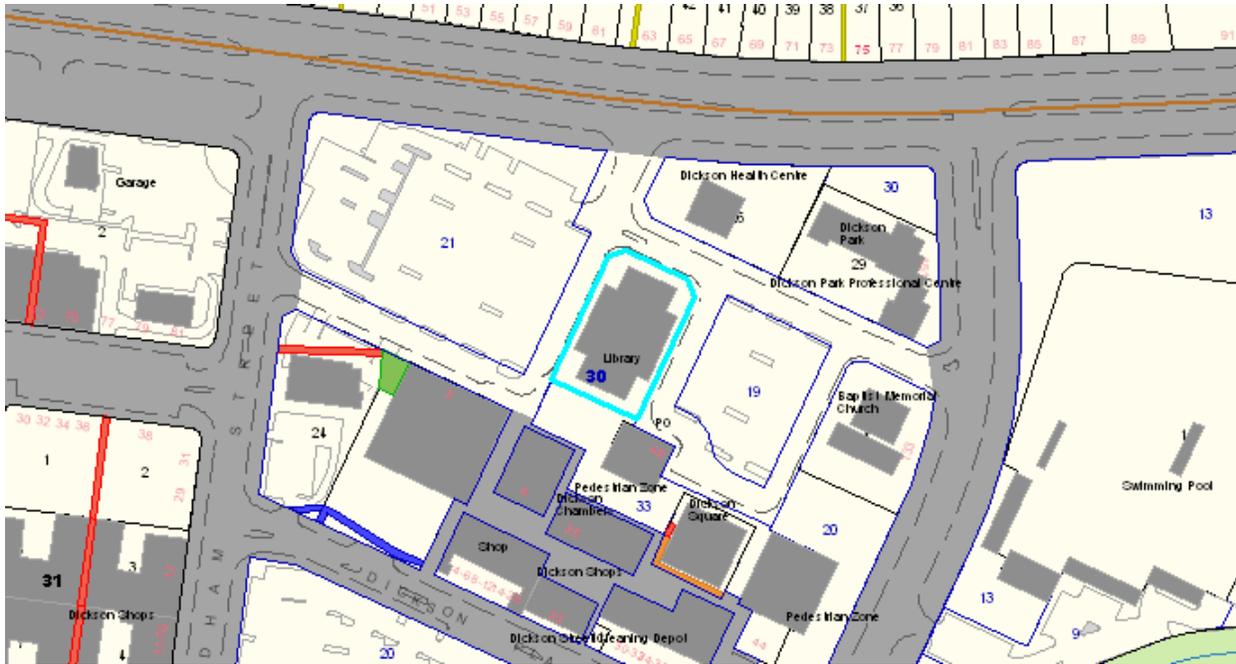


Figure 10. Location of Dickson Library, Dickson.