

# Heritage (Decision about Provisional Registration of University of Canberra Student Residence Group 2, Bruce) Notice 2008 (No 1)

Notifiable Instrument NI 2008 - 299

made under the

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

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**1. Name of instrument**

This instrument is the Heritage (Decision about Provisional Registration for University of Canberra, Student Residence Group 2) Notice 2008 (No 1).

**2. Registration details of the place**

Registration details of the place are at Attachment A: Provisional Register entry for University of Canberra, Student Residence Group 2.

**3. Reason for decision**

The ACT Heritage Council has decided that University of Canberra, Student Residence Group 2 meets one or more of the heritage significance criteria at s 10 of the *Heritage Act 2004*. The provisional register entry is at Attachment A.

**4. Date of Provisional Registration**

21 July 2008

**5. Indication of council's intention**

The council intends to decide whether to register the place under division 6.2.

**6. Public consultation period**

The Council invites public comment by 18 August 2008 on the provisional registration of University of Canberra, Student Residence Group 2 to

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**  
**21 July 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:

- **UNIVERSITY OF CANBERRA STUDENT RESIDENCE GROUP 2 at Bruce**

**DATE OF PROVISIONAL REGISTRATION**

Notified:22.07.08 Notifiable Instrument:NI2008-299

**PERIOD OF EFFECT OF PROVISIONAL REGISTRATION**

Start Date: 21 July 2008      End Date: 15 December 2008

**Extended Period (if applicable) Start Date \_\_\_\_\_ End Date \_\_\_\_\_**

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

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## IDENTIFICATION OF THE PLACE

- University of Canberra Student Residence Group 2, Section 3, Block 1, Suburb of Bruce, ACT.

Within this block, the area under provisional registration includes a 6m curtilage to the west and south of the Residence Group 2 block building, extending along the southern border to within 6m of the buildings of the Residence Group 1 block and incorporating the parklands between Residence blocks 1 and 2. The northern boundary of the registered area is marked by the southern edge of the footpath extending through to the main campus.

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## STATEMENT OF HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

The University of Canberra Student Residence Group 2 is significant for its association with the development of tertiary education in Canberra with the establishment of the Canberra College of Advanced Education, now the University of Canberra. In particular, it is significant for the provision of housing for large numbers of students in the early 1970s as a result of the introduction of free tertiary education by the Federal Labor Government.

The Residence Group is a significant and well-preserved example of 1970s on campus student accommodation. The spacious park setting is distinctive of the planning intentions of the university planners of the time. The setting and the architecture combine to produce a building of integrity, illustrative of modern architecture.

The University of Canberra Student Residence Group 2 is one of only two examples of on campus student residential accommodation designed by John Andrews in Canberra, one of Australia's internationally noted architects.

The University of Canberra Student Residence Group 2 demonstrates an architectural theme of modern architecture with the treatment of both the façades and structure in off-form in situ concrete. This approach was innovative at that time in Canberra.

The residence group represents the ideal of innovative modern architecture and planning; clean, functional and well sited. As a design combining the Late Twentieth-Century International style and the Late Twentieth-Century Brutalist style of architecture it is of special interest in being one of the earliest in Canberra of this modern ideal by one of Australia's important architects.

The place has been acknowledged for many years as a distinctive example of architecture by professional bodies and architecture critics, and has been included in publications about significant architecture. It continues to fulfil its original purpose and its planning remains innovative and sound.

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## FEATURES INTRINSIC TO HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

The physical features of the University of Canberra Student Residence Group 2, Bruce, that particularly reflect its heritage significance are:

- The complex of study/bedroom ‘units’ with site planning where the blocks step down the site in a compact interlocking composition incorporating off-set stairs, within an open landscape setting, and including their original scale, form and fabric. Specific features include: the cubiform overall shape; expressed structural frame; plain smooth wall surface with large areas of blank wall in off-form in situ concrete; the ribbon windows and corner windows; the bull-nosed roof form; the street/stairways; cantilevering structure and stepped planning, original detailing and finishes.
- Open spaces, planting and landscape generally around the complex that enables its original scale and form to be appreciated including the open form of the park setting.

‘Original scale, form and fabric’ shall mean that which was designed and built and is shown on the working drawing titled ‘Residence Group 2 for The Canberra College of Advanced Education dated Sept. ’73 (including the drawing set numbered A3 to A13) and Site Plan A2 dated April ’74, all by John Andrews International Architects.

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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 University of Canberra Student Residence Group 2, Bruce.

The guiding conservation objective is that the University of Canberra Student Residence Group 2, Bruce, 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).

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### REASON FOR PROVISIONAL REGISTRATION

*The University of Canberra Student Residence Group 2, Bruce, place 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.*

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### ASSESSMENT AGAINST THE HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA

Pursuant to s.10 of the *Heritage Act 2004*, a place or object has heritage significance if it satisfies one or more of the following criteria. Significance has been determined by research as accessed in the references below. Future research may alter the findings of this assessment.

- (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 strong and forthright architecture of the University of Canberra Student Residence Group 2 and its innovative planning make it arguably the most architecturally important student residential college in Canberra and otherwise one of Canberra's more important buildings of its time.

The grouping of bedrooms around small communal facilities was innovative; it reflected a desire by students not to live in the more traditional block type residential college accommodation.

The distribution of units in the student residences and stepping down the site to facilitate private northern views demonstrated a high degree of creative achievement, and was innovative at the time. Further, the design treatment of both the facades and structure in off-form in situ concrete was one of the first examples, and only known student residential example, in Canberra of a building design in this 'plastic' material.

The innovative qualities of the University of Canberra Student Residence Group 2 have been acknowledged in national publications including John Andrews' and Associate Professor Jennifer Taylor's, *Architecture; a performing art*, 1982.

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

The design of University of Canberra Student Residence Group 2 combines the Late Twentieth-Century International Style (1960-) and the Late Twentieth-Century Brutalist Style (1960-). The building exhibits many of the particular architectural elements specific to the styles, including International style; cubiform overall shape, structural frame expressed, and plain smooth wall surface; and Brutalist style: strong shapes boldly composed, expressed reinforced-concrete, large areas of blank wall and off-form concrete.

The following design features are of additional significance; the Corbusian window motif (ribbon windows); contrasting non-rectangular shape (the bull-nosed roof); contrasting texture (corrugated roofing); the corner windows; the street/stairways; cantilevering structure and stepped planning.

The student residence is included in the RAIA ACT Chapter Register of Significant Twentieth-Century Architecture being valued by the RAIA as an excellent example of a combination of these two styles of architecture by a leading internationally renowned architect.

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

Few student residential buildings were built in off-form in situ concrete in Australia, the only other known example is the Menzies College Student Housing, La Trobe University, Melbourne, 1968, by Robin Boyd of Romberg and Boyd. The University of Canberra Student Residence Group 2 is the only example in Canberra.

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

The University of Canberra Student Residence Group 2 is important for its association with the development of tertiary education in Canberra with the establishment of the Canberra College of Advanced Education, now the University of Canberra.

John Andrews AO LFRAIA. has played a significant role in Australia's cultural history, as well as designing a number of major buildings in North America. He is one of the most important architects of the late twentieth-century in Australia and was awarded the RAIA Gold Medal in 1980, an Order of Australia in 1981 and a Centenary Medal in 2001.

The University of Canberra Student Residence Group 2 is one of two examples of his university work in Canberra. It has a special association with him being specifically confirmed by him as a significant work in his career and referred to in publications about his work.

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## SUMMARY OF THE PLACE'S HISTORY AND PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

### History

The University of Canberra Student Residence Group 2 was designed by John Andrews International in 1973-74, for the Canberra College of Advanced Education (CCAЕ), construction being completed in 1975.<sup>1</sup> The CCAЕ became the University of Canberra in 1990.

By 1970 the Canberra College of Advanced Education was established with Dr Sam Richardson as the first Principal and a site in the Belconnen suburb of Bruce, dedicated on 28 October 1968 by the Prime Minister John Gorton. The development of the CCAЕ also coincided with the introduction of free tertiary education by the Federal Labor Government under Prime Minister Gough Whitlam 1972-1975 that also provided extensive funds for the initiative.

The design of these residences was an experiment a new type of student residence called *studentenheim*, deviating from the use of large catering kitchens for communal use, to the development of modules comprising six study bedrooms with a separate sitting room, kitchen area and shared toilet facilities. Students would cook and otherwise provide for themselves without the supervision of wardens, tutors or College management. Resident committees would liaise with College administration in terms of cleaning and maintenance of facilities. The success and popularity of *studentenheim* was such that the ANU built 'Toad Hall' on principles developed by the CCAЕ, also with Andrews as architect.

John Andrews, the architect of the UC Student Residence Group 2, has achieved international renown. Among his many international awards are the Centennial Medal and the Massey Medal for Architecture in Canada, 1967; the Arnold Brunner memorial Award in Architecture from the American Academy and the Institute of Arts and Letters, 1971; and the American Institute of Architects Honor Award, 1973. He was made a member of the Order of Australia in 1981; received the Advance Australia Award in 1982; won the Sulman Medal in 1983 and was awarded a Centenary Medal in 2001. He considers the UC Student Residence Group among his best work.

### Description

The University of Canberra is located in a park like setting in the suburb of Bruce, surrounded by major roads with Belconnen Town Centre, John Knight Park and Lake Ginninderra to the west and suburban housing to the south and east. The residences are about 450m to the west of the central concourse in a residential precinct, separate from the main campus buildings, adjacent to Aikman Drive and with car access from College Street. Residence Group 2 is west of the original Residence Group 1 (Block A-H residences) and within easy walking distance of the Belconnen Town Centre. Built on a north facing hillside, Student Residence Group 2 overlooks the College Park with its plantation of Eucalyptus and Casuarinas and is framed by well-established native woodland. They are more formally referred to as Blocks I-N and consists of 156 student study/bedrooms arranged in 27, "units" of six.

Hassell, McConnell and Partners were engaged as architect planners by the National Capital Development Commission (NCDC) with Professor Gordon Stephenson of the University of Western Australia as master-planning adviser to the College. Two orthogonal axes were used to configure the site with the academic buildings laid out along a north-south ridgeline and sporting and student residences along an east-west axis. The building is organised on a 3.05m (10' x 10') planning grid, in six tiers of five levels which cascade on a sloping site, each tier being separated, but functionally connected by access street/stairways. The innovative planning orientates the blocks to the northeast while the stairs step down

in a more northerly direction requiring a slight off-set at each level that forms an external alcove at the unit entries. There is approximately a two-metre change in floor level between each unit as they step down the site, a climb of 13 rises to the street/stairway, while there is a small step down in floor level across the whole residence from the east to the west. The level change across the site required a reduction in units to the two western most tiers.

The University of Canberra Student Residence Group 2 exemplifies a combination of the Late Twentieth-Century International Style (1960-) with its cubiform overall shape, structural frame expressed, plain, smooth wall surface, Corbusian window motif, contrasting non-rectangular shape (the bull-nosed roof), and contrasting texture (corrugated roofing). The Late Twentieth-Century Brutalist Style (1960-) is exemplified by strong shapes boldly composed, expressed reinforced-concrete, large areas of blank wall and off-form concrete.

Additional significant design features include the corner windows, the street/stairways, cantilevering structure and stepped planning. Most internal walls are masonry with the end wall to the wet areas painted externally. All external surfaces are off-form concrete except for the painted masonry walls to the rear entries and the bull-nosed corrugated roof. Smooth in situ off form concrete and the original roofing material, corrugated fibre cement sheet and barges, gave a uniform one material effect to the construction and visual character of the building.

The group was carefully planned to create a scale and distribution of the units with a level of intimacy and to form a lively pattern across the site. The buildings are remarkably intact externally and mature trees around the site add to the aesthetic quality of the group.

## References

ACTPLA Building File, 'Residence Group 2 for The Canberra College of Advanced Education'; John Andrews International Architects and conversation with John Andrews; RAlA 1982 *Canberra: An Architectural Guide To Australia's Capital*; Survey Drawing by Sowden, Wells & Assoc. Pty Ltd.

Andrews, John, and Jennifer Taylor 1982 *Architecture: a performing art*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne.

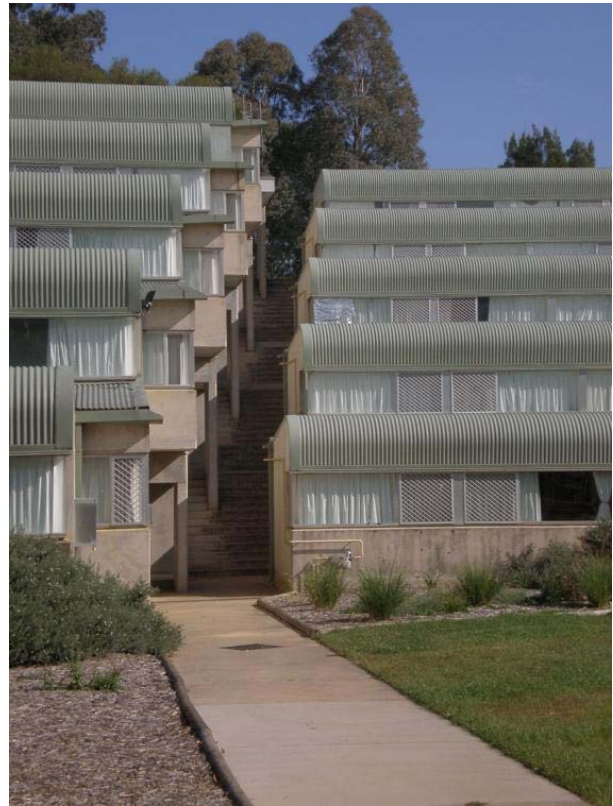
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Register of Significant Twentieth Century Architecture, Royal Australian Institute of Architects.  
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Reid, Paul 2002 *Canberra following Griffin: A Design History of Australia's National Capital* National Archives of Australia, and Australian Honours web site.

Taylor, Jennifer 1990 *Australian Architecture since 1960*, RAlA.

## PHOTOGRAPHS AND PLANS



All photos: Dianne Firth, April 2008

Photos on [www.canberrahouse.com](http://www.canberrahouse.com) on Adobe Flash Player