

Australian Capital Territory

Heritage (Decision about Registration of 13 Canterbury Crescent, Deakin) Notice 2009 (No 1)

Notifiable Instrument NI2009–575

made under the

***Heritage Act 2004* s42 Notice of decision about Registration**

1. Name of instrument

This instrument is the Heritage (*Decision about Registration of 13 Canterbury Crescent, Deakin*) Notice 2009 (No 1).

2. Commencement

This instrument commences on the day after notification.

3. Notice of Decision

Pursuant to Section 40 of the *Heritage Act 2004* the ACT Heritage Council has decided not to register *13 Canterbury Crescent, Deakin*.

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Mr Gerhard Zatschler
Secretary
ACT Heritage Council
GPO Box 158
Canberra ACT 2601

12 November 2009



ACT Heritage Council

STATEMENT OF REASONS

DECISION REGARDING THE INCLUSION OF 13 CANTERBURY CRESCENT DEAKIN (BLOCK 1, SECTION 2) IN THE ACT HERITAGE REGISTER

Background

Building History

Melbourne architects Chancellor and Patrick, whose designs were influenced by Frank Lloyd Wright's Usonian principles designed the building (an example of the Late Twentieth Century Organic Style) for Brigadier Thomas Fergus Buchanan MacAdie in 1959 with construction completed in 1960. Local architect E J Scollay of architects Scollay, Bischoff and Pegrum oversaw the construction of the residence.

1960s extension

Local architect G Neville Ward designed an extension to the south west of residence in 1968/69 with a swimming pool also added at the same time. The dining room was extended into the space of the screened porch and two additional bedrooms, a bathroom, laundry and faceted glazed living room constructed. This extension (also known as the Bianchi wing) changed the "C" form of the plan to more of an "E" shape, changing the symmetry of the building and altering the functional relationship of the internal spaces. A new brick wall was constructed to screen the swimming pool. The flat roof and materials of the extension are similar to the original building.

In the mid 1970's the ensuite to Bedroom 1 was reconfigured to include a new shower, toilet, bidet and vanity with the previous access from the hallway blocked up and a new opening from Bedroom 1.

1970s-1990s alterations

The residence was further altered in the early 1990s with minor internal changes to the existing kitchen (which has resulted in the loss of the Corbusian window motif), laundry and additional bathroom and the construction of a timber framed lattice screen fence to replace the original brick courtyard wall.

A partition wall has been constructed within Bedroom 3 to form a hallway outside the main bathroom; however the date of this construction is unknown.

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It is interesting to note that the original plans dated April 1959 indicate that what is now the ensuite to Bedroom 1 had dual access from both this bedroom and the adjoining Bedroom 2. Subsequent revisions to this plan dated May 1959 (drawn by architect EJ Scollay) indicate that access to this bathroom was to be gained via the hallway. Current access to the ensuite is from Bedroom 1 and appears consistent with the works completed in the mid 1970s as mentioned above.

Additionally, the April 1959 plan also indicates a doorway from the study into the main bathroom however there is no physical evidence to suggest that this doorway was ever constructed and poses the question of whether the house was constructed to the original plans. It is clear from a site inspection that a series of alterations and renovations have occurred to the residence since its construction.

Heritage Assessment History

13 Canterbury Crescent was nominated to the interim ACT Heritage Place Register on 5 January 2005 having been assessed by consultants as part of the Register Backlog project.

At Meeting #2 of 30 June 2005 the ACT Heritage Council accepted the nomination for 13 Canterbury Crescent Deakin which included a draft interim Heritage Place Register Entry for the place prepared by consultants.

Following further consideration of this assessment the Council provisionally registered 13 Canterbury Crescent, Deakin on 4 April 2008. During a period of public consultation the lessees of the property, Mr and Mrs Osborn provided a detailed response outlining their disagreement with the assessment against the heritage significance criteria as established in s.10 of the *Heritage Act 2004* and objecting to the provisional registration.

The owner's key concerns related to the emphasis placed upon Usonian aspects of the design of the house, the reference to the historical importance of the house (MacAdie's role) as being overblown and the concern that the style of the house has characteristics that may be attributed to a number of other architectural styles. Notwithstanding the lessees noted that none of these concerns diminished the aesthetic value of the place as a well designed and executed building which still retains a special character and charm after 50 years of occupation.

In response to the Heritage Council's Report on Public Consultation in relation to the provisional registration of this place, the Minister for Arts and Heritage directed the Council to further consider the objections raised by the owners.

To this end, the residence was visited in July 2009 and further consideration given to the owners objections to the provisional registration and the provisional registration document itself. The Council has determined that whilst the house may be considered as a very good example of the Twentieth Century Organic style, considerable additions and alterations over the years have compromised the integrity of the original residence.

On 10 November 2009 the Council, out of session, decided that it would not enter 13 Canterbury Crescent, Deakin in the ACT Heritage Register as it did not meet the criteria specified in s.10 of the *Heritage Act 2004*. The Heritage Council also endorsed this Statement of Reasons explaining that decision.

Detailed reasoning of why 13 Canterbury Crescent, Deakin does not meet the threshold for listing under the heritage criteria at Section 10 of the *Heritage Act 2004* is included under **Assessment**.

Assessment

The Council's assessment against the criteria specified in s.10 of the *Heritage Act 2004* is as follows.

In assessing the nomination for 13 Canterbury Crescent the Council considered:

- The original nomination form provided by the nominator and the accompanying draft interim Heritage Place Register Entry
- Background material held on Heritage Unit file 04/15084
- Advice from the Heritage Advisory Service dated 18 September 2008
- Factual and interpretation issues raised by the lessees in relation to the Provisional registration
- The physical evidence and surrounding context as ascertained from an onsite inspection in July 2009

In relation to the place:

The Council's assessment against the criteria specified in s.10 of the *Heritage Act 2004* is as follows.

Criterion (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.*

Provisional registration:

The creativity of the architects David Chancellor and Rex Patrick is apparent in the design of the house at 13 Canterbury Crescent, Deakin, constructed in 1960, which was innovative when compared with other houses built in Canberra at that time.

The house is of considerable architectural merit; the solution incorporating a "C" form plan fitted to take advantage of the northern sun with an elaborate open plan interior demonstrated an innovative architectural response to the needs of the 1950s family life style. Each wing houses a function; sleeping and bathrooms, living room with central fireplace, and kitchen and dining; with the number of internal walls reduced to a minimum.

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The house exhibits creative design and artistic excellence by virtue of its architectural theme of modern architecture in what is an interpretation of Frank Lloyd Wright's 'Usonian' house principles.

It is the only known house Chancellor and Patrick designed in Canberra, and is otherwise an accomplished early example of a Late Twentieth-Century Organic style building in Canberra.

The design treatment of the 1968-69 extension, designed by G Neville Ward, was carefully composed in its affect on the original structure; it incorporated many materials similar to the original.

Heritage Council Assessment:

The work of Chancellor and Patrick was heavily influenced by Frank Lloyd Wright's Usonian house principles and whilst the residence is designed in the Late Twentieth Century Organic Style, on closer consideration of the initial design and following further inspection, the house was assessed as being neither innovative, creative nor exceptional as required by this criterion.

Since construction in 1960 the house has been subject to numerous alterations and additions which have incrementally altered the integrity of the original residence; the original "C" shape plan now more closely resembling an "E" with the large addition to the side of the residence; alterations and additions to the original kitchen and bathrooms, the extension of the dining room into the original screen porch and the replacement of the original brick courtyard walls.

13 Canterbury Crescent does not meet this criterion.

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

Provisional registration:

The house at 13 Canterbury Crescent, Deakin, is a very good example of the Late Twentieth-Century Organic style (1960-). The building exhibits free, asymmetrical massing, one of the two particular architectural elements specific to the style. It is notable for displaying the high design skill of the architects David Chancellor and Rex Patrick.

The following design features are of additional significance; plain smooth wall surfaces; steel roof with its long, unbroken roof line, overhang for shade and narrow edge; the integration of the carport roof with the house as a whole; fire place and brick chimney expressed as a simple block; the large areas of timber framed glazing with their large sheets of glass including the corner windows with their frameless mitred glass panels; the Corbusian window motif (to the kitchen); open planning incorporating the large cavity sliding doors and relationship to the enclosed courtyard and original brick walls; the exposed beams to the living room, and original finishes and details.

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The house was carefully planned to achieve a sensitive affinity to and close relationship with the site. The division of sleeping, living and eating areas has been achieved in an organic composition of asymmetrical massing.

The firm of Chancellor and Patrick Architects is considered Melbourne's most skilled interpreters of Frank Lloyd Wright's Usonian house principles. This house by them exemplifies these principles, for which it has been recognised by the RAI ACT Chapter in the Register of Significant Twentieth Century Architecture.

The two examples of Late Twentieth-Century Organic style architecture in Canberra that most closely compare with the Canterbury Crescent house are the McKeown House, Downer; 1964 and the house at 19 Downes Place, Hughes, 1966; both designed by Enrico Taglietti. The Downes Place house is listed on the RAI ACT Chapter Register of Significant Twentieth-Century Architecture.

Heritage Council comment:

On further consideration of the original design of the house and its subsequent modifications, the Heritage Council assessed that, whilst the place as built may have been considered to be a very good example of the Late Twentieth Century Organic style with free asymmetrical massing, horizontal roof planes and highlight windows all key indicators of this style, there are additional stylistic elements present that could be ascribed to other architectural styles.

The brick chimney expressed as a simple block and widely projecting eaves can be attributed to the Post War Melbourne Regional style which would appear to reflect Chancellor and Patrick as a Melbourne based architectural firm. Elements of the Post War International Style are also represented by large sheets of glazing and Corbusian window motif. It should be noted however that the Corbusian window motif to the kitchen window has been lost in renovations to the house and replaced, by two areas of glass bricks.

Since construction in 1960 the house has undergone a series of alterations and additions (one in each subsequent decade since construction) which have incrementally compromised the integrity to the original residence.

The residence at 19 Downes Place Hughes, which has been entered to the ACT Heritage Register, is a clearer expression of the design principles than that at 13 Canterbury Crescent, Deakin.

Whilst 13 Canterbury Crescent may be considered as a very good example of the Late Twentieth Century Organic style, there are clear influences from other architectural styles and the residence is not considered to be of outstanding design quality as required by this criterion.

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Authorised by the ACT Parliamentary Counsel—also accessible at www.legislation.act.gov.au

Criterion (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

Provisional registration:

The Canterbury Crescent house is particularly interesting as it demonstrates a distinctive planning approach.

The planning of the house is of exceptional interest. Each wing houses a function. The open planning incorporating large sliding doors provide a play of space between the indoor and the outdoor spaces. The planning innovations were based on the 1940s-50s 'Usonian' houses designed by Frank Lloyd Wright in USA. Relatively few houses designed in the Late Twentieth-Century Organic style were built in Canberra, and this was the first.

Heritage Council assessment:

Upon further consideration of the original design and subsequent alterations, the Heritage Council assessed that whilst the utilization of Usonian principles by the architects in the design of the residence is interesting and the original planning and layout appealing, the layout has been modified by subsequent extension and internal alterations, and the place is not exceptional as required by this criterion.

The Heritage Council has not been able to obtain evidence to support its initial belief that this residence was the first house of the late Twentieth Century Organic Style to be built in Canberra.

13 Canterbury Crescent does not meet this criterion.

Criterion (d) it is highly valued by the community or a cultural group for reasons of strong or special religious, spiritual, cultural, educational or social associations.

This criterion is not applicable.

Criterion (e) it is significant to the ACT because of its importance as part of local Aboriginal tradition.

This criterion is not applicable

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

This criterion is not applicable.

Criterion (g) it is a notable example of a kind of place or object and demonstrates the main characteristics of that kind.

This criterion is not applicable.

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

Provisional registration:

The house is important for its association with the provision of housing for public servants coming in large numbers from other states as government departments were re-located to Canberra during the late 1950s. In contrast with much of the housing that was provided in blocks of apartments, this is a detached house on its own block seen at the time to be suitable to the high public service role of the owner Brigadier MacAdie, Director of Military Intelligence.

Heritage Council assessment:

On further consideration of the evidence, the Heritage Council found that, while the general historical association of the place with the provision of housing to public servants is demonstrated, the house has no identified strong or special associations with this history, as required by the criterion.

Whilst MacAdie may have commissioned Chancellor and Patrick to design the house, his tenure in Canberra was brief and his association with residence is not of sufficient strength to meet the requirements of this criterion.

13 Canterbury Crescent does not meet this criterion.

Criterion (i) it is significant for understanding the evolution of natural landscapes, including significant geological features, landforms, biota or natural processes.

This criterion is not applicable.

Criterion (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.

Provisional registration:

The architecture of this residence has the potential to contribute to the education of students of architecture and may contribute to understanding late twentieth-century architectural styles. 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 a very good example of mid-twentieth-century modern architecture, being an example of the Late Twentieth-Century Organic style, based on a sensitive affinity to and close relationship with the site. Its innovative planning contributes to its significance and educational heritage.

Heritage Council assessment:

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Whilst the house may be considered as a good example of the Late Twentieth Century Organic Style, in its evolved form it is no longer a 'pure' example of the style and hence of lesser value to teaching than initially thought. The potential of the residence to contribute to the education of students is also limited by the fact the place is a private residence. The residence may be viewed from the street however a fuller understanding of the architectural style could not be achieved without an internal inspection. As a private residence the place is not likely to provide the information needed to make it a good teaching site, as required by this criterion.

13 Canterbury Crescent does not meet this criterion.

Criterion (k) for a place—*it exhibits unusual richness, diversity or significant transitions of flora, fauna or natural landscapes and their elements.*

This criterion is not applicable

Criterion (l) for a place—*it is a significant ecological community, habitat or locality for any of the following:*

- (i) the life cycle of native species;*
- (ii) rare, threatened or uncommon species;*
- (iii) species at the limits of their natural range;*
- (iv) distinct occurrences of species*

This criterion is not applicable.

Conclusion

Whilst the residence may be considered to be a very good example of the Late Twentieth Century Organic style, it has undergone numerous alterations and additions since its construction in 1960 which have compromised the integrity of the original dwelling. It does not meet the level of significance implied by the use of terms such as 'outstanding' and 'exceptional' in the relevant criteria. The ACT Heritage Council finds that 13 Canterbury Crescent, Deakin is of insufficient heritage value to warrant registration in the ACT Heritage Register.

Dr Michael Pearson (Chair)
ACT Heritage Council
12 November 2009