

Heritage (Decision about Provisional Registration of Mackie House, 41 National Circuit, Forrest) Notice 2016

Notifiable Instrument NI2016–474

made under the

Heritage Act 2004, s32 (Decision about provisional registration) and s34 (Notice of decision about provisional registration)

1 Name of instrument

This instrument is the *Heritage (Decision about Provisional Registration of Mackie House, 41 National Circuit, Forrest) Notice 2016*.

2 Decision about provisional registration

On 25 August 2016, the ACT Heritage Council (the **Heritage Council**) decided not to provisionally register Mackie House, 41 National Circuit, Block 16, Section 7, Forrest (the **Place**).

3 Details and description of the Place

The location details and description of the Place are in the schedule.

4 Reasons for the decision

The Heritage Council decided not to provisionally register the Place because it did not have heritage significance as it did not meet any of the heritage significance criteria in section 10 of the *Heritage Act 2004*, as set out in the schedule.

5 Date decision takes effect

The decision not to provisionally register the Place takes effect on the day after this notice is notified.

Fiona Moore
A/g Secretary (as delegate for)
ACT Heritage Council
25 August 2016



ACT Heritage Council

STATEMENT OF REASONS
DECISION NOT TO PROVISIONALLY REGISTER
Mackie House, 41 National Circuit
(Block 16 Section 7, Forrest)
IN THE ACT HERITAGE REGISTER

In accordance with Section 32 of the *Heritage Act 2004*, the ACT Heritage Council (the Council) has decided not to provisionally register Mackie House, Forrest. This Statement of Reasons provides an assessment of Mackie House, Forrest and finds that the place does not meet any of the criteria under s.10 of the *Heritage Act 2004*.

Background

Mackie House was nominated to the ACT Heritage Register on 2 June 2016 for its architectural merit and its association with architect Peter Keys. The nomination was prepared by Eric Martin & Associates on behalf of the Forrest Residents Group.

On 2 August 2016, the Council received an urgent application for a decision on provisional registration for Mackie house under s.30 of the *Heritage Act 2004*.

The Council completed an internal and external site inspection of Mackie House on 15 August 2016.

Mackie House was built in 1959. It was designed by Peter Keys of the firm McConnel, Smith & Johnson, and was the home of Doug and Jill Mackie until 1993 when they sold the property. Extensions were made to the property in 1971, 1977, and 1991. These resulted in significant internal reconfigurations, and the addition of multiple projections to the northern elevation of the house.

Mackie House is listed on the Australian Institute of Architects' Register of Significant Twentieth Century Architecture (Item No. R038).

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 Mackie House, Forrest, the Council considered:

- the original nomination and documentary evidence supplied by the nominator (Eric Martin and Associates);
- supplementary information provided by the nominator (Eric Martin and Associates);
- the original urgent application for a decision on provisional registration and documentary evidence supplied;
- the Council's *Heritage Assessment Policy* (February 2015);
- information provided by a site inspection on 15 August 2016 by ACT Heritage and the ACT Heritage Council; and
- the report by ACT Heritage titled, *Background Information Mackie House*, August 2016, containing photographs and information on history, description, condition and integrity.

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. Future research may alter the findings of this assessment.

(a) importance to the course or pattern of the ACT's cultural or natural history;

Mackie House, Forrest, does not meet this criterion.

There are Late Twentieth-Century Sydney Regional Style (1960–), influences in the original design of Mackie House. These include one minor internal split level, solar access, and high windows and doors, although, as discussed in detail under criterion (d), the place does not comprehensively demonstrate the principal characteristics of the style. The style was an important creative solution to Australian environments and locations, and there are several significant examples of Late Twentieth-Century Sydney Regional Style (1960–) in the ACT, such as 'Cater House' and the Royal Australian Institute of Architects Headquarters. However, neither the importance of the style in the field of architecture, nor the extant examples in the ACT, suffice as evidence that it influenced the course or pattern of the ACT's cultural history to a significant enough degree to meet thresholds against this criterion. Examples of the style such as those listed above, and others, such as Swinger Hill Stage 1 and 2, indicate the style was important in the ACT, however, these examples do not demonstrate the style was sufficiently important to the course of history of the ACT.

There is a stronger argument to say that the Post-War International Style (1940 - 1960) had some influence on the course of the cultural history of the ACT. Buildings of this style occupied considerable public and commercial space in mid-century Canberra, including notable public housing complexes (Northbourne Housing Precinct, Bega and Allawah flats), and prominent commercial buildings in the CBD, such as the MLC Building and ANZ Bank Building. Indeed, the MLC Building influenced subsequent building designs in the ACT and Australia.

It is possible that Mackie House borrowed some aspects of this style, such as the use of large panes of glass, long, low elevations, and an overall cubiform shape. However, most of the definitive features of the style, such as expressed structural framework, curtain walling, and Corbusian window motifs were never incorporated into the house. Those elements that were present have been highly compromised by subsequent additions. In particular, the extensions to the north side of the house have adversely altered the original rectilinear design of the original house, and have reduced the ability to read the original fenestration. Therefore, while the style may have been important to the course of the ACT's history, Mackie House does not comprehensively demonstrate its key aspects.

Mackie House belongs to one of a small group of residential properties in the ACT in the late 1950s and early 1960s where an private owners commissioned an architect designed house, reflecting the beginning of a shift away from mainly government designed and built housing. 'Cater House,' for example, is significant for its sophisticated residential design in the Late Twentieth-Century Sydney Regional Style (1960–) during this breakaway from government designed housing. However, nearly every building in the ACT could be said to fit into a story of a particular design or planning context, or historical trend, but this does not mean that every place meets the threshold imposed by the criteria. An entry on the Heritage Register is valid to the extent that it establishes a level of significance that is strong and special that is therefore above the ordinary, and most of the key features that would have distinguished Mackie House as an example of 'sophisticated' residential design are now no longer present (see criterion (d)).

(b) has uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of the ACT's cultural or natural history;

Mackie House, Forrest, does not meet this criterion.

In the broader context of Late Twentieth-Century Sydney Regional Style (1960–), and Post-War International Style (1940 - 1960), Mackie House is not considered to be uncommon or rare.

Examples of Late Twentieth-Century Sydney Regional Style (1960–) listed on the ACT Heritage Register include:

- Cater House (Red Hill, 1965)
- Royal Australian Institute of Architects Headquarters (Red Hill, 1967)
- 12 Marawa Place (Aranda, 1969)
- Swinger Hill Stage 1 and 2 (Phillip, 1969)
- Cook Housing Cooperative (Wybalena Grove, 1974).

Examples of Post-War International Style (1940 - 1960) listed on the ACT Heritage Register include:

- Bowden House (Deakin, 1951-52)
- Benjamin House (Deakin, 1956)
- MLC Building (City, 1957-61)
- Northbourne Housing Precinct Representative Sample (Dickson, 1959)
- ANZ Bank Building (City, 1961-63)
- Campbell Group Housing (Campbell, 1964)
- Birch House (Yarralumla, 1967)
- 4 Cobby Street (Campbell, 1969-1970)

The places listed have been identified by the Council as good or excellent examples of the styles, are still occupied, and/or in good condition. As such, the Council does not consider buildings of Late Twentieth-Century Sydney Regional Style (1960–), and Post-War International Style (1940 - 1960) to be endangered aspects of the ACT's cultural history.

(c) potential to yield important information that will contribute to an understanding of the ACT's cultural or natural history;

Mackie House, Forrest, does not meet this criterion.

There is insufficient evidence before the Council to demonstrate that Mackie House has the potential to yield important information that will contribute to a wider understanding of the ACT's cultural or natural history. The Council does not anticipate a reasonable likelihood that Mackie House contains substantial physical evidence – currently obscured and of high integrity – pertaining to a defined, significant research interest, and it is unlikely to provide key information that will fill an important gap in existing knowledge about the history of the ACT.

Whilst it exhibits influences of Late Twentieth-Century Sydney Regional Style (1960–), and Post-War International Style (1940 - 1960), the place's ability to strongly represent these styles has been diminished, as outlined under criterion (d).

Other places better represent the Late Twentieth-Century Sydney Regional Style (1960–) in the ACT such as the Australian Institute of Architects ACT Chapter Headquarters in Red Hill and 145 Mugga Way, Red Hill (also known as Cater House).

Other places better represent the Post-War International Style (1940 - 1960) such as the MLC Building (City), and 10 Gawler Cres in Deakin, otherwise known as Benjamin House.

What ability the place does have to provide information that will contribute to an understanding of the ACT's cultural history is adequately represented by documentary evidence and the physical material of the building is unlikely to contribute further to a wider understanding.

(d) importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural or natural places or objects;

Mackie House, Forrest, does not meet this criterion.

Extensions and internal reconfigurations at Mackie House have compromised its ability to strongly demonstrate most of the original design intent that aligned with Post-War International Style (1940 - 1960) and Late Twentieth-Century Sydney Regional Style (1960–). For example, the addition of a dining room, new family room, attached terrace, and new master bedroom, have interrupted the original rectilinear orientation of the northern facade and has impacted on both the internal spaces, the outdoor recreation spaces and the general appreciation of the original design building from the north. Many of the functional relationships within the house have been altered, the rear elevation is significantly changed, fenestration has been reduced, and its original effect has been diminished. In addition, existing landscaping and vegetation have significantly obscured the front of the house, reducing the ability to read the original design from the street (National Circuit) as of 2016.

However, the Council acknowledges that Mackie House demonstrates some aspects of the Late Twentieth-Century Sydney Regional Style (1960–).

The attributes of the style it demonstrates include:

- high windows and doors;
- roofline extending over carport;
- tiled roof;
- internal timber cladding;
- split levelling (to a minor extent);
- solar access in response to siting (i.e. northerly aspect). However, the solar passivity of the original design has been significantly diminished as of 2016, by the addition of three extensions since 1959.

Its ability to fully demonstrate the style is diminished by:

- absence of steep topography allowing pronounced split-level planning;
- absence of framing with stained or oiled timber (timber frames were/still are painted);
- absence of asymmetrical massing;
- absence of skillion roof (roof is gabled);
- absence of clerestory windows;
- absence of timber post and beam construction;
- absence of exposed rafters;
- absence of exposed roof beams;
- absence of timber deck;
- absence of clinker brick walling;
- absence of painted brick walling (the bricks have been rendered);
- absence of boarded stud wall;
- absence of timber awning sash;
- absence of slatted timber screens.

The Council acknowledges that Mackie house demonstrates some aspects of Post-War International Style (1940-1960).

The attributes of the style it demonstrates include:

- original rectilinear plan form in the 1959 house; this has mostly been lost as of 2016;
- use of steel for framing (i.e. steel portal framing);
- large sheets of glass;
- long, low elevations;
- overhang for shade (i.e. wide, overhanging eaves).

Its ability to fully demonstrate this style is diminished by:

- absence of expressed structural frame;
- absence of curtain wall;
- absence of external sun-control device;
- absence of Corbusian window motif;
- absence of cantilevers;
- absence of contrasting, non-rectangular shape.

Although Mackie House exhibits some characteristics of these styles, the Council considers that stronger examples of the styles exist in the ACT. For the Late Twentieth-Century Sydney Regional Style (1960–), the Australian Institute of Architects' ACT Chapter Headquarters in Red Hill, and the house at 145 Mugga Way, Red Hill (also known as Cater House) offer stronger examples than Mackie House. Other places that better represent the Post-War International Style (1940 - 1960) include the MLC Building (City), and 10 Gawler Cres in Deakin, otherwise known as Benjamin House.

(e) importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics valued by the ACT community or a cultural group in the ACT;

Mackie House, Forrest, does not meet this criterion.

Mackie House demonstrates some aspects of the Late Twentieth-Century Sydney Regional Style (1960–) and Post-War International Style (1940 - 1960). These styles are valued by the Australian Institute of Architects (the Institute) as evidenced by the place's inclusion on its Register of Significant Twentieth Century Architecture (Item No. R038), and the 1961 Neil Clerehan book *Best Australian Houses Built by Members of the Royal Australian Institute of Architects*.

While valued by the Institute, the Council's Heritage Assessment Policy interprets a cultural group as a 'group of people within a society with a shared ethnic or cultural background' or 'a group of people connected through the same way of living, which has been transmitted from one generation to another'. The Council therefore does not consider the Institute to be a cultural group for the purposes of the criterion.

Furthermore, there is insufficient evidence before the Council to demonstrate that Mackie House exhibits other aesthetic characteristics which are valued by the ACT community or a cultural group in the ACT.

(f) importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement for a particular period;

Mackie House, Forrest, does not meet this criterion.

Mackie House was awarded the Royal Australian Institute of Architects Canberra Medallion Award in 1962 for 'exceptional merit in architecture.' However, the criteria for determining merit in this circumstance have not been made available to the Council. In light of this, the Council cannot make an accurate determination on whether the exceptional merit is enduring as of 2016, and therefore may constitute a high degree of creative or technical achievement.

Council acknowledges Mackie House exhibits some degree of creative achievement for its time through its design. It was completed in 1959, an early date to have incorporated elements of the 'Sydney School,' which Apperly (et al 1994) records as beginning in 1960. It was a large residential dwelling for its time that allowed for solar passivity by facing north and using the full height windows favoured by the 'Sydney School.' The formal living room ceiling reflected the roof slope which, combined with a drop of three steps from the bedroom end of the house, created a spacious effect and moderate degree of split levelling typical of 'Sydney School' architecture.

However, the creativity of the design is not considered to be to a high degree, sufficient to meet threshold for listing under this criterion. Whilst it exhibits influences of Late Twentieth-Century Sydney Regional Style (1960–), its ability to strongly represent the style has been diminished, as outlined under criterion (d). Other places better represent this style in the ACT such as the Australian Institute of Architects ACT Chapter Headquarters in Red Hill and 145 Mugga Way, Red Hill (also known as Cater House).

The low-pitched gable roof at Mackie House employed a (then) recent technology of steel portal frames over the large formal living and dining areas. The building covenant in this area of Forrest required load bearing walls of brick construction. To some extent, the use of the steel portal frame on load bearing brick walls represents an unusual structural solution to the relevant planning requirements.

Steel framing (although not necessarily portal framing) was a design element of Post-War International Style (1940 - 1960). Although steel portal framing was a relatively new technology at the time, and a somewhat innovative response to planning regulations in Forrest in 1959, the creative achievement of this feature is not of a high enough degree to meet this criterion. For example, it does not represent development of new technology, or a breakthrough in fabrication or construction techniques that contributed significantly to the field of architecture and construction. Further, it does not represent an innovative departure from established norms in architecture. The steel portal structure is not clearly expressed within the house, and a timber frame above the brickwork could have been used instead of a steel frame to achieve the expansive, open effect of the original formal living area. There is no evidence to suggest steel portal framing was the only technical solution to creating a large, open space in this part of the house.

The Council considers the Former Transport Depot in Kingston (1940-41) to be a more significant example of a high degree of creative and technical achievement for the early application of steel portal framing in the ACT.

(g) has a strong or special association with the ACT community, or a cultural group in the ACT for social, cultural or spiritual reasons;

Mackie House, Forrest, does not meet this criterion.

There is insufficient evidence to demonstrate that Mackie House has strong or special associations with the ACT community, or a cultural group in the ACT for social, cultural or spiritual reasons.

The Council acknowledges that Mackie House is included on the Australian Institute of Architects' (the Institute) Register of Significant Twentieth Century Architecture (Item No. R038), and the 1961 Neil Clerehan book *Best Australian Houses Built by Members of the Royal Australian Institute of Architects*. The Councils' Heritage Assessment Policy interprets a cultural group as a 'group of people connected through the same way of living, which has been transmitted from one generation to another'. The Council therefore does not consider the Institute to be a cultural group for the purposes of the criterion.

(h) has a special association with the life or work of a person, or people, important to the history of the ACT.

Mackie House, Forrest, does not meet this criterion.

Mackie House has an association with its original, past and present residents, however, there is insufficient evidence to demonstrate that any of these persons are important to the history of the ACT.

Mackie House has an association with the architect Peter Keys and the practice he was employed by, McConnel, Smith & Johnson (MSJ). Mackie House, as it appeared in its original condition, has been regarded in architectural fields as a good example of Peter Keys' design.

This is evidenced by its listing on the Register of Significant Twentieth Century Architecture (Item No. R038), its appearance in the 1961 Neil Clerehan book *Best Australian Houses Built by Members of the Royal Australian Institute of Architects*, and the receipt of the Royal Australian Institute of Architects' Canberra Medallion Award in 1962. However, Mackie House is not considered to be Peter Keys' or MSJ's most outstanding or important work in any of these examples, or any other sources.

There is some argument that the work of MSJ made a notable contribution to the history of the ACT, as the practice designed numerous buildings with a strong presence in public space, and arguably, public life. These buildings included the CSIRO Headquarters building (1970), the Canberra Club (1976), the National Press Club (1976), and the Benjamin Offices, Belconnen (1970-80), a large office complex for 3500 public servants.

However, as outlined in criterion (d), subsequent additions and alterations to Mackie House have compromised its ability to strongly demonstrate most of the original design intent. As such, the place is considered to have been so altered, that it no longer provides adequate evidence of its association with Peter Keys, and MSJ.

Conclusion

Mackie House in 1959 was a sophisticated example of residential architecture during a phase of the ACT's history when there was a large amount of government housing, and houses of limited cost and design. It displayed influences of Late Twentieth-Century Sydney Regional Style (1960–), and Post-War International Style (1940 - 1960), with expansive fenestration and clean lines on its northern elevation, exhibiting solar passive design. Architect Peter Keys took an unusual approach in creating a sense of interior openness by using the relatively recent technology of steel portal framing for the roof in the central, formal living space.

However, as an example of these styles, Mackie House did not influence the course or pattern of the ACT's history. Indeed, the Late Twentieth-Century Sydney Regional Style (1960–) itself cannot be said to have influenced the course of the ACT's cultural history to a significant degree.

Owing to a substantial number of superior examples of both styles of architecture in the ACT, most of which are still occupied and in good condition, Mackie House has not been assessed as rare, uncommon, or endangered. Further, substantial extensions on the northern elevation, as well as significant internal reconfigurations, have diminished the place's ability to demonstrate the principal characteristics of either style of architecture.

The place has not been shown to be important to the ACT community or a cultural group in the ACT, and, although it has associations with notable architect Peter Keys, and prominent firm McConnel, Smith & Johnson (MSJ), it is not widely considered to be a seminal example of Keys' or MSJ's work.

This Statement of Reasons provides an assessment of Mackie House, Forrest, and finds that it does not meet any of the criteria specified in s.10 of the *Heritage Act 2004*.

SITE PLAN



Mackie House (Block 16 Section 7 Forrest)



0 5 10 20 30 40 Meters

Image 1 Site Boundary, Mackie House, 41 National Cct Forrest