

# Heritage (Decision about Registration of the former AAA Building, Braddon) Notice 2016

## Notifiable Instrument NI2016—575

made under the

Heritage Act 2004, s40 (Decision about registration)

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### 1 Name of instrument

This instrument is the *Heritage (Decision about Registration of the former AAA Building, Braddon) Notice 2016*.

### 2 Decision about registration

On 14 April 2016, the ACT Civil and Administrative Tribunal (**Tribunal**) decided to register the former AAA Building, Block 3, Section 3, Braddon (the **Place**).

Pursuant to section 69(2) of the *ACT Civil and Administrative Tribunal Act 2008* (**ACAT Act**), the order of the Tribunal dated 14 April 2016 is taken to be the decision of the ACT Heritage Council (**Council**).

### 3 Registration details of the Place

The registration details of the Place are in the schedule to this instrument.

### 4 Reasons for the decision

On 12 February 2015, the Council decided to register the Place, see NI2015-73 (the **Decision**).

On 12 March 2015, an application was made to the Tribunal seeking a review of the Decision.

On 14 April 2016, the Tribunal made an order that the Decision be set aside and substituted by a decision under section 40 of the *Heritage Act 2004* that the former AAA Building has heritage significance by operation of section 10(g) of the *Heritage Act 2004* as in force on 3 October 2014, and should be registered on that basis.

Pursuant to section 69(2) of the ACAT Act, the order of the Tribunal dated 14 April 2016 is taken to be the decision of the Council.

On 14 October 2016, the Council entered the registration details for the Place on the ACT Heritage Register to give effect to the Tribunal order and the Tribunal's reasons for the decision. The register entry is at the schedule to this instrument.

**5 Date of registration**

14 October 2016

**6 Revocation**

The *Heritage (Decision about Registration of the former AAA Building, Braddon) Notice 2015*; NI2015–73 is revoked.

Fiona Moore  
A/g Secretary (as delegate for)  
ACT Heritage Council  
14 October 2016



ACT Heritage Council

**AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY  
HERITAGE REGISTER  
(Registration)**

For the purposes of s 41 of the *Heritage Act 2004* as in force on 3 October 2014, an entry to the heritage register has been prepared by the ACT Heritage Council to give effect to the 14 April 2016 decision of the ACT Civil and Administrative Tribunal for the following place:

**The former AAA Building**

**Block 3, Section 3, Braddon**

The ACT Civil and Administrative Tribunal (ACAT) decision is: *212 Northbourne Pty Limited v ACT Heritage Council & Anor* [2016] ACAT 30. References to numbered paragraphs in this decision are placed in brackets.

**DATE OF REGISTRATION**

14 October 2016

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

The Secretary  
ACT Heritage Council  
GPO Box 158, Canberra, ACT 2601  
Telephone: 13 22 81

## IDENTIFICATION OF THE PLACE

The former AAA Building

212 Northbourne Avenue, Block 3 Section 3, Braddon

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This statement refers to the Heritage Significance of the place as required in s 12(d) of the *Heritage Act 2004*.

### STATEMENT OF HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

The former AAA Building is a notable example of a building in the Late Modern Style. It demonstrates the main characteristics of that style and is a notable example for a range of architectural features, in particular the three dimensional curved form, the aluminium sheet cladding and flush strip windows. In addition, because of its original role as the national headquarters building for the Australian Automobile Association, the Building is a notable example of architectural achievements in the development of Canberra in the National Capital Development Commission (NCDC) period and of the architecture of Mr Guy Maron AM, an eminent Australian architect. [*Criterion 10(g)*]

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### FEATURES INTRINSIC TO THE HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PLACE

The attributes listed below are assessed as features intrinsic to the heritage significance of the place and warrant conservation:

- the original 1979 building as designed by Guy Maron<sup>1</sup> is a notable example of a building in the Late Modern Style<sup>2</sup> that demonstrates the main characteristics of that style,<sup>3</sup> i.e. sleek, glossy, free standing buildings; principal masses determined by simple geometry; precision, lightness and elegance; minimalist construction in metallic materials; glass and metal curtain walls and cladding panels.<sup>4</sup> These are expressed in a range of architectural features,<sup>5</sup> in particular:
    - the three dimensional curved form;
    - the aluminium sheet cladding; and
    - flush strip windows.
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### CONSERVATION OBJECTIVE

The guiding conservation objective is that the former AAA Building shall be conserved and appropriately managed in a manner respecting its heritage significance and the features intrinsic to that heritage significance.

The ACT Heritage Council may adopt heritage guidelines applicable to the place under s 25 of the *Heritage Act 2004*.

For further information on guidelines applicable to the place, or for advice on proposed works or development, please contact ACT Heritage on 13 22 81.

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<sup>1</sup> *212 Northbourne Pty Limited v ACT Heritage Council & Anor* [2016] ACAT 30 at [188]

<sup>2</sup> *212 Northbourne Pty Limited v ACT Heritage Council & Anor* [2016] ACAT 30 at [8], [185] and [187]

<sup>3</sup> *212 Northbourne Pty Limited v ACT Heritage Council & Anor* [2016] ACAT 30 at [8], [169], [186] and [193]

<sup>4</sup> *212 Northbourne Pty Limited v ACT Heritage Council & Anor* [2016] ACAT 30 at [190]

<sup>5</sup> *212 Northbourne Pty Limited v ACT Heritage Council & Anor* [2016] ACAT 30 at [187]

## REASON FOR REGISTRATION

The former AAA Building has been assessed against the heritage significance criteria and been found to have heritage significance when assessed against one criterion (10(g)) under the *Heritage Act 2004* as in force on 3 October 2014.

### ASSESSMENT AGAINST THE HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA

Pursuant to s 10 of the *Heritage Act 2004* as in force on 3 October 2014, a place or object has heritage significance if it satisfies one or more of the criteria set out below.

- (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 former AAA Building, Braddon, does not meet this criterion. The assessment and reasons for this can be found in part G of the ACT Civil and Administrative Tribunal (the ACAT) decision *212 Northbourne Pty Limited v ACT Heritage Council & Anor* [2016] ACAT 30.

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

The former AAA Building, Braddon, does not meet this criterion.

There is no evidence that it exhibits outstanding design or aesthetic qualities that are valued by the community or a cultural group.

- (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;**

The former AAA Building, Braddon, does not meet this criterion. The assessment and reasons for this can be found in part H of the ACAT decision *212 Northbourne Pty Limited v ACT Heritage Council & Anor* [2016] ACAT 30.

- (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;**

The former AAA Building, Braddon, does not meet this criterion.

The ACT Heritage Council recognises that the Australian Automobile Association provides programs, such as ANCAP car safety ratings and AusRAP road assessments, that are of great service to the broader Australian community. However, the organisation and the programs related to it are no longer represented in the building and there is no evidence that the broader ACT community or any cultural groups highly value the former AAA Building for its former association with the Australian Automobile Association. Also, while there have been other tenants in the building, none show a significant or enduring relationship that demonstrate that the place is highly valued by the community or a cultural group for reasons of strong religious, spiritual, cultural, educational or social associations.

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

This criterion does not apply to the former AAA Building, Braddon.

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

The former AAA Building, Braddon, does not meet this criterion.

There is insufficient contextual information about the range of examples of the Late Twentieth-Century Late Modern style to enable an assessment under this criterion. While the currently known examples are few, there has not been an adequate survey to establish a sound understanding of the range.

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

The former AAA Building, Braddon, meets this criterion. The full assessment and reasons for this can be found in part I of the ACAT decision *212 Northbourne Pty Limited v ACT Heritage Council & Anor* [2016] ACAT 30 and is summarised below.

The former AAA Building (the Building) is in the Late Modern style, demonstrates the main characteristics of that style, and is a notable example<sup>6</sup> for a range of architectural features in particular the three dimensional curved form and the aluminium sheet cladding and flush windows, all features of substance mentioned by Apperly et al (1994:260-263).<sup>7</sup> The characteristics of Late Modern architecture in Australia are present in the Building at a very high level of competence and integrity.<sup>8</sup>

In addition, because of its original role as the national headquarters building for the Australian Automobile Association, the Building is a notable example of architectural achievements in the development of Canberra in the NCDC period and of the architecture of Mr Guy Maron, an eminent Australian architect. The Building is important because of its contribution to the history and architectural story of the ACT. As to the second point, it is relevant that Mr Maron received the Sir Zelman Cowan Award, the highest award of the Royal Australian Institute of Architects, for his design of the Bicentennial Conservatory at the Adelaide Botanic Garden and that the Conservatory has been placed on the South Australian Heritage Register. It is relevant also that Mr Maron's contribution to architecture in Australia has been recognised by his appointment as a Member in the Order of Australia.<sup>9</sup>

The fact of its inclusion in Jennifer Taylor's seminal 1986 (reprinted in 1990) publication indicates that the Building became a notable example of Late Modern architecture not only in Canberra, but also in Australia as a whole.<sup>10</sup>

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

The former AAA Building, Braddon, does not meet this criterion.

There is insufficient evidence that the former AAA building has strong or special associations with any person, group, event, development or cultural phase in local or national history. Even though the construction of the building occurred during the development of the ACT under the National Capital Development Commission (NCDC), there is no evidence that it was important in this period of development or that it influenced later development in the ACT.

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<sup>6</sup> *212 Northbourne Pty Limited v ACT Heritage Council & Anor* [2016] ACAT 30 at [8]

<sup>7</sup> *212 Northbourne Pty Limited v ACT Heritage Council & Anor* [2016] ACAT 30 at [185]-[187]

<sup>8</sup> *212 Northbourne Pty Limited v ACT Heritage Council & Anor* [2016] ACAT 30 at [193]

<sup>9</sup> *212 Northbourne Pty Limited v ACT Heritage Council & Anor* [2016] ACAT 30 at [188]

<sup>10</sup> *212 Northbourne Pty Limited v ACT Heritage Council & Anor* [2016] ACAT 30 at [192]

Additionally, whilst the work of the Australian Automobile Association is important for the nation, there is no evidence that it, or the work it has been involved with, have a strong or special association with the former AAA Building.

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

This criterion does not apply to the former AAA Building, Braddon.

- (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**

The former AAA Building, Braddon, does not meet this criterion.

Whilst it has been suggested that the former AAA Building may be an educational resource to those studying the Late Twentieth-Century Late Modern style of architecture, there is no evidence that this is currently likely.

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

This criterion does not apply to the former AAA Building, Braddon.

- (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 does not apply to the former AAA Building, Braddon.

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## SUMMARY OF THE PLACE

### HISTORY AND PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

#### HISTORY

Further history of the former AAA Building along with a detailed description of the place can be found in the ACAT decision *212 Northbourne Pty Limited v ACT Heritage Council & Anor* [2016] ACAT 30.

The former national headquarters of the Australian Automobile Association (AAA) was designed in 1978 by Cheesman, Doley, Neighbour and Raffin, later Raffin Maron, with Guy Maron as the lead architect<sup>11</sup> with construction completed in 1979 by Concrete Constructions.

The AAA was formed in 1924 and represents several motoring bodies throughout Australia, such as the NRMA and the RACV. The AAA represents these groups at a national level and supports or runs several programs aimed at improving road safety such as ANCAP car safety testing and AusRAP road safety assessments. Prior to moving into the AAA Building in 1979, the organisation's headquarters were located in Sydney, but they realised the need for a national organisation to be where the federal government was seated in order to properly represent their members.

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<sup>11</sup> *212 Northbourne Pty Limited v ACT Heritage Council & Anor* [2016] ACAT 30 at [11] and [188]

The AAA requested a building for their new national headquarters that would provide maximum return on their investment (*Architecture Australia*, 1982). The block required a northwest to southeast pedestrian link and to retain a small treed park in the southwest corner. The owners required a building of which they would occupy the ground floor and lease the upper floors. By situating the building at an angle across the block the architect was able to accommodate the site limitations and by adding a curve to the building was able to maximise floor space and the area the owner could lease.

The clients were not the only group influencing the design; the National Capital Development Commission (NCDC) had several planning restrictions that applied to all buildings along Northbourne Avenue, as one of the ACT's main avenues. There were several simple planning restrictions, such as a maximum building height of three stories and setbacks of 18m, but there were also high level requirements such as buildings had to be of a high national quality and have an integration of landscape and architecture.

The building's sleek curving facade portrays a high-tech aesthetic in a building in the Late Twentieth-Century Late Modern style (Apperly et al 1994). This style of building design is a continuation of the Late Twentieth Century International style where the simple rectangular shapes have been bent along a curve. Apperly et al describes the style as trying to convey the image of technology, but as Taylor (1990) notes it uses conventional techniques without any real technological ingenuity which, while distinctive, is an aesthetic variation on architectural modernism. The aluminium cladding on the building has been used in Australian buildings from the mid-1960s, but has been applied to great effect when used as the main facade element. The building was one of a number constructed at that time that used aluminium curtain walls as a main visual element (comparators are Maddison Clinical Science Block in Newcastle 1981; the Mount Druitt Hospital and the Education Building in Perth 1982).

The building received the Royal Australian Institute of Architects (RAIA, now AIA) Canberra Chapter Award of Merit in 1982. During the judging, the RAIA considered that the siting of the building created an uncomfortable relationship with neighbouring buildings with the curve of the building facing the car park of the adjoining Gowrie Hostel (now Fenner Hall). However, the ACAT in *212 Northbourne Pty Limited v ACT Heritage Council & Anor* [2016] ACAT 30 considered that the design of the building responded appropriately to the buildings and car park of the adjacent property (at [152]).

The AAA had moved out of the building and occupied another site within the ACT by 1998.

A recent addition to the building is a black painted sun control scaffold along the northern facade. This was added as part of a refurbishment program that also included upgrades to many of the building's systems. The black painted metal frame, while contrasting with the original form and aesthetic, is somewhat sympathetic to the Late Twentieth-Century Late Modern style which can include in its exterior characteristics, "Steelwork exposed and painted" (Apperly, et al. 1994).

## DESCRIPTION

The building sits diagonally across the block in a northwest-southeast orientation which allows pedestrian access across the block and retains a pre-existing treed park in the southwest corner of the block.

It has a reinforced concrete frame supporting a reinforced concrete floor. The services are contained in towers at either end of the building that are made with reinforced concrete and there is a basement parking area.

It has a curved form of aluminium panels and glazing which create a sleek external appearance, however later additions include a detached scaffolding system of sun protection along the northern facade which, while functional, somewhat detracts from the crisp aesthetic of the exterior. The strip windows are double glazed units tinted a dark grey. The architectural team, including builders and suppliers, created a bespoke cladding system, based on Comalco mounting systems modified for this building, that allowed the window panes to be 'slung' between the aluminium sections, creating a frame-free strip of window panes along the entire length of the facade. The aluminium facade continues over the plant area on top of the building so as not to detract from its aesthetic appeal.



The same style of panelling that is used on the exterior of the building is used as a wall covering in the lobby area.

Physical condition and integrity

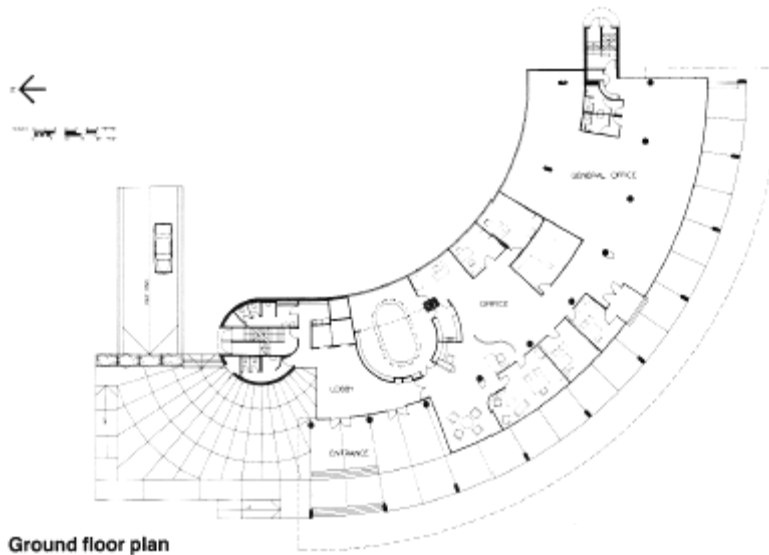
A site visit by ACT Heritage on 13 September 2013 showed the building to be in excellent physical condition and integrity. Some minor staining on a few of the aluminium cladding panels was evident and an external scaffolding sun control system had been erected; neither was significantly detracting from the building or considered permanent.

SITE PLAN



**Image 1.** Former Australian Automobile Association Building, registration boundary (NOTE: the boundary is based on the block boundary).

**IMAGES**



**Image 2.** Former Australian Automobile Association Building ground floor plan. (*Architecture Australia* 1982)



**Image 3.** Former Australian Automobile Association Building from Northbourne Avenue. (ACT Heritage 2013)



**Image 4.** Former Australian Automobile Association Building northern side with the black sun control scaffolding visible on the left in front of the building. (ACT Heritage 2013)

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## REFERENCES

Apperly R, Irving, R, & Reynolds P L (1994), *A Pictorial Guide to Identifying Australian Architecture: styles and terms from 1788 to the present* (revised edition). Angus & Robertson, Sydney.

*Architecture Australia* (1982), Canberra Medallion Commendation. Australian Automobile Association Headquarters, Braddon.

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Maron G (2014), Personal communication via email dated 3 March 2014.

Royal Australian Institute of Architects (n.d.), Register of Significant Twentieth Century Architecture. RSTCA No. R113. CSC Building.

Steele J (1997), *Architecture Today*. Phaidon, London

Taylor J (1990), *Australian Architecture Since 1960*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. National Education Division, Royal Australian Institute of Architects, ACT.