

# Heritage (Decision about Registration of Canberra National Seventh Day Adventist Church, Turner) Notice 2022\*

Notifiable instrument NI2022–302

made under the

Heritage Act 2004, s 40 (Decision about registration)

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## 1 Name of instrument

This instrument is the *Heritage (Decision about Registration of Canberra National Seventh Day Adventist Church, Turner) Notice 2022*.

## 2 Decision about registration

On 2 June 2022, the ACT Heritage Council (the *Heritage Council*) decided to register Canberra National Seventh Day Adventist Church, block 9 section 38, Turner (the *Place*).

## 3 Registration details of the Place

The registration details of the Place are in the schedule.

## 4 Reasons for the decision

The Heritage Council is satisfied on reasonable grounds that the Place has heritage significance as it meets one or more of the heritage significance criteria in section 10 of the *Heritage Act 2004*. A detailed statement of reasons including an assessment against the heritage significance criteria is provided in the schedule.

## 5 Commencement

This instrument commences on the day after its notification day.

\*Name amended under Legislation Act, s 60

**6 Date registration takes effect**

The registration of the Place takes effect on 2 June 2022.

**7 Revocation**

The *Heritage (Decision about Provisional Registration of Canberra National Seventh Day Adventist Church, Turner) Notice 2022 (NI2022—73)* is revoked.

Edwina Jans  
A/g Secretary (as delegate for)  
ACT Heritage Council  
2 June 2022

**Schedule**

**(See sections 3 and 4)**

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ACT Heritage Council

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

For the purposes of s 40 of the *Heritage Act 2004*, an entry to the heritage register has been prepared by the ACT Heritage Council for the following place:

**CANBERRA NATIONAL SEVENTH DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH**

**BLOCK 9, SECTION 38, TURNER**

**DATE OF REGISTRATION**

2 June 2022 Notifiable Instrument: 2022–

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

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

#### LOCATION OF THE PLACE

Canberra National Seventh Day Adventist Church, 1-3 Macleay St, Block 9, Section 38, Turner.

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This statement refers to the description of the place as required in s 12 (c) of the *Heritage Act 2004*. The attributes described in this section form part of the heritage significance of the place. For the purposes of s. 12(c) of the *Heritage Act 2004*, the boundary of the place is at Image 1.

#### DESCRIPTION OF THE PLACE

Canberra National Seventh Day Adventist Church, consisting of the following attributes:

The architectural elements of the church, designed by Ken Woolley, that are specific to the Late Twentieth-Century Ecclesiastical style (1960-):

- traditional rectangular plan shape,
- use of brick, timber and steel,
- plain wall surfaces,
- unbroken straight lines emphasising verticality, and
- glazing with vertically proportioned panes.

The architectural elements of the church, designed by Ken Woolley, that are specific to the Late Twentieth-Century Sydney Regional style (1960-):

- asymmetrical massing,
- clerestory windows,
- skillion roof form, clad in square profile sheet metal, and
- textures and colours generally natural or neutral.

The architectural elements of the church, designed by Ken Woolley, that are unique to his design:

- The courtyard pool and its relationship to the interior space, particularly its position higher than the internal seating area,
- The presentation of light within the interior space, including the light fall from the long high windows and the reflection of the external reflection pool on the internal walls,
- The white walls and dark floor colour,
- The prominent baptismal font design and its central placement, and
- The clean lines, simple forms and neutral colour palette associated with the interior fittings, including the low, straight lines of the wooden seating and the large, round, white light fixtures.

The church building and the pool form the core heritage significance of this Place. In the context of any proposed developments elsewhere in the church complex, the Council will not focus its attention on changes except insofar as the proposal may impact the heritage significance of the church building and the pool. Factors that will be considered are those relating to the relationship of the church building to its setting that were integral components of Woolley's original design, including:

- The angle of the rooflines reflected in the church and the church hall (original church),
- The u-shaped arrangement of buildings around the pool and courtyard and the low-line of the church

- amenities wing that connects the main church and the church hall, and
  - The simple treatment of the frontage of the church on Gould Street and the relationship of this to the neighbouring Holy Trinity Church.
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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

Canberra National Seventh Day Adventist Church, designed by the prominent Australian architect Ken Woolley, is an excellent example of Modernist church design incorporating characteristics of the Late Twentieth-Century Ecclesiastical and Late Twentieth-Century Sydney Regional Styles. Its design integrates a combination of these architectural elements and unique attributes related to its function as a Seventh Day Adventist Church. It is thought to be the only church of its kind in Australia that incorporates symbolic aspects of the Seventh Day Adventist liturgy.

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### CONSERVATION OBJECTIVE

The guiding conservation objective is that Canberra National Seventh Day Adventist Church shall be conserved and appropriately managed in a manner respecting its 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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### REASON FOR REGISTRATION

The Council has assessed the Canberra National Seventh Day Adventist Church, Turner against the heritage significance criteria and is satisfied that the place is likely to have heritage significance when assessed against criteria [d, f] under s 10 of the *Heritage Act 2004*.

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### ASSESSMENT AGAINST THE HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA

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

In assessing the heritage significance of Canberra National Seventh Day Adventist Church, the Council considered:

- the Council's *Heritage Assessment Policy* (March 2018);
- information provided by a site inspection on 2 December 2021 by ACT Heritage; and
- the report by ACT Heritage titled, *Background Information Canberra National Seventh Day Adventist Church*, June 2022, 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;**

The Council has assessed Canberra National Seventh Day Adventist Church against criterion (a) and

is not satisfied that the place is likely to meet this criterion.

The hall was built in 1958 and was originally used for church services. This building was one of several shown in designs for the church precinct by David W King and approved by the NDCD in 1957, but it was the only building that was built from that plan. This original building remains and is presently used as a church hall as originally intended.

In 1967, Ken Woolley of Ancher, Mortlock and Woolley, was engaged to design a new church. The design reflected several prominent architectural styles of that time and also factors unique to the location, existing buildings, and its function as a Seventh Day Adventist (SDA) church. Building was completed in 1971. Since that time, the building complex has remained relatively close to Ken Woolley's design. Minor updates to furnishes and structure have occurred and an extension to the link building was built within the courtyard. This extension retained the low-profile and vertically orientated windows used in the original façade.

While this Place was central to the development of the SDA Church in the ACT, it cannot be demonstrated that this reflected the broader course or pattern of the ACT's cultural history. Other examples of churches and other ecclesiastical buildings are included on the ACT Heritage Register from the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries that better reflect broad cultural trends that influenced the early development of the ACT, or which constitute good examples of planning decisions, such as the *Church Lands Lease Ordinance 1924*, aimed at ensuring the spiritual needs of the community were met.

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

The Council has assessed Canberra National Seventh Day Adventist Church against criterion (b) and is not satisfied that the place is likely to meet this criterion.

Although Canberra National Seventh Day Adventist Church is a good example of Late Twentieth-Century Ecclesiastical Style (1960–) buildings in the ACT, these building types are not considered to be uncommon, or rare. Other examples of this style listed on the ACT Heritage Register include:

- Holy Trinity Church, Lyneham (Lutheran, built 1961). Designed by Frederick Romberg of Grounds Romberg and Boyd.
- St Joseph's Catholic Church, O'Connor (built 1973). Designed by Kevin J. Curtin of Kevin J. Curtin & Partners.

In the context of ecclesiastical buildings in general in the ACT, there are 13 other places currently included on the ACT Heritage Register. The places listed have been identified by the Council as good or excellent examples of certain styles of ecclesiastical architecture, are still occupied or in use, are in good condition and are adequately maintained. As such, the Council does not consider ecclesiastical architecture to be an endangered aspect 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;**

The Council has assessed Canberra National Seventh Day Adventist Church against criterion (c) and is not satisfied that the place is likely to meet this criterion.

There is insufficient evidence before the Council to demonstrate that Canberra National Seventh Day Adventist Church, 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 the place 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. What ability the place does have to provide information about the history of the development of the ACT's religious institutions 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;**

The Council has assessed Canberra National Seventh Day Adventist Church against criterion (d) and is satisfied that the place is likely to meet this criterion.

Canberra National Seventh Day Adventist Church is a good example of Late Twentieth-Century Ecclesiastical Style (1960 –) architecture, expressing several of the style's key attributes. While there are other churches in Canberra that represent earlier expressions of this style, this church is unique in that it also incorporates clear elements of the Late Twentieth-Century Sydney Regional style (1960-).

There are several characteristics related to these specific styles of Modernist ecclesiastical architecture evident in the exterior of the church. The use of familiar materials, characteristic of the Late Twentieth-Century Ecclesiastical style, can be seen in the choice of the red-brown Bowral brick, the painted western red cedar used in the walls and window joinery, and the roll-formed, brown, steel decking used for the roof. The Late Twentieth-Century Sydney Regional style (1960-) is evident in the asymmetrical shape, a lack of concern in the façade as a presentation front, and the skillion roof form.

The outer wall of the church, facing Gould Street, has clerestory windows, which are characteristic of the Late Twentieth-Century Sydney Regional style. However, the vertical proportions of the windows are a feature of the Late Twentieth-Century Ecclesiastical style. The lower windows of the church and in the link building were also vertically proportioned maintaining consistency with this style. Other elements of the building also use unbroken lines that emphasise the verticality, a feature which is characteristic of the Late Twentieth-Century Ecclesiastical style.

There are also characteristics related to the Late Twentieth-Century Ecclesiastical style evident in the interior of the church, including: the orientation of the seating in a traditional rectangular fashion, at a right-angle to the high outer wall of the prism and the plain, white surfaces of the walls.

Although the characteristics linking the Late Twentieth-Century Sydney Regional style and the Late Twentieth-Century Ecclesiastical style to the Canberra National Seventh Day Adventist Church are clear, the selective way in which elements of these styles were combined and adapted to the specific location are characteristic of Woolley's design process. In designing a building, Woolley did not focus on any particular architectural style, but rather his primary focus was on the place and location to which he applied selected elements of various architectural styles.

The importance of this place in demonstrating the principal characteristics of its class is demonstrated by the fact that it received a Royal Australian Institute of Architects (RAIA) Twenty-five Year Award in 1996 by the ACT Chapter. This award acknowledged the architectural

significance of the building when designed and that it continued to demonstrate those significant architectural qualities over twenty-five years.

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

The Council has assessed Canberra National Seventh Day Adventist Church against criterion (e) and is not satisfied that the place is likely to meet this criterion.

There is some evidence to demonstrate that the aesthetic aspects of the Canberra National Seventh Day Adventist Church are valued by the architectural community. It is featured in architectural publications including *The Master Architect Series IV: Ken Woolley and Ancher Mortlock & Woolley, Selected and Current Work* edited by Stephen Dobney and *Canberra Architecture* by Andrew Metcalf. Furthermore, its value to the Australian Institute of Architects (the Institute) is evidenced by its inclusion on its Register of Significant Twentieth Century Architecture (RSTCA No. R114).

However, the Council does not consider the architectural community to be a cultural group for the purposes of the criterion. 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'. There is insufficient evidence before the Council at this time to demonstrate that the aesthetic characteristics of Canberra National Seventh Day Adventist Church are valued by a specific cultural group of this nature or the broader ACT Community.

While there is some appreciation of the architectural symbolism of the church and the features associated with these within the SDA community, it is not possible to demonstrate that as a whole the community highly values the aesthetic characteristics of the building, nor could the SDA community be defined as a cultural group for the purposes of this criterion.

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

The Council has assessed Canberra National Seventh Day Adventist Church against criterion (f) and is satisfied that the place is likely to meet this criterion.

The Canberra National Seventh Day Adventist Church creatively reflects aspects of the SDA liturgy through its architectural design. The architect, Ken Woolley, put deliberate consideration into incorporating this symbolism into the design. It is thought to be the only church in Australia in which the architectural design intentionally reflects the symbolism of the SDA doctrines.

Water is used to emphasise the central place of baptism by immersion within the SDA doctrine. Because of the placement of the massive external buttresses rising from the courtyard pool, it can be interpreted that the building itself is rising from the water. To enter the church each person must descend steps located in the courtyard to reach the main doors that are situated lower than the external pool. Once inside the church the seating for the congregation is also situated lower than the external pool and the focus of the congregants is upon the baptismal font on the right side of the rostrum at the front of the room.

The deliberate play of light within the interior combined with the white walls was intended to symbolise purity. The clerestory windows in the high wall facing Gould Street provided very high



light, light was also reflected from the water of the exterior pool providing movement through the reflections on the inner walls which served both a symbolic function and softens the internal light. Light was also focused on the immersion font through the prominent and dramatically shaped skylight.

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

The Council has assessed Canberra National Seventh Day Adventist Church against criterion (g) and is not satisfied that the place is likely to meet this criterion.

There is insufficient evidence that the Canberra National Seventh Day Adventist Church has a strong or special association with the ACT community, or a cultural group in the ACT for social, cultural or spiritual reasons. The Council acknowledges that the place is valued by the Australian Institute of Architects (AIA) and other architects, however, they do not constitute a cultural group nor can they be considered representative of the ACT community as a whole.

While, by virtue of being the first and most prominent SDA church in Canberra, this place was central to the development of the denomination in the region there is no evidence to suggest that the association to this place is particularly valued by members of the SDA community for social, cultural or spiritual reasons. Furthermore, even if a strong or special association of the place to the SDA community could be established, they do not constitute a cultural group for the purposes of assessment against this criterion. Nor can any specific people or events that could be considered important to the broader ACT community be associated with the place.

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

The Council has assessed Canberra National Seventh Day Adventist Church against criterion (h) and is not satisfied that the place is likely to meet this criterion.

While Ken Woolley is a nationally recognised architect who played a prominent role in the profession in the late twentieth century there is no evidence to suggest that his association with this place demonstrated a strong, notable or influential role in the history of Canberra. Woolley undertook regular commissions within Canberra and there is no evidence to suggest that his association with this place was any more special than with any of his other works.

# SITE PLAN



**Image 1** - Canberra National Seventh Day Adventist Church site boundary. The church building and the pool form the core heritage significance of this Place (as shown by the thin yellow line), any proposed developments elsewhere in the church complex will be considered insofar as they may impact the heritage significance of the church building and the pool.