

Heritage (Decision about Registration of Canberra's Precast Concrete Bus Shelters, various locations) Notice 2026

Notifiable instrument NI2026-368

made under the

Heritage Act 2004, s 40 (Decision about registration)

1 Name of instrument

This instrument is the *Heritage (Decision about Registration of Canberra's Precast Concrete Bus Shelters, various locations) Notice 2026*.

2 Commencement

This instrument commences on the day after its notification day.

3 Decision about registration

On 29 July 2026, the ACT Heritage Council (the *council*) decided to register Canberra's Precast Concrete Bus Shelters, various locations (the *objects*).

4 Registration details of the objects

The registration details of the objects are in schedule 1.

5 Reasons for the decision

The council is satisfied on reasonable grounds that the objects have heritage significance as they meet 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 schedule 1.

6 Date registration takes effect

The decision to register the objects takes effect on the day after the council made its decision.

7 Revocation

This instrument revokes the *Heritage (Decision about Provisional Registration of Canberra's Precast Concrete Bus Shelters, various locations) Notice 2026* (NI2026—172).

Dr Mary Clare Swete Kelly
Secretary (as delegate for)
ACT Heritage Council
29 July 2026

Schedule 1

(See sections 4 and 5)



ACT Heritage Council

**AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY
HERITAGE REGISTER
Final 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 objects:

CANBERRA'S PRECAST CONCRETE BUS SHELTERS

Collection of moveable objects. Typically located at various bus stop and works depot locations in the ACT.

Transport Canberra depot: 255 Canberra Avenue, Fyshwick

Date of Registration

29 July 2026

Notifiable Instrument: NI2026

Copies of the Register Entry are available online at <https://www.act.gov.au/environment/heritage/act-heritage-register> and at ACT Heritage.

For further information please contact:

The Secretary
ACT Heritage Council

Email heritage@act.gov.au

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Telephone 13 22 81

Statement of heritage significance

Canberra's pre-cast concrete bus shelters are distinctive objects that hold architectural, historical, and cultural significance across the ACT. Designed by architect Clement Cummings and selected by the National Capital Development Commission (NCDC) in 1975, these shelters reflect a unique moment in Canberra's urban development, shaped by the Whitlam Government's vision for decentralised urban planning and improved public services.

In the more than 50 years since 1975, most bus shelters remain intact and in use — a testament to their enduring quality and functional design. Their brutalist aesthetic is expressed through simplicity, materiality, and modular construction. The shelters were designed to be relocatable, serving utilitarian needs while maintaining a strong visual identity. Minor adaptations over time have improved accessibility and safety while preserving the original design intent. Their integrity remains high. Recognisable by their distinctive form and colour, the bus shelters have become synonymous with Canberra's identity.

Beyond their architectural and functional value, the precast concrete bus shelters embody the integrated design and development of Canberra through the extensive development under the NCDC. They are important not only for their design characteristics but also for their deep community significance and representation of a progressive planning era.

This statement refers to the heritage significance of the objects as required in s 12(d) of the *Heritage Act 2004* (the Heritage Act).

Location of the objects

Canberra's pre-cast concrete bus shelters are typically located at bus stops and in the Transport Canberra works depot ready for deployment.

As they are moveable objects designed and intended to change locations, the recorded Heritage Register location is the Transport Canberra depot: 255 Canberra Avenue, Fyshwick.

This statement refers to the name and location of the objects as required in ss 12(a) and (b) of the Heritage Act.

Description of the objects

This statement refers to the description of the objects as required by s 12(c) of the Heritage Act. The attributes described in this section form part of the heritage significance of the objects.

Canberra's pre-cast concrete bus shelters have the following attributes of significance:

- Precast concrete bus shelters as designed by Clement Cummings (Refer to Background document, drawing numbers CAS76/593, 7422CC1B, CC2B, FG4 dated 14/11/74).
- Cream and orange colour scheme
- Shelters are designed to be moveable to suit the transport network
- The Collection varies according to Series and condition and can include external moulding around windows and internal fibreglass bench seating and may include community murals on the interior surface

Conservation objective

The guiding conservation objective is that Canberra's pre-cast concrete bus shelters shall be conserved and appropriately managed in a manner respecting their heritage significance.

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

For further information on guidelines applicable to the objects, or for advice on proposed works or development, please contact ACT Heritage via email at heritage.registrations@act.gov.au or via 13 22 81.

Reason for registration

This statement refers to the heritage significance of the objects as required by s 12(d) of the Heritage Act.

The Council has assessed Canberra's Precast Concrete Bus Shelters against the heritage significance criteria and is satisfied on reasonable grounds that the objects have heritage significance when assessed against criteria (d), (e), and (g) under s 10 of the Heritage Act. An object is considered to have heritage significance if it meets one or more of the criteria.

Table 1 Criteria that the Council consider have been met.

CRITERION	(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)	(e)	(f)	(g)	(h)
MET	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No

Assessment against the heritage significance criteria

This section refers to the heritage significance of the objects as required by s 12(d) of the Heritage Act.

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

In assessing the heritage significance of Canberra's Precast Concrete Bus Shelters, the Council considered:

- the original nomination and documentary evidence supplied by the nominator;
- the Council's *Heritage Assessment Policy* (March 2018);
- information provided by a site inspection on 15 May 2025 by ACT Heritage;
- the report by ACT Heritage titled, *Background Information Canberra's Precast Concrete Bus Shelters*, October 2025, containing photographs and information on history, description, condition and integrity;
- information and comments received during the public consultation period under s 37 of the Act on the provisional registration of Canberra's Precast Concrete Bus Shelters.

According to s 10 of the Heritage Act, a place or object has heritage significance if it meets one or more of the following criteria. Future research may alter the findings of this assessment. The Council's assessment against the criteria specified in s 10 of the Heritage Act is as follows.

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

Does not meet criterion.

The Council is not satisfied on reasonable grounds that the objects meet this criterion.

Canberra's pre-cast concrete bus shelters represent the egalitarian approach to public architecture by the National Capital Development Commission in the 1970s and its vision for Canberra as a great place to live and work. The changing locations of the bus shelters over the past 50 years mirror the changing history of settlement and growth across the city, made possible by the 1970s federal Whitlam Government's model for reform. While the Cummings design met the need for shelters to follow the expansion of the public transport system according to the Y Plan, there is insufficient evidence that the bus shelters have influenced the course or pattern of the ACT's cultural or natural history, or that they have been noteworthy exponents of this era. Rather, the bus shelters have been a part of that history, with an enduring functional design.

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

Does not meet criterion.

The Council is not satisfied on reasonable grounds that the objects meet this criterion.

When the Cummings-designed concrete bus shelters were first introduced in 1975, they were of an uncommon design and were relatively few. Since then, 400-500 Cummings-designed bus shelters have been placed across Canberra. At the time of assessment there are approximately 480 in operation. Based on the number of shelters and managing authority's advice that they are not planning to retire the shelters; the structures are not considered to be rare or endangered. The process of their relocation includes refreshing and restoring the shelters by using new techniques and materials as they become available. Importantly, the shelters have continued to be transportable so they can be relocated to meet the transport and community needs of the city.

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

Does not meet criterion.

The Council is not satisfied on reasonable grounds that the objects meet this criterion.

A feature of the pre-cast concrete bus shelters is their ability to be relocated. As such, the sites are unlikely to contain substantial physical evidence of archaeological or other defined research interest.

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

MEETS CRITERION.

The Council is satisfied on reasonable grounds that the objects meet this criterion.

The Canberra pre-cast concrete bus shelters have become a class of objects within the Canberra landscape. They demonstrate the defining characteristics of a bus shelter, while at the same time being notable as unusual examples of bus shelters. Their moveability is an important variation in the history of bus shelters in Canberra, and their brutalist design sets them apart from other bus shelters in Canberra and Australia.

While a select few concrete bus shelters (often using other colour schemes) exist outside Canberra, they remain closely associated with Canberra - their place of origin. Nowhere else in Australia is this design of concrete bus shelter used as extensively as in Canberra. Their brutalist design and materiality, high integrity, extensive presence, as well as moveability make them a distinct class of Canberra objects.

The large number of surviving concrete shelters are a testament to the durability of Cummings' well-known design. The bus shelters have largely retained their integrity after more than 5 decades of use. Despite attempts to replace the bus shelters with modern alternatives, the Cummings bus shelters have prevailed. The remaining shelters (around 480 in operation at the

time of the assessment) are in good condition and are maintained by the ACT Government.

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

MEETS CRITERION.

The Council is satisfied on reasonable grounds that the objects meet this criterion.

Canberrans have demonstrated a fondness for Cummings' unique and enduring functional and iconic design. The modest Canberra pre-cast concrete bus shelters embody aesthetic characteristics of 20th century brutalist architecture that evoke a strong human response. The use of materials (pre-cast concrete and fibreglass), the block-like structure and the simplicity of form represent Brutalism. Although Brutalism has not always been popular in Canberra, the aesthetic characteristics of the Cummings bus shelters have become a valued and enduring symbol of Canberra. The unusual design is immediately identifiable and recognisable as a Canberra landmark.

The iconic shape, style and colours of the bus shelters are commonly seen on popular culture and tourist merchandise representing Canberra. Since the 1980s some shelters have featured art murals painted on the internal walls. These community-led murals, sanctioned by the ACT Government, have been a way for schools and community groups to identify their local community through the bus shelters, while retaining the shelters' iconic structure and outward appearance.

Their distinctive form has been replicated in architecture and public spaces, paying homage to the exceptional and rare design. They are widely recognised for their artistic appeal and have received the Sir Roy Grounds Award for Enduring Architecture by the RAIA.

The work of artist Trevor Dickinson prominently features the bus shelters through his Beautiful Bus Shelters of Canberra series. The series has been featured in an exhibition by the Canberra Museum and Gallery in 2018 and reproduced on marketing products sold at cultural and tourism centres around the ACT. His colourful depictions represent the playful aesthetic appeal and iconic nature of the bus shelters to the ACT community.

The bus shelters are valued by the ACT community for the combination of their structural, functional and aesthetic qualities. They are considered iconic landmarks and their presence in the streetscape contributes a sense of Canberra having a unique identity when compared to other Australian cities.

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

Does not meet criterion.

The Council is not satisfied on reasonable grounds that the objects meet this criterion.

The Canberra bus shelters, made from pre-cast concrete, with a distinctive cylindrical form and polycarbonate windows, are a distinctive design. While the design is for relocatable objects, the use of available materials (concrete, polycarbonate and fibreglass) and existing technology (locally made pre-cast concrete) is of the period and does not meet the threshold of inclusion for this criterion.

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

MEETS CRITERION.

The Council is satisfied on reasonable grounds that the objects meet this criterion.

The Canberra Pre-Cast Concrete Bus Shelters have a strong association with the ACT community for social and cultural reasons, spanning multiple generations. This community association is evidenced by the official enduring art mural projects, occurring since 1982. The iconic bus shelters have been relocated to new suburbs to foster a sense of belonging for residents and to identify the provision of bus services. This connectedness to the shelters contributes to a deep sense of community stewardship. The use of the image of the Cummings' bus shelters for popular jewellery and homewares further illustrates the value the community places on them.

Despite some negative reactions to the design and the materials from the public in the mid-1970s, Canberrans have developed a special association with the distinctive designs of the bus shelters, which have remained essentially unchanged for fifty years. The shelters have endured both physically and culturally, becoming a beloved and recognisable feature of Canberra's suburban landscape. In 2026 the community's attachment to the bus shelters is demonstrable, enduring, continuing and out of the ordinary for street furniture.

The bus shelters create a shared sense of place and identity for Canberrans, with the likeness of the bus shelters appearing in promotional photos of Canberra and on popular marketing and tourism products such as playing cards, jewellery, figurines, tea towels, tattoos and games.

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

Does not meet criterion.

The Council is not satisfied on reasonable grounds reasonably believes that the objects meet this criterion.

The design of the pre-cast concrete bus shelters is recognisable in the broad Canberra community. The landmark cream and orange Canberra Pre-Cast Concrete Bus Shelters are

considered architect Clement Cummings' most familiar work.

The achievements of Clement Cummings do not however relate to the bus shelters themselves, and Cummings' achievements have not been prominent in shaping the history of the ACT, as required by this criterion.