



ACT Heritage Council

BACKGROUND INFORMATION THE CIVIC SQUARE PRECINCT (BLOCKS 3, 18-23 AND 26 SECTION 19, CITY)

At its meeting of 19 September 2019 the ACT Heritage Council decided that the Civic Square Precinct was eligible for provisional registration.

The information contained in this report was considered by the ACT Heritage Council in assessing the nomination for the Civic Square Precinct against the heritage significance criteria outlined in s10 of the *Heritage Act 2004*.

Planning for the Precinct – building on the Griffin framework

The Civic Square Precinct (see Figure 18 p.20) is located on the lower eastern slopes of City Hill in the Canberra Central district and within that, the division of City. The area was originally named Civic Centre in Walter Burley Griffin's 1911 plan for Canberra, in which it was to be the civic administration area for the city, separate to the Commonwealth government area on the other side of the proposed lake, including tree lined streets and avenues, a city hall, courts, jail, post office, banks, offices, plazas and other functions essential to the day to day running of a modern city.

When Prime Minister Bruce opened the Civic Shopping Centre on 6 December 1927 (today the Melbourne and Sydney Buildings) he said, "I dislike the name Civic Centre, and I think that a much better name can be given to the place...and we must give names which are original and appropriate." (*Canberra Times* 6 December 1927:1) This possibly foreshadowed the Canberra National Memorials Committee's 8 December 1927 report, with Bruce as the chair, on naming Canberra's streets and suburbs that formed the basis of the 20 September 1928 determination under the *National Memorials Ordinance 1928* officially naming the Division as City (noting that the Naming Committee also had control of approvals, rejections and alterations of any naming proposals). Despite this, in 1961 the new city square was officially gazetted as "Civic Square" by the National Memorials Committee (headed by Gordon Freeth at the time) and the general area is still colloquially referred to as "Civic" almost a century later.



Figure 1 Griffin's 1913 plan with the main axial lines marked in red

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Walter Burley Griffin functionally defined the hill containing the Vernon trigonometrical station, later named City Hill, as the centre of civic administration in his plan for Canberra, linking with the mercantile centre at Russell and the Capitol on Capitol Hill (Figure 1). These three elements represent the major centres or nodes of the National Triangle in Griffin's plan (Wigmore 1963:70-71). The exact details of how this was to be designed is not known, but the location of the Square on the slope of City Hill and on the axis from City Hill to Mount Ainslie, locks the Square into the symbolic framework and the landscape elements of Griffin's plan.



Figure 2 Griffin's 1913 plan showing axial lines and block structure around City Hill (Reid, 2002:110)

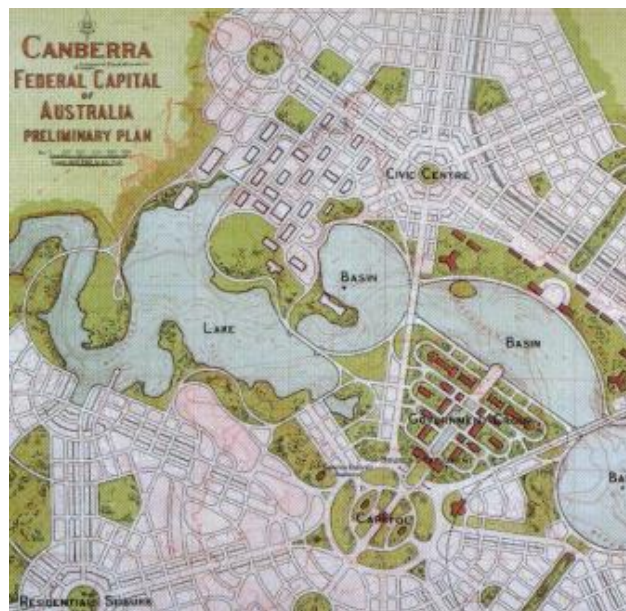


Figure 3 Griffin's 1918 plan (right) including the laneways between the major roads (Reid, 2002:114)

Canberra's subsequent development away from Griffin's plan is well documented (e.g. Reid 2002, Gibbney 1988, etc.) with progress being halted by political, economic and global influences. Griffin's 1913 plan no longer showed a building on City Hill but simply a green space replacing the municipal administration building shown on his 1911 Competition winning plan. The hill is designated 'Civic Place' on Griffin's 1918 plan and so named on the gazetted plan adopted by the Federal Capital Advisory Committee (FCAC) in 1925. Deliberations by the FCAC included the subdivision of City Hill with the top of the hill as the civic place and the lower slopes for the provision of all sites for buildings of public character (Federal Capital Advisory Committee 1922:1-2).

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The National Capital Planning and Development Committee (NCPDC), established in 1938, recognised that the development of the city centre was a very important factor in the future development of Canberra. This development would establish the city as the focal administrative and business area, taking focus away from the centres of Kingston and Manuka and was supported by the increasing populations in Ainslie, Turner and Braddon.

R. J. Keith Harris, one of the professional architects on the NCPDC, developed a study for the development of the City Hill Area in 1946. While Harris' design was not developed, one of the NCPDC's decisions had a profound effect on the area today; the prioritising of through traffic (Reid, 2002:203-207). Continuing traffic from Northbourne and Commonwealth Avenues through the internal ring road (Vernon Circle) effectively split the area into east and west halves, making access difficult and reducing City Hill's suitability for future civic use. Griffin's plan for City Hill to be the municipal centre was also hampered by the absence of a local government that would build and occupy a city hall or have use for any of the civic buildings intended for the area for more than half a century.

The isolation from the initial development at City Hill and on the south side as well as the abandonment of the proposed railway shifted Griffin's market centre from Russell to the current commercial hub of the 'City', or 'Civic', on the northeast of City Hill (Peter Freeman, 2009:2:6).

City Hill Proposals

Numerous proposals for City Hill, including the Civic Square Precinct, were mooted in 1940, 1943, 1946 and 1947. These proposals included a range of minor and major modifications to Griffin's Canberra plans, removing or adding roads, changing the shape of City Hill and variations of where to locate civic buildings; however, none of them resulted in action on the ground, nor had much influence in planning directions (Peter Freeman, 2009:2:10; Reid 2002:204-207). In 1951, in response to the Senior Town Planner Trevor Gibson's development plan, the NCPDC still made no actual decisions on action, but did make the following observations that remained influential when development actually took place a decade later:

- that Civic Square be located at the southern end of Northbourne Avenue being the virtual entrance to the city and facing the proposed city hall;
- vistas at the ends of the avenues to be left open to free the view of City Hill from the approaches; and,
- buildings on the inner side of London Circuit be designed with adequate façades presented towards City Hill (Daley 1951).

Civic and Cultural Proposals of the McCallum Report

In 1955, a Senate Select Committee chaired by Senator J. A. McCallum was appointed to inquire into, and report on, the development of Canberra. It recommended that the land on City Hill be reserved exclusively for civic administration including buildings for a legislative council, local government authorities, courts of justice, and any other buildings needed for the civic administration. The report also recommended the establishment of a "city hall" to provide for large public gatherings, musical recitals etc. and that steps be taken to establish cultural institutions such as a national theatre and opera house. It was suggested to the Committee that provisions of cultural facilities be considered where "under a modern method art displays and concert and repertory facilities could be provided for in one building". This 'multi-purpose' method involved the construction of the main stage and seating facilities for repertory, concert, operatic or other such purposes, and the construction of a large foyer which would be used by patrons during intervals and be hung with works of art.

The Senate Select Committee Report (1955:38) also commented on the early design controls for Civic which aimed at creating harmony between the separate functional units. These controls provided for two-storied buildings with a continuous arcade treatment on the ground floor and a middle courtyard approached by two arched entrances which secured continuity of the façade, as can be seen in the Sydney and Melbourne buildings. The report resulted in two moves which dramatically increased the speed and extent of Canberra's development. Firstly, Sir William Holford, an eminent British town planner, was invited to survey Canberra's future development. Second was the establishment of the National Capital Development Commission (NCDC) in 1957.

Table 1: Civic Square Timeline, from the NCDC's 1958 implementation

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Date	Event
7 July 1958	NCDC calls for tenders for the North and South Buildings (Civic Offices)
8 February 1960	Minister for the Interior Mr Freeth announced the NCDC's proposal for Civic Square to include a fountain and sculpture from Tom Bass
6 March 1961	Civic Offices taken over by the Department of the Interior
12 March 1961	Civic Square used for the inaugural Canberra Day Oration which saw the Square's first public assembly
20 March 1961	Civic Library opens
6 September 1961	Canberra's Coat of Arms designed by Lenore Bass installed
21 September 1961	Civic Square gazetted
15 December 1961	Ethos statue unveiled
24 June 1965	Canberra Theatre opening night
1979	Theatre link built with ticket office, gallery space and increased foyer space
24 January 1981	Multicultural Festival starts, focused in Civic Square as part of Australia Day celebrations
1986	The Canberra Centre complex builds across Ainslie Avenue and the City Hill-Mount Ainslie axis
1989	ACT self-government
1992-1993	South building renovated to accommodate the new ACT Legislative Assembly, extending into the courtyard, splitting it in two
16 May 1998	Rebuilt Playhouse opened along with major refurbishment to the auditorium, foyer and link
1998	Canberra Museum and Gallery (CMAG) opens after extensive renovations to the North Building as well as a multicultural centre and office accommodation for Craft ACT, the National Trust, Canberra District and Historical Society and Canberra Arts Marketing. The expansion significantly fills in the internal courtyard of the north building.
1998	Rectangular pool replaced with two quarter arc pools with fountains and two sections of grass and trees planted
2006	New Civic Library (encroaching into the Square and removing one of the landscaped areas) and theatre link with public stairs over the top linking City Hill with the axis
2006	Upgrades to the South Building for the Legislative Assembly and in the North Building the Theo Notaras Multicultural Centre, additional works carried out on Ainslie Place (the eastern extension of the Square across London Circuit that used to be part of Ainslie Avenue)

The Civic Square Precinct

The Department of the Interior was forced to vacate its premises at Acton in 1959 in order to provide more space for the Canberra Community Hospital. Melbourne architects Yuncken & Freeman Brothers, Griffiths & Simpson were commissioned by the NCDC to plan an administrative and community focal point for the population of Canberra. The first stage in the development of City Hill as the core of the city area was the construction of Civic Square and the North and South Buildings (originally known as Civic Offices) as a conspicuous feature of the City centre. The project went to tender in late June 1959 and the contract was let in August 1959. Built by Concrete Constructions (Canberra) Pty Ltd, it was completed by February 1961.

Simpson conceived the design of the Square and the boundary buildings as an aesthetic entity, with the approx. 60m x 60m public and ceremonial space bounded by two colonnaded administrative buildings to the north and south, the Canberra Theatre Centre on an upper level podium edged by a set of stairs to the west and London Circuit, edged by commercial buildings, to the east. The dimensions of the Square reflect Griffin's dimensions for Ainslie Avenue, with the square as the terminating urban element on that axis, with City Hill.

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Figure 4 NCDC Plan of Civic Centre 1962 (in NCA, 2004:105). The NCDC structure plan strongly references the spatial framework of the 1913 and 1918 Griffin Plans. This enabled the visual and physical link to City Hill from Ainslie Avenue.

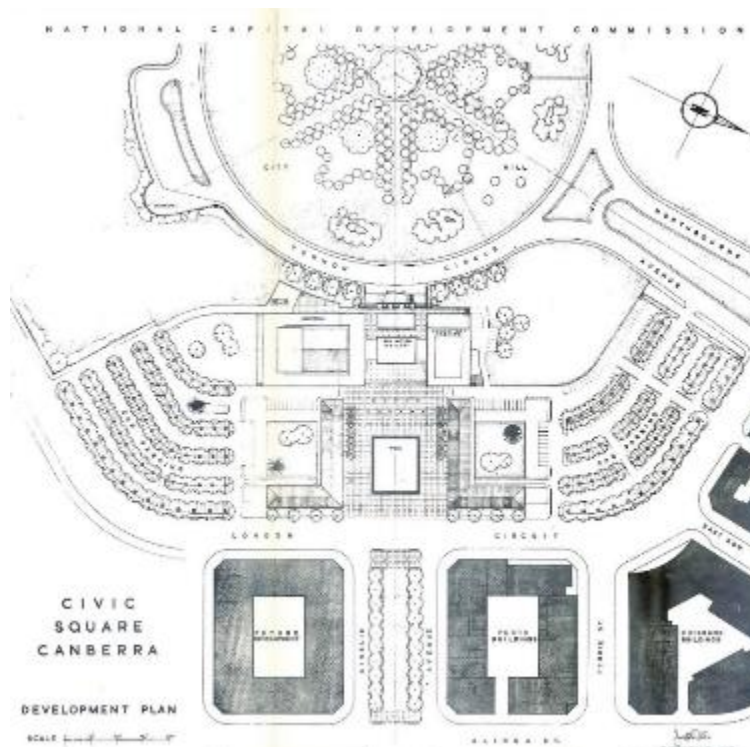


Figure 5 NCDC Civic Square and surrounds Development Plan April 1961.

The furnishing of the open space between the buildings being developed in relation to the scale and texture of the buildings and their environs, the directions of approach, and points of emphasis. The buildings were originally designed with extreme simplicity in L shaped three-story buildings, providing a background for the enrichment provided by a free-standing sculpture, *Ethos*. Less than ten years after their construction they were extended with the

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addition of the same plan in its reverse form. This resulted in two rectangular buildings with central courtyards. The buildings then extended into the courtyards, mostly filling them in: the South Building during the 1993 refurbishment for the Legislative Assembly and the North Building in 1998 during refurbishments for the Canberra Museum and Gallery (CMAG).

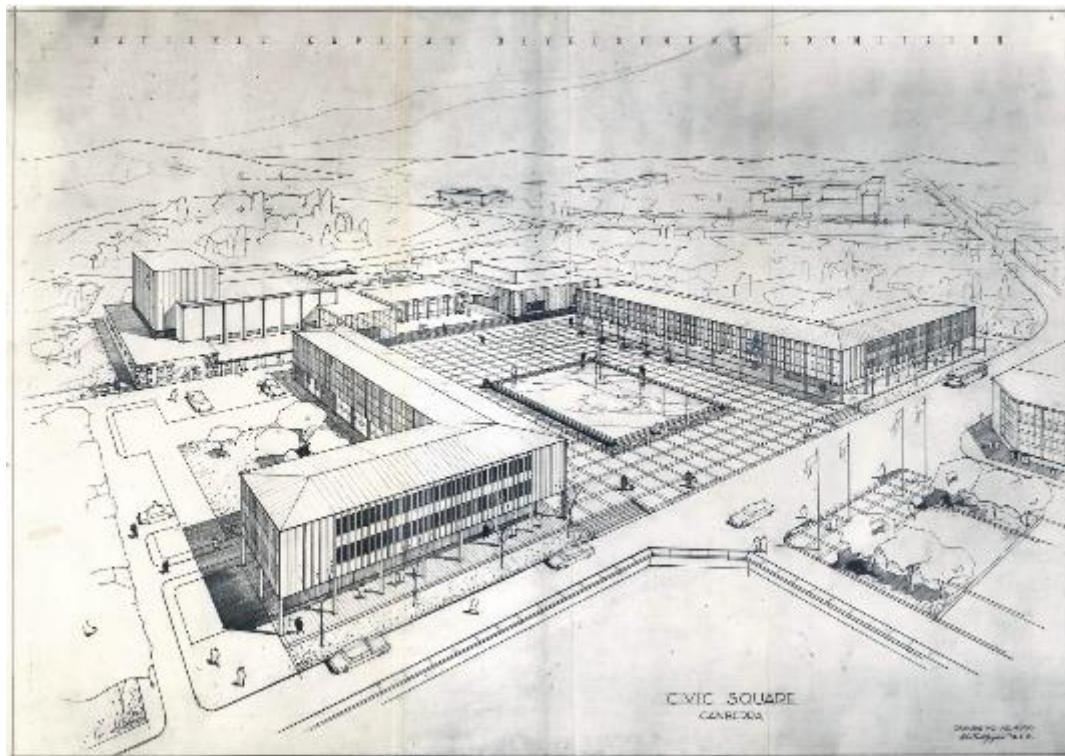


Figure 6 Sketched view across Civic Square with the Law Courts in the background, NCDC, March, 1961.

The ascending sequence of the spaces, which terminate at City Hill, follows a classical layout for civic and cultural spaces where significant buildings are built on elevated platforms or podiums. The Civic Square elevated podium at the western side, with its grand staircase provides prominence to the theatre and the cultural activities of the city, whilst the 'link' provides access to city hill and reflects the foothill nature of the lower slopes of City Hill. Other public buildings and spaces like this in Canberra include The National Library, The High Court, The Australian War Memorial and the original design for the Woden Town Square.

The North Building originally housed a "permanent" Canberra exhibition by the NCDC and a "10,000 volume" lending library, with a focus on children's and young adult's titles. Lands and Survey, Parks and Gardens, Plan Printing and Agriculture and Stock sections of the Department of the Interior occupied the upper floors. The South Building offices were originally designed on lines similar to modern banking procedures, strategically placed on the ground floor to permit easy public access from the Square for payment of rates and motor registration and licence fees. The other occupants of the buildings included the ACT Advisory Council, the Conciliation and Arbitration Commission and the Deputy Crown's Solicitors Department (Civic Offices at Canberra 1962, 91).

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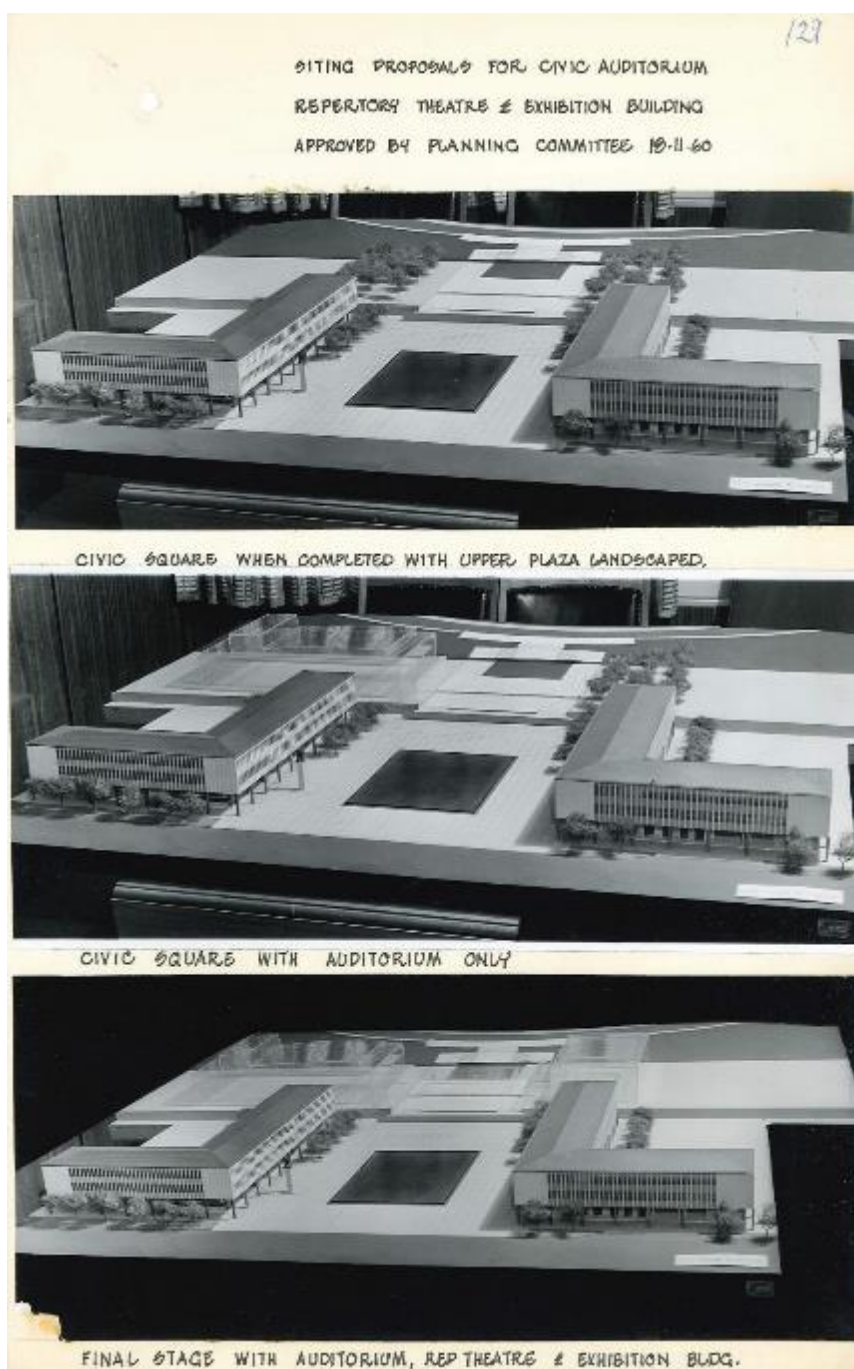


Figure 7 Models of the approved site proposals for Civic Square, showing the construction of the North and South Buildings, the central square and pond, and the upper terraces with the Canberra Theatre Centre. NCDC, 1960. (ACT Archives 001056396860-400_2_folio_129)

The South Building housed the ACT Advisory Council (1962 - 1974), the ACT Legislative Assembly (1974 - 1978), the ACT House of Assembly (1978 - 1988) and following self-government in 1988, the Legislative Assembly (1993 - present). While the ACT did not have a local government until 1988, the South Building had been used for civic and municipal purposes since its beginning with the Commonwealth agencies responsible for the ACT located within. The South Building was extensively refurbished to house the Legislative Assembly in 1992 which included the extension of the courtyard, leaving two small sections of gardens, one open to the public, the other for members only. The refurbishments reinforced the civic role the precinct plays in Canberra.

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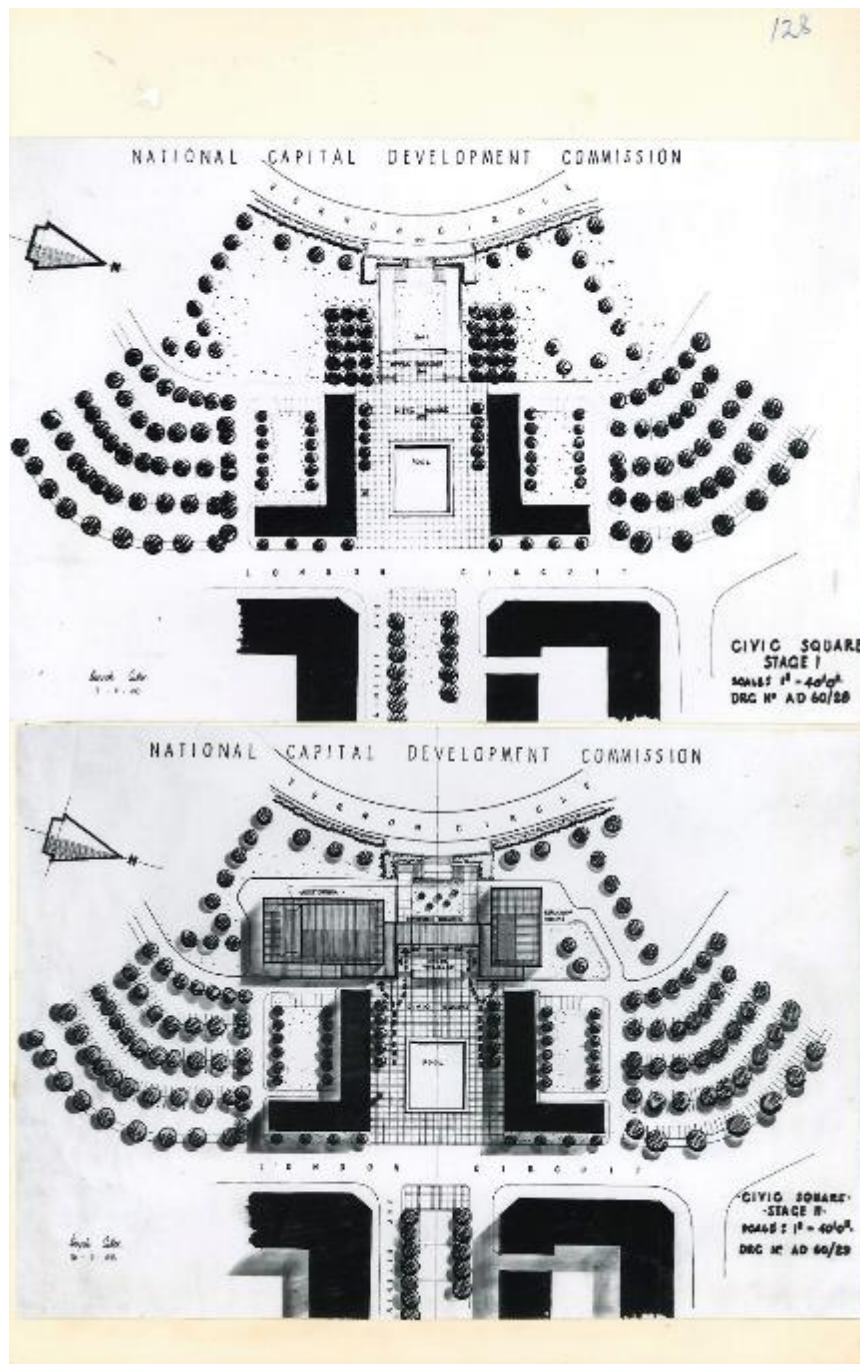


Figure 8 Sketches showing Civic Square Stage 1, & 2. Canberra Theatre Centre, NCDC, Nov 1960. (ACT Archives 0010563968 60-400_2_folio_128)

Other features of the Square include a portico with the ACT Coat of Arms (designed by Lenore Bass) marking the entrance into the Legislative Assembly and the copper sculpture of *Ethos* (by Tom Bass). The sculpture was juxtaposed as an asymmetrical focal point to soften the symmetry of the Square and the North and South Buildings, and a reference to which the furnishings of the Square could be disposed (Simpson 1960). *Ethos* was commissioned from the Australian sculptor Tom Bass and was sponsored by Canberra's business community. It symbolises the 'spirit of the community' and its civic pride. The figure holds a 'bursting sun, symbolic of the culture and enlightenment available through the National University and research and scientific organisations in the Capital' ('Canberra, Your Capital', brochure c1961). It was unveiled in December 1961 and during the 1960s and early 1970s, tourist posters of Canberra extensively featured *Ethos* as a symbol of the city. The sculpture is entered in the ACT Heritage Objects Register.

The original pool was a large rectangular element of 945m² with several fountain jets surrounded by spillage drains and a bed of uneven, polished river rocks set in concrete. It was designed as a major component of the Square,

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conceptually and physically an integral part. It cooled the North and South Buildings through the collection of the water spillage over the sides in the perimeter drains, which was then recycled through the same system used in winter for heating but to cool the buildings instead; however, this system was not successful and was eventually disconnected. In 1998, the pool was replaced with a smaller water feature comprised of two quarter circle arcs with fountain and waterfall components, located at the eastern end of the Square with the two sections divided along the City Hill – Mount Ainslie axis. Clarity of this axis, however, is significantly diminished by the 1989 expansion of a shopping mall which covered the axis with a three story linear gabled glass atrium.



Figure 9 Tom Bass installing Ethos 1961, NAA A1200 L40707

The proportion, scale and external design of the North and South Buildings accorded with contemporary planning policies which required consistency with the format of earlier buildings such as the Sydney and Melbourne Buildings. This was achieved by designing the buildings to sit low and flat, based on a 6m module (6m between columns, 12m overall height, arcade contained in a 3m overhang) with 10 columns along the London Circuit axis and 11 along the other axis which act as the colonnade for the pedestrian arcade from the first floor overhang.

Concessions to more modernist architectural designs are found in the large areas of plate glass on the ground level and the repetitive fenestration of the two upper floors with the mosaic gold tiles of the ground floor open colonnade columns reminiscent of the rich materials used in classical architecture. The style of the buildings was part of a small revival of interest in stripped classical architecture that emerged in the early 1960s after falling out of favour post-war. The stripped classical style used symmetrical massing and repetitive column-like features to create a classical style but without any of the details or decoration. Other examples in the ACT include the National Library, the ACT Law Courts and the Royal Australian Mint.

The Square displays strong classical references to the European piazza and Civic town square in its physical composition; the water feature and statuary and classical multi societal civic urban form in the sequencing of the ascending levels, whilst the 60 metre separation between the North and South Buildings, continues a classical urban design spatial configuration that enables sunlight to enter the square at all times of the year with the height of the buildings at three storeys.

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Figure 10 showing the view across the square taken from Moresby House, with City Hill and Law Courts in the background 1968 (NAA A1200 L78109)



Figure 11 View across Civic Square with the pool and fountain in the foreground and the stairs up to the Canberra Theatre Centre and The National Library and Captain Cook Fountain in the background (ACT Heritage Library Ref#007133)

The Laneways

The laneway connection is a continuation of the laneways set out in Griffin's 1918 plan to enable a physical connection through the blocks designated as Civic and Cultural that run around City Hill.

Canberra Theatre Centre (comprising the Canberra Theatre, The Playhouse, The Link and the Courtyard Studio)

In 1960, the NCDC made a submission to the Minister of the Interior, Gordon Freeth, for the commitment to construct a civic auditorium. A multi-functional auditorium was proposed in response to existing inadequate facilities in Canberra and the demands of the increasing population. The Albert Hall, the Capitol Theatre (since demolished) and

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the various smaller community halls provided the major cultural facilities.

In response, a Cultural Facilities Committee was established, headed by Sir John Overall and included representatives from the Australian Broadcasting Commission, the Elizabethan Theatre Trust, the Australian National University and the Department of the Interior. This Committee recommended the provision "in the National Capital [of] an auditorium to seat 1,200 persons. The auditorium should be designed for requirements of orchestral, philharmonic, and choral performances, for theatrical productions and for use for major conferences and conventions. This building should incorporate a small flat floor hall to accommodate about 200 persons." (NCDC 1960, 6). This recommendation was endorsed by the NCDC.

The 1961 design brief for the Canberra Theatre Centre stated the following:

- the construction of a cultural centre at the head of the new Civic Square, consisting of 1,200 seat auditorium, 300 seat repertory theatre, a small exhibition gallery, together with allied works leading up to Vernon Circle, public toilets and landscaping to complete the upper plaza of Civic Square;
- civic design requirements were required to be fulfilled and to preserve and emphasise the visual axis along Ainslie Avenue to City Hill;
- the ultimate proposal for the development of the city is the provision of a city hall on top of City Hill;
- the Canberra Theatre Centre to be architecturally complementary to the North and South Buildings; and
- provide a visual enclosure to the head of the Square in the near view, whilst retaining the axial view from Northbourne Avenue to City Hill.

In 1961, the firm Yuncken & Freeman, the architects for the North and South Buildings were contracted to design the Canberra Theatre Centre. Their design for the Centre was of two blocks, the theatre and the Playhouse, connected by an open colonnade, the Link, through which the Ainslie Avenue view to City Hill is preserved. It met a programme in which civic design and stringent economy shared equal importance. The Centre was designed in accordance with the functional-modern aesthetic. The Theatre was designed and equipped as a flexible structure suitable for the variable needs of musical and drama performances. Its foyer provided exhibition space. The Playhouse was also designed to accommodate varied functions including intimate performances, banquets and receptions, exhibitions and meetings (Theatre Centre 1967:962).

There was some opposition to Yuncken and Freeman's proposal, noting that there should be provision of restaurant or cafe facilities in the immediate vicinity; and the need to ensure a human approach to planning Civic Square and to induce a liveliness and friendly atmosphere which might otherwise be lacking in the formal design (Godfrey 1961).



Figure 12 Artist Impression of the Canberra Theatre (Canberra Times Collection #002759)

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The opening of the Canberra Theatre Centre, 24 June 1965 marked a major step in the development of the city's cultural life. The occasion was marked by performances by the Australian Ballet supported by the Queensland Symphony Orchestra. The establishment of the Centre met the physical needs for a cultural facility and provided a focus for the cultural aspirations of a growing diverse and vigorous community. It attracted performances from local, national and international artists.

The Canberra Theatre Centre was one of the first such centres to be built in Australia. It is "unique in Australia in that it includes the first major theatre built with government funds - a recognition by the Government of the significance of cultural activities in the lives of the people" (Centre that is unique in Australia 1965). The Centre reflected the importance placed on the social need for cultural facilities. Contemporary commentary of the Centre made references and comparisons to Utzon's Opera House, particularly on such a magnificent facility being provided for a considerably less amount of money (Department of Interior 65/1179).



Figure 13 Thespis 1965 NAA A1200 L53087

The Canberra Theatre Trust was established under a Commonwealth ordinance to manage the Centre with Sir George Currie as the first Chair. Terry Vaughan was appointed director to meet the challenge presented by this new dimension in Canberra's cultural future. Vaughan's background was based in music both as a conductor and a composer, as well as in management. He composed an orchestral piece to mark the opening night.



Figure 14 View across Civic Square to the Canberra Theatre 1971, NAA A1500 K27325

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Originally located at the City Hill side of the Link, a bronze sculpture was installed providing a fountain centrepiece between the two buildings. *Thespis*, the muse of theatre, was sculpted by an American Robert Cook. It was originally surrounded by a low flat wall, providing seating so that one could sit and contemplate. In 1973, the director of the Canberra Theatre Centre requested that the sculpture be moved as it caused considerable traffic congestion from time to time (Vaughan 1973). The NCDC addressed the problem in association with the modifications of Civic Square and associated pedestrian areas. *Thespis* was relocated in 1975 to the front of the Link. It was moved again as a freestanding sculpture to inside the new Link on the City Hill end vestibule.

Many alterations and additions have occurred to the Canberra Theatre Centre over time, reflecting needs and functions required of this cultural facility. These changes include:

- late 1960s, the need for clearer identification of the Centre by means of larger signs and of upcoming and current attractions being held, as many tourists were not aware of the Centre's function and what was currently playing;
- 1975 extensions to the rear of the Playhouse were completed providing additional storage and stage facilities;
- 1979 the Link, replacing the open colonnade, was built to provide a ticketing office, gallery space and increased foyer space;
- 1982 extensions to the Theatre were completed and included a rehearsal room, offices, technological services and the Courtyard Studio;
- 1988 major interior refurbishment of the Theatre's auditorium, foyer and Link;
- 1995/96 demolition of the Playhouse and construction of new Playhouse;
- 1998 opening of the new Playhouse; and
- 2006 rebuilding the Link, incorporating the construction of the new Civic Library and the pedestrian overpass as well as the installation of the sculpture Fractal Weave (by David Jenz).

Precinct Description

The Square, between the North and South Buildings and the Canberra Theatre Centre and London Circuit, is a large publicly accessible space. There are numerous streetlights spread symmetrically over the space that have the ability to hold banners and provide power to temporary installations if required. The southwest corner of the Square contains a slightly raised landscaped area of manicured grass and small shade trees. The paving is a light grey with darker grey stripes leading from opposite columns on the North and South Buildings. The eastern end of the Square has a water feature, which is currently two quarter circle arcs with fountain and waterfall components, with the two sections divided along the City Hill – Mount Ainslie axis.

The North and South Buildings are of reinforced concrete construction with copper roofing. They are clad externally with white quartz vertical mullions to the upper floors, separated by vertical aluminium windows with grey precast panels underneath. The exterior walls of the ground floors are fully glazed and set back providing open colonnades with the columns faced with gold gilt mosaic tiles (Civic Offices at Canberra 1962:91). These colonnades are illuminated by lighting suspended from the edge of the colonnades' ceilings.

The entrance to the South Building is marked by a free-standing portico located a quarter of the way along the façade from London Circuit with the statue of *Ethos*, standing approximately 6 metres high, sited in front. The South Building has an accent over the entrance on a modernist pediment, provided by the large coat of arms of Canberra in wrought and gilded copper mounted on the façade. The North Building has a similar portico located closer to the centre of the façade, but with no pediment.

The buildings present a long, low, repetitive façade with ground level pedestrian colonnaded arcade in the stripped classical style. The buildings are symmetrical across the square with entrances offset to the eastern end of the square. The buildings are rectangular, being slightly longer along the east-west axis, but present as being square in form. They enclose internal courtyards which are mostly filled in with newer building elements but retain small courtyard sections.

Canberra Theatre complex (the Playhouse, the Courtyard Studio, the Link, and the Theatre) and Civic Library form the western end of the Square. The Playhouse sits behind the North Building and the Theatre sits behind the South

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Building with the two sections joined by the Link.

Coming off the Link into the northwest corner of the Square is the Civic Library, which includes space underneath the Link while the southern end of the Link forms the entrance to the Complex with a short run of wide steps leading up to the entrance level from the Square. There is a pedestrian overpass and steps located centrally and going over the top of the Link as part of the City Hill – Mount Ainslie axis.

The Canberra Theatre is located on the southern side of the complex with the Courtyard Studio in the southern extension. The base of the Canberra Theatre is a simple rectangle brown brick building, with the Courtyard Studio a matching extension of this with a small courtyard between the two sections. The Canberra Theatre roof extends above the simple geometry of the lower level with a rendered white, curved rectangular projection, with a further white rendered 'tower' that holds the staging equipment and services.

The Playhouse is located at the northern end of the complex. The lower level comprises two rectangular sections, the southern part in line with the rest of the complex, the northern slightly offset. The upper section comprises a half circle structure on top of the southern section and the northern section is made up of a taller rectangular box.

The Link sits in between the Canberra Theatre and the Playhouse, joining them with a combined reception and ticket office space. There is a ~20m wide run of ten steps over ~4m from the Square to a ~215m² landing in front of the Link. The Link sits flush against the Canberra Theatre, has a raised long atrium section between it and the axis staircase. The link is entered from this landing via a glass and aluminium frame wall with a large video screen mounted to the front.

The Civic Library is sited on the northern side of the axis staircase and juts out into the Square with a curving façade. The library extends underneath the link. The curve of the library façade echoes the curve of the Playhouse as seen from the Square. The curved façade is covered in various colour glass shading panels broken up by grey horizontal panels at 6m spacing, echoing the verticality of the North and South Buildings as well as the 6m module they are based on.

The City Hill – Mount Ainslie axis, incorporating Ainslie Place, is an important aspect of the design of the Civic Square Precinct, but is unusual in that it is the lack of features that makes it important. The axis maintains an open space that provides a clear link, both visual and physical, between City Hill and Mount Ainslie. It is manifest by the ability to stand along the axis and being able to clearly discern that it is an open space and its ability to be used as a pedestrian thoroughfare, although this is somewhat compromised by the shopping arcade, which does allude to the axis in its internal thoroughfare as well as the design of the gabled glass atrium that has its apex running along the axis. The pedestrian overpass of the Link and the one-way, split Ainslie Place with its wide inner landscaped area. There is a sense of symmetry on either side of the axis in the form of the mostly mirrored North and South Buildings, the split water feature and the avenue of trees and mirrored hard landscaping along Ainslie Place.

Roy McGowan Simpson and the Firm of Yuncken & Freeman Brothers, Griffiths & Simpson

Roy McGowan Simpson A.O. (1914-1997) was the lead architect from Yuncken & Freeman Brothers, Griffiths & Simpson commissioned to design the Civic Square Precinct. Simpson was born in 1914 in Melbourne and started his career as an architect under Louis R Williams, an ecclesiastical design specialist (after his mother organised for them to meet). His career took off slowly due to the Depression and then he joined Yuncken Freeman Freeman and Griffiths just prior to World War II. Post-war, the firm reformed with Simpson as its youngest partner to become Yuncken Freeman Freeman Griffiths and Simpson (later renamed Yuncken Freeman Brothers Griffith and Simpson, but it was generally just referred to as Yuncken Freeman).

Simpson, through Yuncken Freeman, had several major commissions in Canberra, with the most significant being the two precincts around City Hill, namely Civic Square and the Law Courts precinct. These precincts exemplify his design philosophy that the total scene is more important than the individual project as well as his reputation for refined, sensitive and timeless designs (Yuncken, 1997; Simpson, 1997). Simpson's design philosophy for the Square was explained in his Simpson in his AS Hook address (an address given by recipients of the (Royal) Australian Institute of Architects Gold Medal) noted that the overall precinct design is more important than the individual elements within it. It had a hierarchy of considerations with the individual elements of a place being subservient to the precinct and the precinct being subservient to the city. He suggests that most buildings should be of a thoughtful design that complements the whole without competing with each other, noting "I believe that most buildings are required to play

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a background role in order that the occasional special one can exert its proper emphasis in the group composition” (Simpson, 1997), a statement that very much supports his use of the stripped classical style of the Civic Square Precinct that also emphasises Griffin’s axial lines in the greater design of the city as a whole.

Simpson has also been responsible for several significant projects in Melbourne and Canberra, including:

- St Patrick’s Cathedral Diocesan Centre in Melbourne;
- La Trobe University Master Plan;
- the Cotter River Reserve, Canberra;
- planning for 18 houses for the chiefs of defence services (the NCDC’s first commissioned project); and
- renovations at The Lodge and the Governor General’s residence in Canberra.

Simpson held several important roles and was highly-regarded in his profession. He was:

- the Site Planner at the Australian National University (ANU) from 1968-1980;
- the author of many architectural practice notes;
- a foundation committee member of the National Trust of Australia, was a member of numerous committees and has held numerous other positions and has been awarded various honours over his lifetime,
- awarded an Officer of the Order of Australia; and
- awarded the RAIA Gold Medal in 1997 (Castles, 1997).

Sculptures and public artwork



Figure 15 Ethos by Tom Bass was commissioned by the NCDC and co-sponsored by the Canberra Chamber of Commerce and is a symbol of civic pride. It is separately registered as an object in the ACT Heritage Register.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION – THE CIVIC SQUARE PRECINCT



Figure 16 The ACT Coat of Arms by Lenore Bass is based on the official ACT Coat of Arms designed by Mr C R Wylie and registered with the College of Arms in 1928. It was made in copper for the Civic Offices in 1961.



Figure 17 Thespis by Robert Cook is an abstract sculpture of a reclining human figure representing Thespis, who was reputed to be the first person ever to appear on stage as an actor in a leading role rather than as part of a chorus. Originally funded through the Australian Government through the National Capital Development Authority for the new Canberra Theatre Centre. This work was relocated in 2006 to the refurbished foyer of the Canberra Theatre Centre.



Figure 18 Fireline by Nola Farman acknowledges the relationship of the Ngunnawal people to the region. At night Fireline's flickering flames travel from Ainslie Place and curve around the northern side of Civic Square, representing the grasslands which Civic Square was built on that the Ngunnawal managed by fire.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION – THE CIVIC SQUARE PRECINCT



Figure 19 ACT Memorial by Matthew Harding was commissioned by the ACT Government to honour all those people who have had an association with the ACT and who have served their country in war, conflict, peacekeeping and humanitarian missions. It incorporates elements that symbolise these roles throughout the world and the overarching goal of peace. It provides a place for remembrance and contemplation.



Figure 20 The Canberra Times Fountain, designed by Robert Woodward AM, was commissioned by Federal Capital Press in 1976 and installed as a gift to the people of Canberra in 1979. It is a fountain centrepiece. The tube and rods are of fabricated stainless steel. This dramatic fountain marks the intersection of Ainslie Avenue with City Walk.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION – THE CIVIC SQUARE PRECINCT



Figure 21 The ACT Honour Walk - recognises individuals or groups from across all categories of endeavour that have made significant and sustained past contributions to the ACT with a plaque in their honour.

Physical condition and integrity

Civic Square has been routinely maintained and updated since 1961. There have been many significant changes to the fabric of the place, such as the:

- removal of Tom Bass's water feature,
- removal of grid patterned paving,
- demolition of the Canberra Playhouse, and terrace restaurant,
- enclosure of the breezeway to form the link
- Library being constructed to encroach the open square,
- New porticos for both north and south buildings, and
- changes to landscaping of Ainslie Place, etc. as detailed in the history section above.

Despite these changes, the place has retained its main features and design philosophy and the physical features that currently make up the place are all in excellent condition.

Democracy and Public Space at Civic Square

Parkinson (2012:200) has defined democracy as, "...a set of principles and procedures that allow groups of people to make binding, collective decisions about how they should live together" and that the landscape that this occurs in, the actual architecture of the assembly building and chambers as well as the open spaces around them, is an integral part of a successful democracy with a meaningful connection between the people and the decision-makers.

He argues that direct and meaningful access to assembly buildings is an important part of democracy and Civic Square with its open and accessible paved apron at the entrance to the Legislature, provides the ideal setting for ease of access to the Legislature.

The inclusion of all cultural groups into places of power, real or symbolic, has a meaningful impact on democracy, particularly recognising that modern cities are often a palimpsest of layers built over the cultural landscapes of its original inhabitants (Parkinson, 2012:192).

The Civic Square Precinct recognises the Ngunnawal people in several ways. . Within the square, the artwork *Fireline* by Nola Farman acknowledges the relationship of the Ngunnawal people to the area and their history of managing what was once grassland with fire. The local NAIDOC Week activities start in Civic Square with a flag-raising ceremony. The Legislative Assembly acknowledges Ngunnawal people and other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples at the start of sitting as well as having Ngunnawal representatives performing *Welcome to Country* on special occasions. The United Ngunnawal Elders Council (UNEC) meets in the North Building and is assisted by ACT Office for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs (OA&TSIA); as well as provided advice to the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander

BACKGROUND INFORMATION – THE CIVIC SQUARE PRECINCT

Elected Body (ATSIEB). ATSIEB provides a strong democratically elected voice that provides direct advice to the ACT Government, under legislation and using the Assembly committee rooms to conduct hearing and meetings, with the ambition of improving the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Canberrans, a step towards true reconciliation. This inclusive symbolism of being represented in the Civic Square Precinct, and the local assembly in particular, helps to legitimise Ngunnawal voices and bring them into intimate contact with decision makers (Parkinson, 2012:194-195).

Civic and Cultural usage

Civic Square and associated buildings have provided the focus for cultural activities, civic receptions and civic administration in Canberra since 1961. Its role as the local government and cultural precinct provides a forum for the community of Canberra that is capable of holding large numbers of people (*Canberra Times* 7 March 1961, suggests crowds up to twelve thousand, but could fit up to twenty thousand if needed). This multi-functional role of the precinct has led to the upgrading of the Canberra Theatre Centre and the installation of the ACT Legislative Assembly into the South Building, strongly reinforcing Civic Square's role as a focal point for local politics, administration and cultural activities.

The use of Civic Square as a public forum, and a place for celebration has been highly successful, transforming the place into a lively dynamic space. Events which have attracted the Canberra community to its symbolic centre include civic receptions for royal visits, sporting triumphs, theatre festivals, multicultural festivals and commemorative festivals such as Australia Day activities, protests, keys to the city, and union meetings.



Figure 22 Papuan Government trainees under statue of Ethos, 1962, NAA A1200 L42355

BACKGROUND INFORMATION – THE CIVIC SQUARE PRECINCT



Figure 23 Crowds in Civic Square, Canberra day 1967 Australian News and Information Bureau. NAA A1200, L62172



Figure 24 Entertainment in the Square, 1967. NAA A1500 K16989

BACKGROUND INFORMATION – THE CIVIC SQUARE PRECINCT

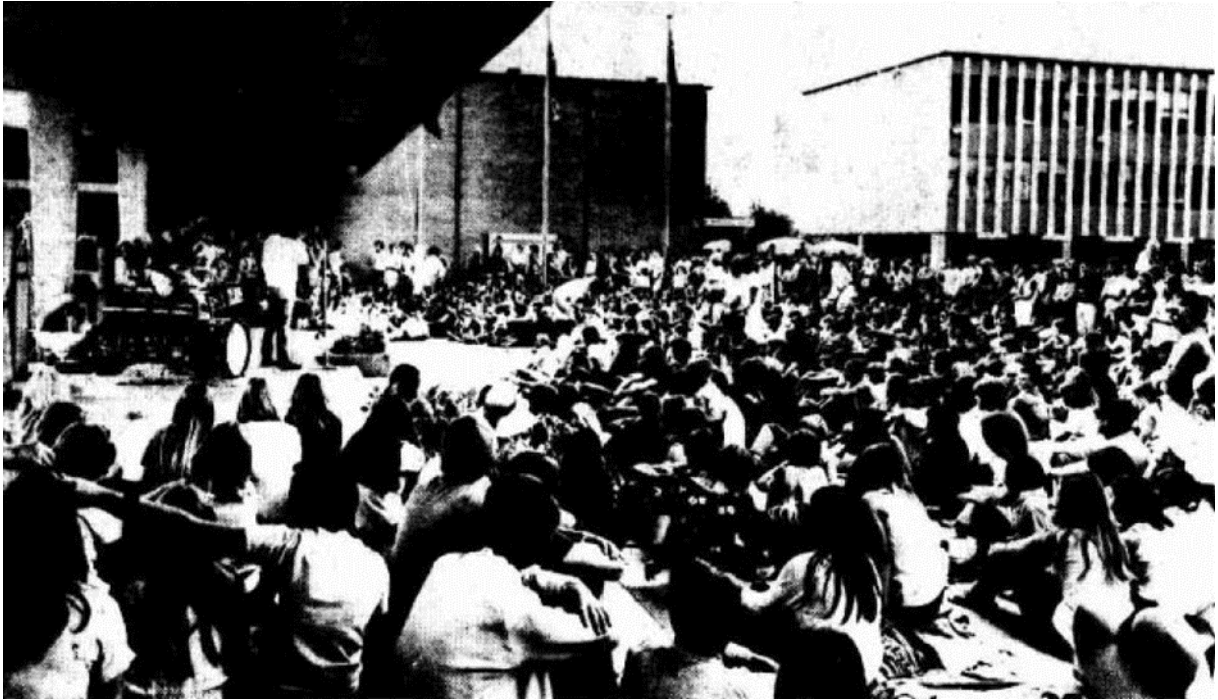


Figure 25 Canberra Day concert in Civic Square (Canberra Times 16 March 1970)



Figure 26 Workers 'lunching in the sun', 1975. NAA A6135, K29/5/75/26



Figure 27 Norman Gunston (a.k.a. Gary McDonald) being crowned 'King of Canberra' during Canberra Week celebrations (Canberra Times 15 March 1976)



Figure 28 The City Manager, Tony Blunn, flying a kite gifted by Tadao Saito as sign of friendship and goodwill with the cities of Hakodate and Shiraishi (Canberra Times 25 November 1977)

BACKGROUND INFORMATION – THE CIVIC SQUARE PRECINCT



Figure 29 Multicultural Festival in Civic Square during Canberra Week festivities (Canberra Times 25 January 1981)



Figure 30 The Princess of Wales talks to the crowd in Civic Square during the 1983 Royal Tour (Canberra Times 25 March 1983)

BACKGROUND INFORMATION – THE CIVIC SQUARE PRECINCT



Figure 31 ACT farmers protesting in Civic Square, 1986 NAA A165/K21/2/86/56



Figure 32 Protest in Civic Square against development around Civic Square (Canberra Times 14 November 1987)

BACKGROUND INFORMATION – THE CIVIC SQUARE PRECINCT



Figure 33 Dancers for the Bicentennial celebrations pose in Civic Square (Canberra Times 30 September 1988)



Figure 34 Mal Meninga presents the Canberra Raiders' 1989 premiership trophy to the crowd in Civic Square (ACT Heritage Library ref#:007556)

BACKGROUND INFORMATION – THE CIVIC SQUARE PRECINCT



Figure 35 Launch of the Winter Bed Vigil to support Canberra's homeless (Canberra Times 16 August 2013)



Figure 36 Hiroshima Day 70th anniversary ceremony (Canberra Times 6 August 2015)

BACKGROUND INFORMATION – THE CIVIC SQUARE PRECINCT



Figure 37 Palm Sunday Refugee Rally (A Progressive Christian Voice Australian via Twitter @APCVA 8 April 2017)



Figure 38 Pro-LGBTI protesters at a rally against the Safe Schools program (Canberra Times 12 August 2017)

BACKGROUND INFORMATION – THE CIVIC SQUARE PRECINCT



Figure 39 Pro- and anti- greyhound racing protesters rally in Civic Square (Canberra Times 28 November 2017)



Figure 40 Students protest the defunding of the ANU School of Music's H-Course (Canberra Times 5 September 2018)



Figure 41 Design Canberra Festival, City Sessions with the Pop Inn (ACT Heritage, 2018)



Figure 42 The Museum of Kindness pop-up in Civic Square (ACT Heritage, 2018)

BACKGROUND INFORMATION – THE CIVIC SQUARE PRECINCT

SITE PLAN – BOUNDARIES (CURTILEGE)

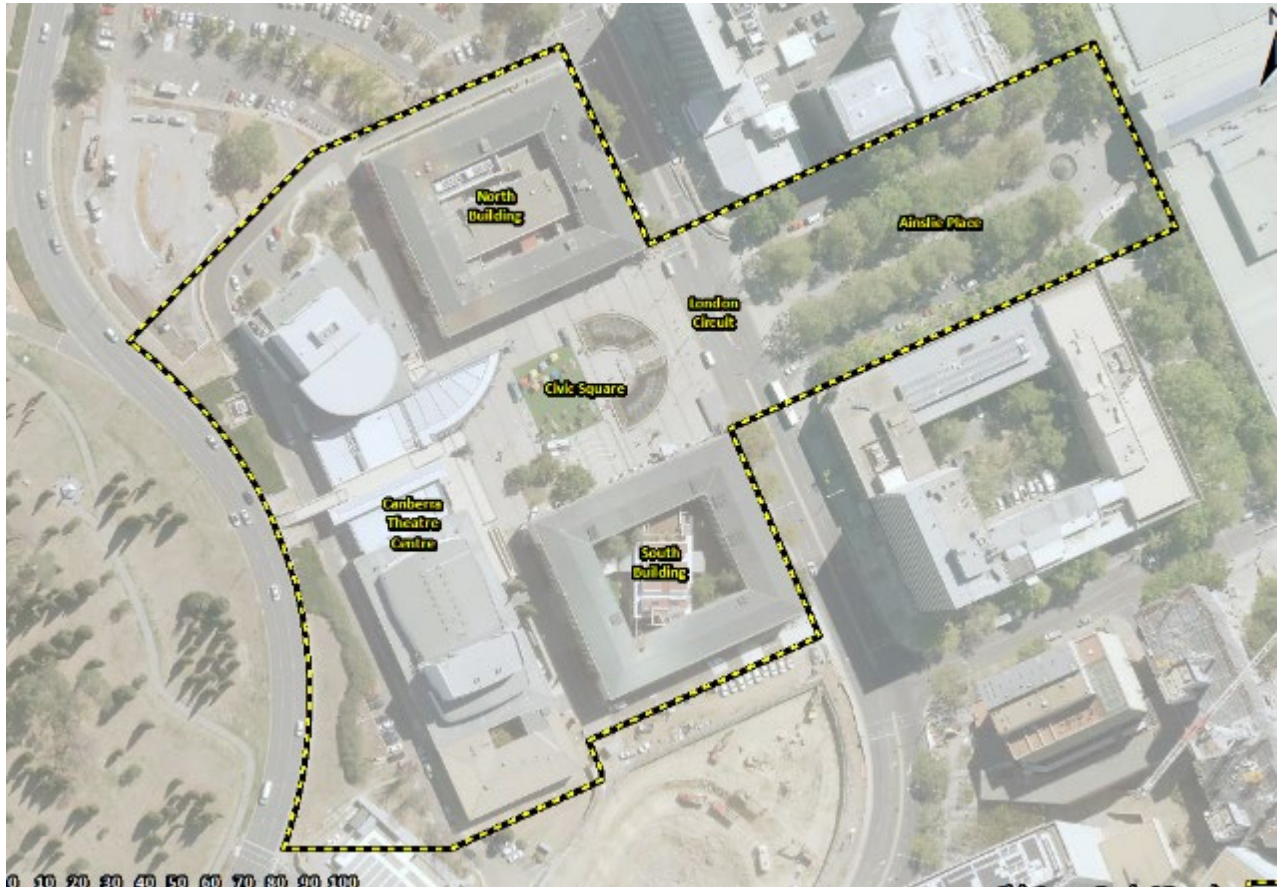


Figure 43 The Civic Square Precinct site boundary

BACKGROUND INFORMATION – THE CIVIC SQUARE PRECINCT

IMAGES



Figure 44 Civic Square looking west along the City Hill-Mt Ainslie axis (ACT Heritage, 2018)



Figure 45 Flagpoles at entry to Ainslie Place looking east along the City Hill-Mt Ainslie axis (ACT Heritage, 2018)

BACKGROUND INFORMATION – THE CIVIC SQUARE PRECINCT



Figure 46 Ainslie Place facing south along City Walk (ACT Heritage, 2018)



Figure 47 City Hill from the Link overpass (ACT Heritage, 2018)

BACKGROUND INFORMATION – THE CIVIC SQUARE PRECINCT



Figure 48 Civic Library with The Playhouse in the background (ACT Heritage, 2018)



Figure 49 The Canberra Theatre Centre and the Link (ACT Heritage, 2018)

BACKGROUND INFORMATION – THE CIVIC SQUARE PRECINCT



Figure 50 The Playhouse (ACT Heritage, 2018)



Figure 51 The South Building containing the Legislative Assembly (ACT Heritage, 2018)

BACKGROUND INFORMATION – THE CIVIC SQUARE PRECINCT



Figure 52 South Building colonnade and expanded security entrance (ACT Heritage, 2018)



Figure 53 North Building, home of CMAG (ACT Heritage, 2018)

BACKGROUND INFORMATION – THE CIVIC SQUARE PRECINCT



Figure 54 North Building portico (ACT Heritage, 2018)



Figure 55 North Building internal stairs (ACT Heritage, 2018)



Figure 56 Civic Square water feature (ACT Heritage, 2018)

BACKGROUND INFORMATION – THE CIVIC SQUARE PRECINCT

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