



ACT Heritage Council

AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

**HERITAGE REGISTER
(Provisional Registration Details)**

Place No:

For the purposes of s. 33 of the *Heritage Act 2004*, an entry to the heritage register has been prepared by the ACT Heritage Council for the following place:

- **145 Mugga Way**

Block 45, Section 32

RED HILL

DATE OF PROVISIONAL REGISTRATION

Notified: 10 April 2008 Notifiable Instrument: NI 2008-99

PERIOD OF EFFECT OF PROVISIONAL REGISTRATION

Start Date: 4 April 2008 End Date: 4 September 2008

Extended Period (if applicable) Start Date _____ End Date _____

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

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IDENTIFICATION OF THE PLACE

- 145 Mugga Way, Block 45, Section 32, Suburb of Red Hill, ACT.
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HISTORY OF THE PLACE

The building was designed for R.V. and B. H. Cater and their young family by Russell Jack of leading Sydney architectural practice Allen Jack and Cottier and constructed in 1965 by W.G. Schwarzlose of Narrabundah, ACT. The builder died shortly after the house was completed.

The Cater's requirements included achieving a measure of privacy in an exposed area and to site the house close to the street so that the view across Canberra could be captured. Other aims were restful backgrounds for day to day living.

The house received the RIAA ACT Canberra Medallion for 1965.

Mr and Mrs Cater still live in the house, although their children have long since left. The building retains much of its original furnishings and artwork, which was hung to great effect on the crisp white walls, New pieces collected over the years complement the original design intent.

In recognition of its timeless design quality and the enthusiasm of its owners, the building was awarded the RIAA Twenty Five Year Award in 1990.

This house is one of only a few reflecting a shift at the time from mainly government designed and built housing to private development where the individual owner commissioned an architect. As such the building reflects not only the style of Russell Jack, but the result of the interaction between the owner and architect: the conscious choice by the owner of Jack because of his style and the finished design demonstrating choices and wishes of the owner.

Russell Jack

After completing service in the RAAF during WW2 Russell Jack studied architecture at Sydney Technical College. This was a part time course requiring students to gain practical experience with a qualified architect. Between 1946 and 1952 Jack worked in this capacity for the Sydney firm of Rudder Littlemore and Rudder. An excellent student with a passion for his subject, he came first in each year of his course and on completion was awarded the Byera Hadley Travelling Scholarship, spending 1952 and 1953 in Europe combining travel with work for a London architectural firm.

Howells in *Allen Jack & Cottier 1952 – 2002*, p2-3 describes Jack's European experiences thus:

'Jack's overall impression of European architecture left him disappointed and dissatisfied. Similarly the modern post war urban form in new English towns... failed to live up to expectations, striking him as sterile and lifeless.'

On returning to Australia, Jack spent a further two years at Rudder Littlemore and Rudder, and in 1956 formed a partnership with Dennis (John) Allen, with whom he had become firm friends during college.

'From the earliest days of practice in Sydney Jack developed a philosophy of design that reflected many of the ideals of Modernism. In response to the economic austerity and

shortage of materials that was a legacy of World War II, Jack argued strongly for economy of planning and building to make smaller spaces appear larger. Among the devices he advocated to achieve this were the use of glass walls running from cross wall to cross wall, and from floor to ceiling, open planning, avoiding a series of small enclosed cells, the use of light interior colours, low scaled or built in furniture. He argued that materials should be expressed honestly and directly, expressing their own innate characteristics and not attempting to imitate others. Jack was a strong advocate of exploiting aspect and outlook to link the interior with the exterior while protecting privacy. These ideas form a common theme at the start of his early house designs. (Howells, op cit, p4)

These ideas crystallised in Jack's own house in Wahroonga, Sydney, winner of the Sulman Medal in 1958 and further exemplified in the Palmer House, Turrumurra Sydney in 1959.

'Jack's use of painted bagged brickwork and oiled and stained timber established the Jack and Palmer houses as forerunners of the Sydney School of architecture.' Howells, op cit, p4

Further works in the early 1960s addressed the problem of privacy and environmental conditions, balancing outlook and introspection with a series of protective blade walls and sheltered courtyards. These are exemplified in the Kobin House, 1963 and the Jacobs House, 1963. The Cater House is a clear development of this theme.

The early houses won considerable public and professional acclaim, receiving widespread publication in both professional and popular magazines of the time. They combined a modern aesthetic with warm, natural materials and human scale in an attempt to resolve the short comings that he perceived in modern European works. It is worth noting that these characteristics came to typify the Sydney school, which as a domestic architecture gained widespread public acceptance and adaptation as a standard house style.

In *Australian Architecture Since 1960*, p 50 Jennifer Taylor writes:

'The Sydney School architecture has been passed on to the vernacular and is part of the builder's repertoire. It was not the product of a united school, but the outcome of a group of architects with common ideals who pursued their own paths toward reaching those ideals... with its emphasis on climatic control by natural means and its respect for land forms and flora it was a sympathetic way in which to build. Further the fact that it was widely and rapidly accepted and that for more than a decade it continued to hold a persuasive influence on Australian architecture testifies to its relevance and validity.'

From the mid 1960s Allen and Jack began to concentrate on commercial and public works commissions, success in which increased the profile and reputation of the firm.

Although Allen and Jack are now retired from practice, the firm of Allen Jack and Cottier remains one of the most respected and sought after Sydney architectural practices, working in a wide range of disciplines and with a string of prestigious awards going back to the Sulman Medal of 1958.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PLACE

The building is considered to be an excellent example of the late twentieth century Sydney Regional style of architecture by Allen Jack & Cottier (Russell Jack) who are considered to be key practitioners in the style.

The building is sited close to the road. Its form takes advantage of a land slope to the north which affords expansive views across Canberra.

The house presents an introverted façade to the street with only one small window visible in a composition consisting of strong horizontal roofline and smooth horizontal wall planes. Both the carport entry and front door are at ninety degrees to the street, giving a great measure of privacy and setting up a concept of the building slowly revealing itself as one passes through the various levels and spaces.

The building is designed over three split levels with a single pitch roof following the slope of the land. The top level includes a small entry foyer, guest room with the small window facing the street, a bathroom and main bedroom, which looks on to one of two interior courts. These courts allow abundant light into the centre of the house and create a private garden outlook.

Stairs from the entry lead to the middle level, the heart of which is a lofty dining room which acts as a gallery space leading to a private, fairly contained sitting room, and to the informal kitchen and family room. The dining and family rooms open to the east facing interior court. The sitting room, kitchen and family room open to the north onto a timber deck.

A few steps, carefully screened from the family areas, lead to the children's wing which contains three bedrooms, a bathroom and laundry. The service rooms open into the east court, with external stair access back up to the carport area.

The planning is logical and tight, using the split levels to separate the various functions. At the same time there is a rich quality of three dimensional space created by sloping ceilings, cleverly placed windows and controlled sight lines.

The exterior expression of the building is strong and bold, using a limited palette of simply detailed materials. Walls are load bearing cavity brickwork, bagged and painted white. Windows, doors and exposed roof beams and fascias are oiled timber. The roof is metal deck. Inside, floors are either carpeted, timber boards or waxed brick paving. Ceilings are white painted plasterboard and follow the roof slope. There is extensive built in joinery in Queensland Blackwood, which forms a striking contrast to the white walls. The interiors are informal and restful, with simple materials, forming a backdrop for furniture and artwork which complement the design of the house.

In *Allen Jack and Cottier 1952 –2002*, p70 Howells writes:

'The house embraces many of the characteristic Sydney School idioms (such as materials used, massing and roof form), despite the lack of a steeply wooded and rocky site typical of this school of architecture...Jack sought to anchor the Cater house with a roof plane following the fall of this site. In place of clinker brick, Jack used white painted bagged brickwork, typical of his earlier house on Sydney's North Shore.'

The building has been altered once, in the early 1980s. This involved extension of the kitchen and family room onto the rear deck. The existing doors and windows were relocated and other original finishes carefully matched.

The landscaping is simple, informal and minimal – reflecting the design qualities of the building. The house is surrounded by large expanses of grass. Planting consists of predominantly Australian native trees, plants and shrubs on the perimeter of the block and in several places against the building.

Condition

The building is in excellent condition and highly intact.

Design Comments

The building is an excellent example of late twentieth century Sydney Regional style. This is characterised in the external built fabric by:

- metal deck roof;
- asymmetrical massing;
- roof following slope of land;
- skillion roof;
- timber post and beam construction;
- dark brown stained timber boarded fascias, posts, doors and windows;
- exposed roof beams;
- timber deck;
- white bagged brick walling;
- timber awning sashes;
- courtyards.

Internal built fabric details identified to exemplify late twentieth century Sydney Regional style includes:

- split level form;
- raking white plasterboard ceilings;
- white bagged brick walls;
- timber and brick paved floors;
- stained timber joinery.

Apery et al, 1989, p240 summarise this style as follows:

'While they avoided the overt aggressiveness associated with Brutalism, architects of the Sydney School were greatly influenced by the qualities of the sites on which their houses were often built: sloping, rocky, well treed, with views... Typically a house would descend its hillside site in a series of split levels covered by roof planes approximately parallel to the slope of the land. This configuration helped to produce interior spaces of greater richness and complexity than were found in the more box like rooms of conventional houses. textural and tactile qualities of traditional, so called natural materials: painted common bricks... and unpainted timber which was sometimes left in its sawn state. Ideally the building site was left untouched; any introduced landscaping made use of informal arrangements of Australian flora.'

Allen Jack and Cottier, together with Ken Woolley, Philip Cox, Peter Johnson and Ian McKay were key practitioners of the Sydney Regional Style known as the Sydney School. The building is a rare example of the work of Allen Jack and Cottier in Canberra and is an excellent representation of the style. It can be closely compared with the RAI national headquarters building at 2 Mugga Way, designed by Ancher Mortlock and Woolley soon afterwards.

Later Canberra buildings designed in this style include the medium density developments of SSwinger Hill by Ian McKay in 1971; and Wybalena Grove, Cook, and Urambi Village, Kambah, by Michael Dysart in 1974.

The building can be most closely compared with a number of Sydney buildings erected during the 1960s, mostly on Sydney's North Shore, including:

- Jack House, Wahroonga NSW by Russell Jack, 1958
- Palmer House, Turrumurra, NSW by Allen & Jack, 1959
- Kobin House, Woollongong NSW, by Allen & Jack, 1963
- Jacobs House, by Allen & Jack, 1963.
- Woolley House, Mosman NSW by Ken Woolley, 1962

- House, Killara, NSW by Ancher Mortlock Murray & Woolley, 1963
 - Johnson House, Chatswood, NSW by Peter Johnson, 1963
 - Pettit & Sevitt Project Houses by Ken Woolley, 1962-78
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STATEMENT ABOUT THE HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PLACE

145 Mugga Way, Red Hill, is an excellent example of late twentieth century Sydney Regional Style, displaying typical characteristics of the style. The building was an innovative house design for Canberra at the time, and is a rare Canberra example of the work of Sydney firm Allen Jack and Cottier who were a key practitioner of the style. The house provides a valuable resource to understand this part of Canberra's architectural story.

ASSESSMENT AGAINST THE HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA

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. Significance has been determined by research as accessed in the references below. Future research may alter the findings of this assessment.

- (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;**

This place did not meet this criterion.

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

The building is an excellent example of late twentieth century Sydney Regional style. This is characterised in the external built fabric by:

- metal deck roof;
- asymmetrical massing;
- roof following slope of land;
- skillion roof;
- timber post and beam construction;
- dark brown stained timber boarded fascias, posts, doors and windows;
- exposed roof beams;
- timber deck;
- white bagged brick walling;
- timber awning sashes;
- courtyards.

Internal built fabric details identified to exemplify late twentieth century Sydney Regional style includes:

- split level form;
 - raking white plasterboard ceilings;
 - white bagged brick walls;
 - timber and brick paved floors;
 - stained timber joinery.
-

These features are enhanced by the property's Australian native garden setting.

The building is a very good example of the late twentieth century Sydney Regional style, and identified as such by the RAIA.

The house is an early and well executed Canberra example of this style in a privately commissioned residence by a major practitioner of the style.

The building forms part of a group of small houses designed by Allen and Jack in the 1950s and 1960s in which they explore and develop the idiom of a well planned modern house, which uses warm, natural materials, has human scale and intimacy, and makes the most of the attributes of the site. The house is a later and mature example of this body of work, undertaken just prior to the firm's concentrating on larger commissions.

The building was awarded the RAIA ACT Chapter Canberra Medallion for 1965 and the RAIA Twenty Five Year Award in 1990.

The building is in excellent condition and highly intact.

- (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;**

This place did not meet this criterion.

- (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;**

This place did not meet this criterion.

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

This criterion is not applicable.

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

This place did not meet this criterion.

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

This place did not meet this criterion.

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

This place did not meet this criterion.

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

This criterion is not applicable.

- (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

As an excellent example of late twentieth century Sydney Regional Style in a typical landscape setting the building provides a valuable resource in providing a wider understanding of the style and the work of Allen Jack & Cottier. The building is also a highly sophisticated residential design solution at a time when the majority of Canberra housing was provided by either the government or private builders in the form of unimaginative brick veneer boxes presenting a respectable façade to the street and largely ignoring aspect and other intrinsic site qualities.

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

This criterion is not applicable.

(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 is not applicable.

FEATURES INTRINSIC TO SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PLACE

The features intrinsic to the heritage significance of 145 Mugga Way, Red Hill, and which require conservation comprise:

- external built fabric and details including metal deck roof, dark brown stained timber boarded fascias, posts, doors and windows, white bagged brick walls, building form and skillion roofline following the ground slope, courtyards.
- internal built fabric and details including split level form, raking white plasterboard ceilings, white bagged brick walls, timber and brick paved floors, stained timber joinery.
- the Australian native garden setting.

REASON FOR PROVISIONAL REGISTRATION

145 Melbourne Avenue, Red Hill, has been assessed against the heritage significance criteria and found to have heritage significance against 2 criteria under the ACT Heritage Act.

APPLICABLE HERITAGE GUIDELINES

The Heritage Guidelines adopted under s27 of the *Heritage Act 2004* are applicable to the conservation of 145 Mugga Way, Red Hill.

The guiding conservation objective is that 145 Mugga Way, Red Hill, shall be conserved and appropriately managed in a manner respecting its heritage significance and the features intrinsic to that heritage significance, and consistent with a sympathetic and viable use or uses. Any works that have a potential impact on significant fabric (and / or other heritage values) shall be guided by a professionally documented assessment and conservation policy relevant to that area or component (i.e. a Statement of Heritage Effects – SHE).

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1. CONSULTATION WITH STAKEHOLDERS

Draft provisional registration entry was released for public comment on 12 April 2008 and period for public comment closes on 8 May 2008.

2. BIBLIOGRAPHY

Miles, M, canberra.house.com.au/profiles//145mugga.html

Royal Australian Institute of Architects, Register of Significant Twentieth Century Buildings, Citation No. R043.

Howells, Trevor 2002 *Allen Jack and Cottier 1952 –2002*, Focus, Sydney, pp 1-18, 70-71.

Metcalf, A. 203 *Canberra Architecture*, Landmark Press, p106, Item 80.

Apperly, R, R Irving and P Reynolds 1989 *Identifying Australian Architecture Styles and Terms from 1788 to Present*, pp 240-243, Angus & Robertson.

Taylor, J 1990 *Australian Architecture since 1960*, RAI, pp 34-50.

Architecture in Australia, January 1966, pp 74-75.

Architecture in Australia, March 1961, pp 78-83.

3. PHOTOGRAPHS AND PLANS

Figure 1. Front view of 145 Mugga Way, Red Hill.



(www.canberrahouse.com/houses/1960s-house-profiles/145-mugga-way-red-hill-1965/)

Figure 2. Location of 145 Mugga Way, Red Hill.

