

Australian National University

Acton Campus — Site Inventory



Study Item/ Area	Pauline Griffin Building
Acton Campus Precinct	KINGSLEY Precinct
Building Nos. & Names	11 (Pauline Griffin Building)

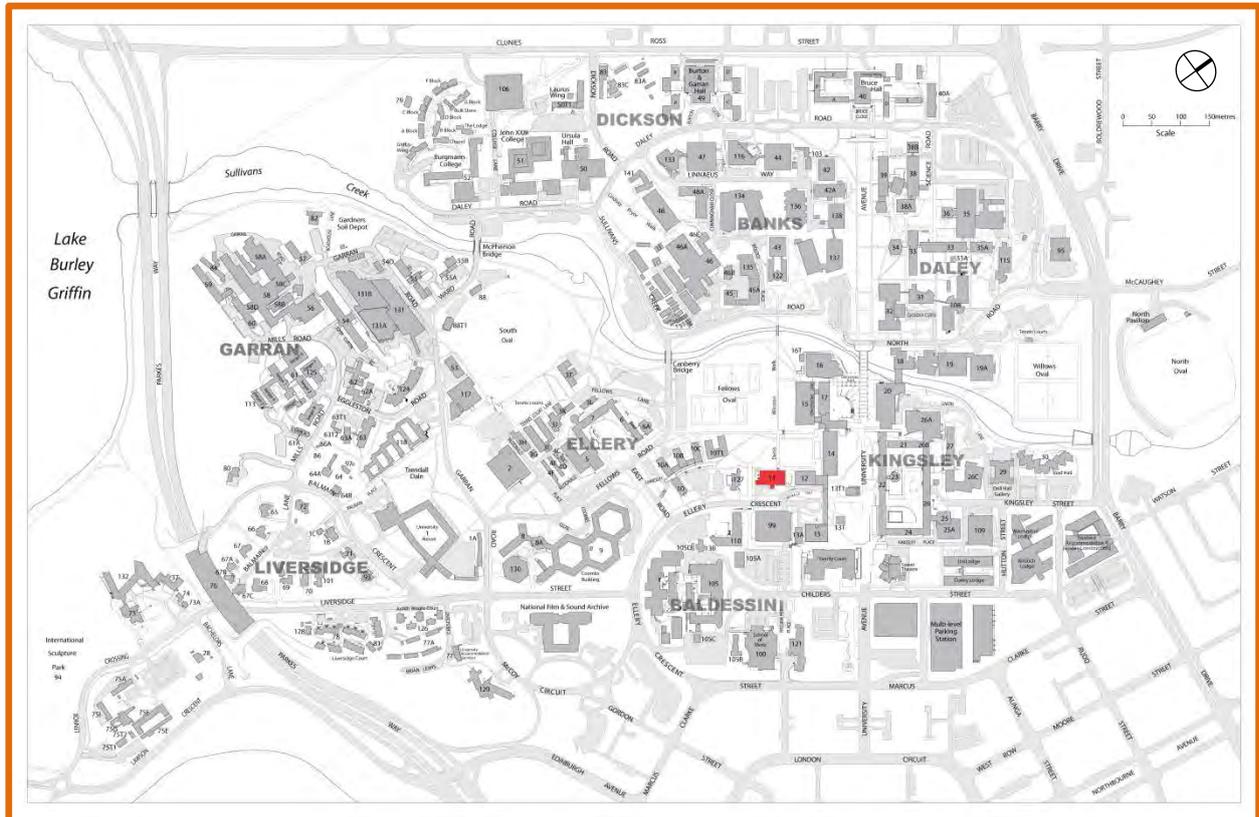


Figure 1: Location of study area within the ANU Acton Campus site.

Heritage Ranking	Pauline Griffin Building— High —Meets criteria for Commonwealth Heritage List.
Heritage Listing	The Pauline Griffin Building is not individually listed on the Commonwealth Heritage List (CHL).
Condition—Date	The Pauline Griffin Building is in fair condition, though requires some basic maintenance and upkeep. There have been numerous instances of water leaking through the roof, exacerbated in the heavy hailstorms of February 2007. The water leaks have resulted in numerous stains to the vermiculite ceilings. The roof structure, and insulation beneath, should be examined and any repairs to ceilings and walls carried out.
Relevant Documentation	2011 Heritage Study for the Pauline Griffin building has been prepared by the ANU Heritage Officer. It provides a detailed history and description of the building.

Context of the Buildings

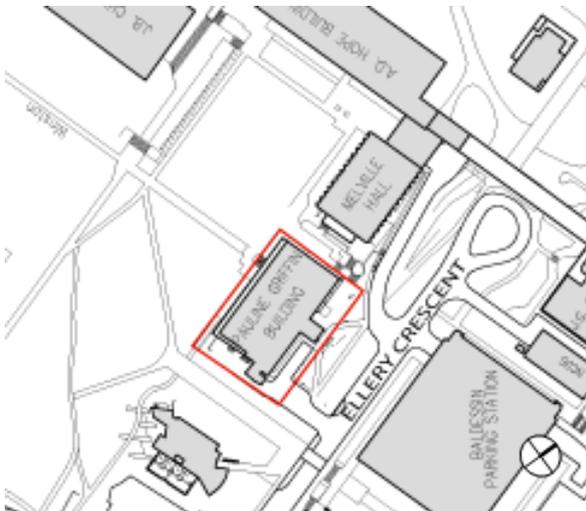


Figure 2: Plan image of the Pauline Griffin Building (Union Building) in relation to the ANU Campus.

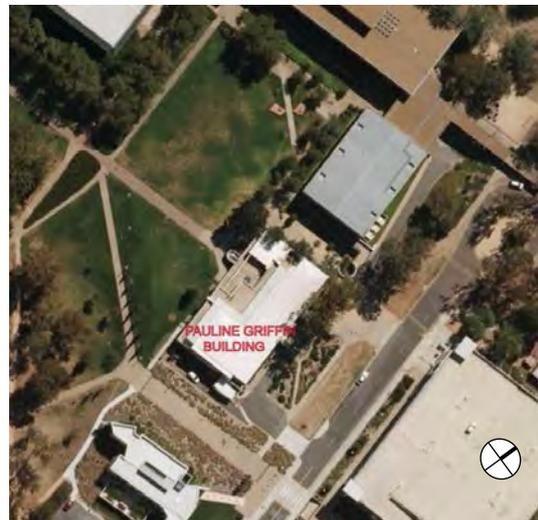


Figure 3: Aerial photograph image of the Pauline Griffin Building (Union Building) in relation to the ANU Campus.

Brief Historical Overview

In April 1960 it was decided that a Union Building was essential for students of Canberra University College. At this time, student committees and associations on the campus were slowly gaining ground, nurtured by the Vice-Chancellor and Central Administration. The Union Building was the first permanent headquarters of these groups.

The building was designed by Sydney Ancher (1904-1979), of the firm Ancher Mortlock and Murray (later Ancher Mortlok, Murray and Woolley) who was a pioneer of the post war international style in Australia, with strong influences from European architects including Mies Van Der Rohe and Le Corbusier. His work was modern and bold yet low in mass, and blended well into the Australian landscape; qualities entirely suited to the relatively undeveloped ANU campus of the early 1960s. The building was sited close to a major entrance of the University and adjacent to other administration facilities, such as the Chancery buildings.

To meet the growth of the student population, in 1969 the University site planner, Roy Simpson, recommended that a new Union building be constructed on University Avenue. Council accepted the proposal shortly after and the new building was completed in 1972. A Universities Commission grant of \$200,000 went towards the conversion of the old Union Building to additional offices for University Administration. The building accommodated offices for Housing, Postgraduate Administration, and OIC Student Services and meeting rooms on the lower ground floor, with Student Administration, Admissions, Undergraduate Scholarships & Student Welfare, Student Files and part of Property & Plans on the ground floor.

The remainder of the Property & Plans Division were located on the first floor, along with the Development Plan Registry and Engineering Services. By the mid-1990s the Chancery Annex housed University Central Administration, which included the Housing Office and the Property & Plans Division. Refurbishments were carried out in the next few years to a University design. The building was renamed the Pauline Griffin Building in 2001. The building now houses Student Administration, International Education Office, Student Recruitment Office and the Academic Skills & Learning Centre.

Apart from the Union Building, Ancher also designed the Northbourne Avenue Housing Group with similar characteristics, which was completed in 1962. These are the only examples of Ancher's work in the ACT.

In 2001, the building was named after Pauline Griffin, AM who served on the University Council from 1978-1998 and as Pro Chancellor of the University from 1991-1998.

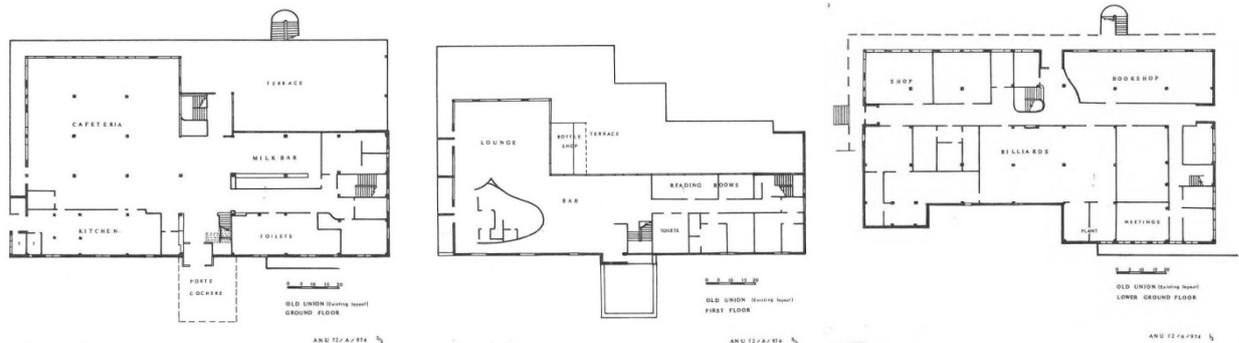


Figure 4: The original plans of the original Union Building completed 1965. Including the original space designations.

Description of the Pauline Griffin Building

Buildings

The building is a classic example of the Post War International style of architecture, with elements of the inter war functionalist style. The overall cubiform shape of the building, flat roof, large sheets of glass, plain, smooth wall surfaces contribute to the exterior aesthetic.

The building is constructed of concrete brick on concrete pier foundations. The terraces are important aspects of the design, and reveal a 'stepped' motif to the west of the building that mirrors the direction of the slope. The open views to the west have largely been obscured from the centre of the floors by internal partitions. Window frames are timber with some later aluminium examples. In general, the windows alternate between large single panes and smaller sliding horizontal sashes, punctuated by glazed doors in similar frames.

The building has a flat galvanised roof and is lined with square gutters and downpipes (replaced since original construction). The front façade displays separated banks of vertical windows.

Those of the top floor are joined to continual clerestory windows running the length of the building; the lower floor windows are similar. This provides a pronounced horizontal perspective which is reinforced by the series of louvred overhangs above the terraces. The terraces have a concrete-tiled floor and the shelters are supported by square steel posts. The louvred shelters are modern; the original basic overhangs were formed by the exposed rafter ends. The terraces are lined by low rails which also serve as the backrest of continuous seating running the length of the building. The low P&O style rails again provide a somewhat elongated perspective of the different levels. The front entrance is from Ellery Crescent through a glazed entry lobby (originally a *porte cochere*)

The large open internal areas have been lost with light office partitions, though some significant original features have survived the fit-out. Of note, these include the dark stained timber window and door frames and architraves, the location of services and amenities and the (now defunct) dumbwaiter. The dumbwaiter is the only remaining physical evidence of the original catering facilities. Internal joinery is dark-stained, including window and door frames, stair rails and some skirting, with a basic mould used throughout. It is likely that some of the original doors were also of similar style, though have since been replaced with modern solid or glazed examples. An original dark-stained timber ledged door can be seen providing access to the sub-floor area from the records room on the lower ground floor, and should be retained. The cornices and skirting boards are of a very basic square mould, apart from the northwest extension which has a slight scotia mould along the upper length of the boards. These stylistic differences help differentiate the original style from later additions.

Original ceilings are coated with vermiculite, with later false ceilings of fibro boards added throughout. Other modern additions include air-conditioning units (with unsympathetic ductwork running the length of the western façade above the windows and punctuating the ground floor terrace), modern light fittings with some original plastic mounting blocks, and modern appliances and fixtures in bathrooms and kitchenettes.

Landscape

The northern façade of the building is screened by a number of nectar producing acacia trees. This group of trees is a significant natural element that helps to set the building in the Australian landscape, though does attract possums. A number of mature trees

Description of the Pauline Griffin Building

are also found in the surrounding landscape, including a large oak to the northwest and a line of young conifers along the path from Chifley Library to the west. Two large eucalypts screen the air-conditioning unit to the northwest of the front façade which also help to establish the building in the Australian landscape.

Significance Assessment against the Commonwealth Heritage criteria

Statement of Significance

The Pauline Griffin Building was the first Student Union building constructed on the ANU campus. The building was central to student life on the ANU Campus in the 1960s until the current Union Court was constructed. The building was converted into office accommodation, a purpose which it served for many years.

The Pauline Griffin Building was designed by notable modern architect Sydney Ancher, a prominent Australian modern architect from the 1950s-1970s, and is an outstanding example of the post-war international style of architecture, of which Ancher was a pioneer. The building demonstrates the principal characteristics of this style and also has elements of the inter-war functionalist style.

The Pauline Griffin Building is strongly associated with Sydney Ancher, and since 2001, has also been strongly associated with Pauline Griffin, AM, who was University Pro Chancellor from 1991-1998. Pauline Griffin also stood as a member of the University Council from 1978-1998.

Criteria	Assessment
<p>(a) Historic The place has significant heritage value because of the place's importance in the course, or pattern, of Australia's natural or cultural history.</p>	<p>The Pauline Griffin Building was the first student Union building constructed on the ANU campus. It housed early student catering facilities, as well as other administrative offices and retail outlets that were an important part of student social life in the 1960s.</p> <p>The Pauline Griffin Building was designed by notable modern architect Sydney Ancher, and is an outstanding example of the post war international style of architecture, of which Anchor was a pioneer. The building is named after Pauline Griffin AM, Pro Chancellor of the ANU from 1991 to 1998.</p> <p>The Pauline Griffin Building meets criterion (a) for historic values</p> <p><i>Attributes</i> Form and original function of the building as the ANU Student Union and its significant associations.</p>
<p>(b) Rarity The place has significant heritage values because of the place's possession of uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of Australia's natural or cultural history.</p>	<p>The Pauline Griffin Building does not meet CHL criterion (b) for rarity values.</p>

Significance Assessment against the Commonwealth Heritage criteria

<p>(c) Scientific The place has significant heritage value because of the place's potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of Australia's natural or cultural history.</p>	<p>The Pauline Griffin Building does not meet CHL criterion (c) for scientific values.</p>
<p>(d) Representative The place has significant heritage value because of the place's importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of: A class of Australia's natural or cultural places; or A class of Australia's natural or cultural environments.</p>	<p>The Pauline Griffin Building is an outstanding example of the post-war international style of architecture. Designed by Sydney Ancher, a pioneer of this style. The building demonstrates the principal characteristics of this style including the overall cubiform shape, flat roof, horizontality, use of glass and steel, differing fenestration, plain, smooth wall surfaces, overhangs for shade and contrasting textures.</p> <p>The building also has elements of the interwar functionalist style including a take on the traditional P&O style balconies and corbusian window motifs or ribbon windows.</p> <p>Furthermore, the Pauline Griffin Building is representative of University Student Union in the 1960s, with remnant fabric (such as the dumb waiter) demonstrating this use prior to its refurbishment for office accommodation.</p> <p>The Pauline Griffin Building meets criterion (d) for representative values</p> <p>Attributes</p> <p>The form and interior and exterior fabric of the building including the horizontal massing, P&O railings, fenestration, flat roof and contrasting textures, interior stained timber doors, windows and architraves, vermiculite ceiling and the original function of the building as the ANU Student Union.</p>
<p>(e) Aesthetic The place has significant heritage value because of the place's importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics valued by a community or cultural group.</p>	<p>While the Pauline Griffin Building displays a high level of aesthetic value, to fully meet this criterion, aesthetic values must be demonstrated as being valued by the community. The community appreciation of aesthetic value has not been formally tested.</p> <p>The Pauline Griffin Building does not meet CHL criterion (e) for aesthetic values</p>
<p>(f) Creative/Technical The place has significant heritage value because of the place's importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period.</p>	<p>The Pauline Griffin Building does not meet CHL criterion (f) for creative/technical values</p>

Significance Assessment against the Commonwealth Heritage criteria

<p>(g) Social The place has significant heritage value because of the place's strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons.</p>	<p>The Pauline Griffin Buildings has strong connections with the ANU community as the former Student Union; however, the presence of social value (strong or special attachment to the place by an identified community group) has not been formally tested.</p> <p>The Pauline Griffin Building does not meet CHL criterion (g) for social values</p>
<p>(h) Associative The place has significant heritage value because of the place's special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in Australia's natural and cultural history.</p>	<p>The Pauline Griffin Building is strongly associated with Sydney Ancher, a prominent modern architect who designed the building. Ancher was a pioneer of modern architecture in NSW and beyond, and was instrumental in the growth of the post-war international style of architecture.</p> <p>Since 2001, the Pauline Griffin Building has been strongly associated with Pauline Griffin, AM, who was University Pro Chancellor from 1991-1998. Pauline Griffin also stood as a member of the University Council from 1978-1998.</p> <p>The Pauline Griffin Building meets criterion (h) for associative values</p> <p><i>Attributes</i> The building itself and its strong associations with notable persons.</p>
<p>(i) Indigenous The place has significant heritage value because of the place's importance as part of Indigenous tradition.</p>	<p>The Pauline Griffin Building does not meet CHL criterion (i) for Indigenous values</p>

Photographs



Figure 5: The Union Building (Pauline Griffin Building) under construction October 15, 1964. (Source: ANU Archives)



Figure 6: Newly Completed Union Building (Pauline Griffin Building) October 5 1965. (Source: ANU Archives)



Figure 7: Southwest view of the Pauline Griffin Building with the now enclosed *porte cochere*. (Source: ANU Heritage Office 2011)



Figure 8: Current view of Pauline Griffin Building. (Source: ANU Heritage Office 2011)



Figure 9: Interior top floor of the Pauline Griffin Building circa 1966. (Source: ANU Archives)



Figure 10: Memorable social gatherings on the lawns near the old Union Building included presentations and student festivals (the Aquarius Festival of University Arts, 1971). (Source: ANU Archives)

Management Issues

Constraints and Opportunities

Constraints arise from the identified heritage values of the Pauline Griffin Building and it is a requirement under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (Cwth)* (EPBC Act) to conserve them. The significant fabric of the Pauline Griffin Building, as indicated in the attributes above, should be conserved wherever possible.

The Pauline Griffin Building is of High heritage significance and meets the EPBC Commonwealth Heritage criteria a) historic, d) representative and h) associative. Elements of 'high' heritage value embody Commonwealth Heritage values in their own right and make a significant contribution to the values of the Acton Campus as a whole. Elements of high heritage value should be retained and conserved. They require a high level of care in their management and the tolerance for change is generally low or able to tolerate some change and adaptive reuse. Loss or unsympathetic alteration would diminish the Commonwealth Heritage values of an individual element and the campus as a whole.

The **Tolerance for Change** heritage management tool, outlined in Section 7.6 of the ANU Acton Campus Heritage Study 2012, will assist in conserving heritage values through a process of change. The Pauline Griffin Building is able to tolerate moderate/some level of change through development whereby the historic, representative and associative attributes and characteristics are conserved and interpreted.

Opportunities arise from the identified heritage values of the Pauline Griffin Building. The history of the Pauline Griffin Building should be interpreted to maintain the historic and associative values of significant attributes identified in the assessments above. A greater degree of change may be tolerated if interpretation is of a very high quality and considered in any future development, which presents the identified heritage values for the future.

Recommendations

The Pauline Griffin Building should be nominated to the Commonwealth Heritage List and a Heritage Management Plan should be developed to guide the best practice management of the site.

If development resulting in loss of significant fabric is proposed, interpretation and a heritage impact assessment would be a prerequisite according to EPBC Act requirements.

Photographic recording for the ANU archives should be undertaken prior to any potential loss of significant fabric, buildings or landscaping in any future development of the Pauline Griffin Building.

A formal assessment of the aesthetic and social values of the building should be carried out.