

Study Item/ Area	HC Coombs Complex / Hedley Bull Building
Acton Campus Precinct	ELLERY Precinct
Building Nos. & Names	8 (HC Coombs Building Extension), 8A (Coombs Lecture Theatre), 9 (HC Coombs Building), 9A (Coombs Lab Wing), 130 (Hedley Bull Centre)



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

Heritage Ranking	HC Coombs Complex (Buildings 8, 8a, 9 and 9a)— High —Meets criteria for Commonwealth Heritage List Hedley Bull Building— Neutral —does not meet criteria for Commonwealth Heritage List
Heritage Listing	The HC Coombs Complex or the Hedley Bull Building is not listed on the Commonwealth Heritage List. The HC Coombs Building is nominated to the ACT Heritage Register (August 2007).
Condition—Date	The condition noted here is at October 2011. The extant buildings and trees in the HC Coombs Building and Hedley Bull building areas continue to be well maintained as the Research Schools of Social Sciences (RSSSPS) and Pacific Studies (RSPacS). Some sections of the HC Coombs Complex require minor repairs and upgrade of services, though overall the buildings are in very good condition.
Relevant Documentation	There is no relevant documentation for these buildings.

Context of the Buildings

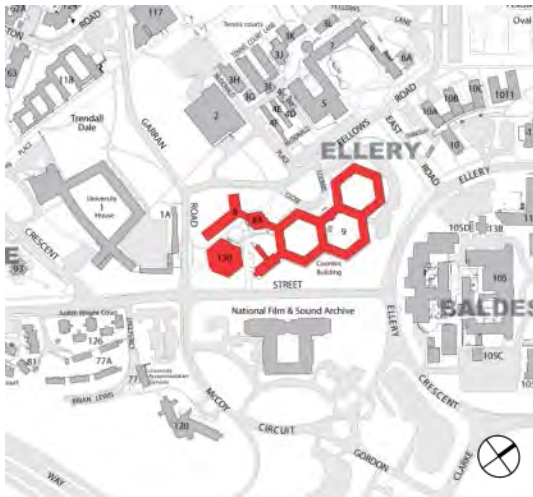


Figure 2: The HC Coombs building and surrounding faculty buildings including University House and the National Film and Sound Archive.

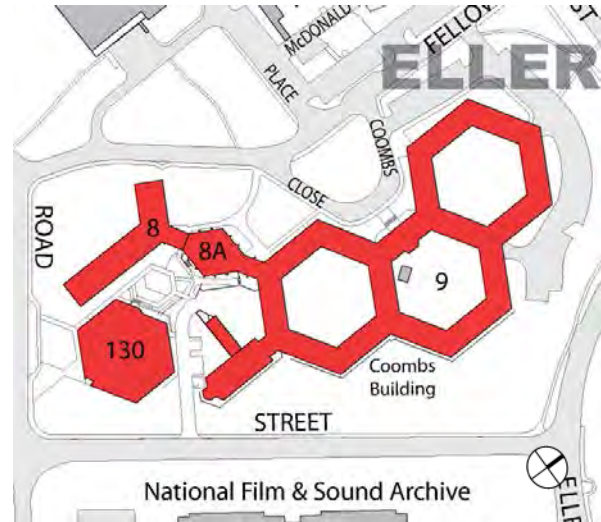


Figure 3: Configuration of the H C Coombs Building and its extensions.

Brief Historical Overview

In 1959, the Joint Schools of Social Sciences and Pacific Studies of the ANU, housed in temporary accommodation in the old Canberra Community Hospital buildings, were provided with funding to construct more permanent accommodation. Initial construction began in 1960 with a hexagonal design submitted by Melbourne architects Mockridge, Stahle and Mitchell Pty Ltd.

The foundation stone for the building was officially laid by Robert Gordon Menzies MP, Prime Minister of Australia, in 1962, with construction of the first stage completed by 1964. The building was awarded the Meritorious Architecture Award from the Royal Australian Institute of Architects that same year.

The architects Mockridge, Stahle and Mitchell Pty Ltd were renowned in Australia for their work on educational buildings and churches, and their unique interpretation of the Post-War Ecclesiastical and Post-War Melbourne Regional styles. The hexagonal shape of the footprint is also reminiscent of the work of renowned architect John Andrews of John Andrews International.

The Coombs Lecture Theatre (Building 8a) was completed in 1968. By this time the building's design and the artworks associated with it, including purpose-designed ornamental screens for the front of the building designed by Matcham Skipper, had generated interest and warranted inclusion in the film *Sculpture in Australia* in 1967, produced by the Commonwealth Film Unit.

An additional 'hemi-hexagon', left out of the initial construction due to financial constraints, was added in 1971 to the rear of the link between the two original hemi-hexagons. At this time the lab-wing of the building was also added. These additions included laboratories to house further experimentation and research for various departments. The schools have continued to expand, with the Building now housing over 40 research centres and groups.

In 2002, the HC Coombs Extension, designed by Cox, Humphries, Moss Architects, was constructed to provide additional space for the expanding schools and the College of Asia and the Pacific. This was intentionally designed to complement the existing building using a similar palette of materials and design features.

Further growth in the faculties prompted a need for more space and in 2008 the Hedley Bull Building was completed to house the College of Asia and the Pacific in the southeast section of the Coombs Extension. It was opened by Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd.

The building was officially named the HC Coombs Building after Dr Herbert Cole 'Nugget' Coombs (1906–1997), Chancellor of the ANU from 1968 to 1976, and whose active interest in the ANU spanned nearly four decades. As Director-General of Post-War Reconstruction, he was a member of the ANU Interim Council and then of the ANU Council, serving as Deputy Chair from 1957 and Pro-Chancellor from 1959 to 1968. Dr Coombs instigated many new initiatives in the University, including the Creative Arts Fellowship for Australian artists and the establishment of the North Australian Research Unit. He also served as Governor of the Reserve Bank of Australia, Chair of the Australian Council for Aboriginal Affairs and Chair of the Australian Council for the Arts.

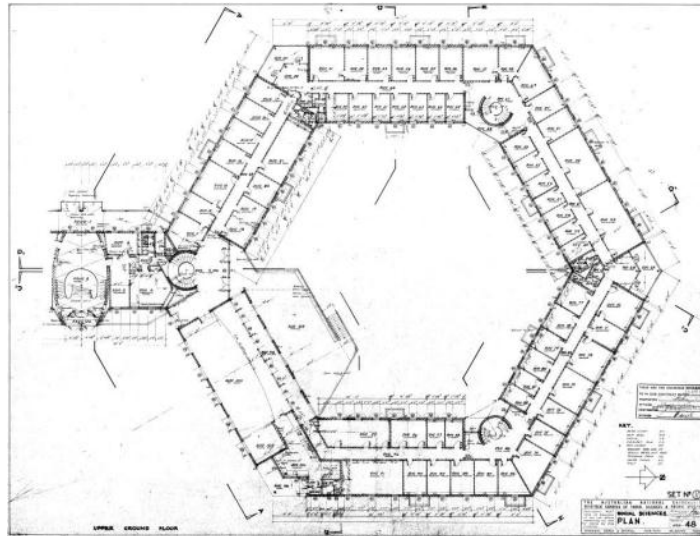


Figure 4: The original plan of the original HC Coombs Building (one side) This presents the layout of rooms for all three floors of the building including stairwell locations.

Description of HC Coombs Complex & Hedley Bull Building.

Buildings

The later buildings within this group were designed to complement the original design for the HC Coombs Building presented by Mockridge, Stahle and Mitchell architects. Despite the staggered construction dates, many of the additions to the initial building were planned in advance and materials for construction were acquired to retain the consistency of design. The Hedley Bull building (130) is an exception to this. The buildings were specifically designed to respond to their location, weaving through existing vegetation to sit comfortably within their assigned space.

Building 9. HC Coombs Building is of a hemi-hexagonal design and is constructed of putty coloured Santan brick featuring single hung sash windows, with white painted wooden frames and shutters. The roof is clad in acid green Cordova style tiles and has original copper guttering/plumbing. Alternating windows include an additional glazed sash and a balcony finished with black iron balustrades. The main entrance is framed with ornamental metallic screens by artist Matcham Skipper, commissioned to be included with the building during construction. Internal walls are bagged and painted brickwork with wooden doors and finishes with double splayed architraves.

Building 9a: Coombs Lab wing is a rectangular extension to the original hexagon designated for the Research School of Pacific Studies. It is constructed of similar materials to the original building for continuity of design. The interior is of materials appropriate to the function of the section as a laboratory.

Building 8: Coombs Building Extension continues the external features of the original design including the Santan brickwork and window alignment. This building differs slightly, having window screens offset from the building rather than directly attached as appears on the original sections.

Building 8a: Coombs Lecture Theatre was designed to sympathetically complement the original sections and their hexagonal shape. The exterior of the building mimics the Santan brick of the original building however does not include windows. The interior is lined with carpet and timber panelling to provide the required acoustic qualities.

Building 130: Hedley Bull Centre. The design of this building is not congruent with the other buildings within the HC Coombs complex; however the hexagonal shape of this building represents strong consideration by the architects to complement the existing buildings. It is constructed in moulded concrete panelling with black, metal framed windows with timber panelling lining the interior. While it does possess similar design aspects to the rest of the buildings, it remains a distinctively separate building within the complex. It has been designed and reported as one of the most 'green' buildings on the Acton campus in terms of its passive mass; grey-water recycling; green water retention; recycled water used in gardens (mostly native species) and operable windows with high performance glass. This building won an award for best interior architecture in Australia in 2009.

Landscape

The landscape in the area is mixed. Around Fellows Road area there is lawn and full grown eucalypts. This contrasts with the formally designed garden beds that surround the Hedley Bull Building and the Liversidge Street side of the H C Coombs building. The beds include predominantly native species, however there are a few non-native plants including pines along the East Road section. The courtyard landscaping was originally designed by Beryl Mann (1916-1982), a highly acclaimed landscape architect.

Significance Assessment against the Commonwealth Heritage criteria

Statement of Significance

The HC Coombs Complex was designed by renowned architects Mockridge, Stahle and Mitchell and is significant as purpose built permanent accommodation for the Research Schools of Social Sciences and Pacific Studies. The building was one of the first structures considered permanent in a climate of temporary accommodation for the fledgling University and its establishment. The HC Coombs Complex is representative of several mid to late twentieth century architectural styles uniquely employed and implemented by Mockridge, Stahle and Mitchell architects, who were well known for their innovative approach to construction and their work on tertiary buildings.

The complex is named after Herbert Cole "Nugget" Coombs, who was an influential figure in the establishment and development of the University. Coombs was Chancellor of the ANU from 1968-1976. The Research Schools of Social Sciences and Pacific Studies was one of the four original research schools established the ANU. The school coordinates the Australian Dictionary of Biography, a highly valuable tool which continues to contribute to Australia's history. The buildings also house the department of International Relations, the only one of its kind in Australia and one of only a few academic centres in the world devoted to research in the field. This department has, and continues to, attract distinguished international scholars.

The HC Coombs Complex is also associated with several important academics who have taught and studied at the schools including Hedley Bull, a renowned professor of International Relations, Sir Fredrick Nadel, the first Chair of Anthropology, Sir Keith Hancock, historian and Director of the Research School of Social Sciences and WD Borrie, Professor of Demography, and namesake of the Borrie Prize which promotes the study of population-related issues in all academic disciplines.

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 HC Coombs Complex was designed by renowned architects Mockridge, Stahle and Mitchell and is significant as purpose built permanent accommodation for the Research Schools of Social Sciences and Pacific Studies. The building was one of the first structures considered permanent in a climate of temporary accommodation for the fledgling University and its establishment.</p> <p>The complex is named after HC Coombs, who was an influential figure in the establishment and development of the University. Coombs was Chancellor of the ANU from 1968-1976.</p> <p>The Research Schools of Social Sciences and Pacific Studies was one of the four original research schools established the ANU. The school coordinates the Australian Dictionary of Biography, a highly valuable tool which continues to contribute to Australia's history.</p> <p>The buildings also house the department of International Relations, the only one of its kind in Australia and one of only a few academic centres in the world devoted to research in the field. This department has, and continues to, attract distinguished international scholars.</p> <p>The HC Coombs Complex meets CHL criterion (a) for historic values</p> <p>Attributes</p> <p>The complex and the significant work of the individual research groups which are housed there.</p>

Significance Assessment against the Commonwealth Heritage criteria

<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 HC Coombs Complex does not meet CHL criterion (b) for rarity values.</p>
<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 HC Coombs Complex 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 HC Coombs Complex is representative of several mid to late twentieth century architectural styles uniquely employed and implemented by Mockridge, Stahle and Mitchell architects, who were well known for their innovative approach to construction and their work on tertiary buildings. The HC Coombs Complex is one of the only examples of this prominent firm's tertiary buildings in Canberra.</p> <p>The complex demonstrates a considered response to its existing landscape, as the building sits comfortably between already established vegetation and capitalises on the irregular shape of the site formed by surrounding roads.</p> <p>The building's unusual shape, with a hemi-hexagonal footprint, the integration of sculptural screens (by Matcham Skipper) into the functional design of the building, the addition of complementary buildings and the internal features including the customised mosaic tiling in the stairwells and timber batten features on the ceilings demonstrate the characteristics of Mockridge, Stahle and Mitchell's unique style.</p> <p>The HC Coombs Complex meets CHL criterion (f) for representative values</p> <p>Attributes</p> <p>The building, its location and its unique design features including customised internal features and the integration of the ornamental screens by Matcham Skipper.</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>The HC Coombs Complex displays a high level of aesthetic values, especially with the integration the ornamental screens by Matcham Skipper.</p> <p>Aesthetic values must be demonstrated as being valued by the community to qualify for recognition on the CHL. At this stage, the HC Coombs Complex does not meet this criterion because community appreciation of aesthetic value has not been formally tested.</p> <p>The HC Coombs Complex does not meet CHL criterion (e) for aesthetic values.</p>

Significance Assessment against the Commonwealth Heritage criteria

<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><i>The HC Coombs Complex does not meet CHL criterion (f) for creative/technical values.</i></p>
<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 HC Coombs Complex is likely to have strong connections with the ANU community; however, the presence of social values (strong or special attachment to the place by an identified community group) has not been formally tested.</p> <p>The HC Coombs Complex 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 HC Coombs Complex is strongly associated with several important figures in the history of the ANU including Dr Herbert Cole 'Nugget' Coombs (1906–1997), Chancellor of the ANU from 1968 to 1976. Dr Coombs instigated many new initiatives at the University, including the Creative Arts Fellowship and the establishment of the North Australian Research Unit.</p> <p>The Complex is also associated with the many academics who have taught and studied at the schools including Hedley Bull, a renowned professor of International Relations, Sir Fredrick Nadel, the first Chair of Anthropology, Sir Keith Hancock, historian and Director of the Research School of Social Sciences and WD Borrie, Professor of Demography, and namesake of the Borrie Prize which promotes the study of population-related issues in all academic disciplines.</p> <p>The HC Coombs Complex meets CHL criterion (h) for associational values</p> <p>Attributes The buildings and the significant research and achievements which occurred there.</p>
<p>(i) Indigenous The place has significant heritage value because of the place's importance as part of Indigenous tradition.</p>	<p>The HC Coombs Complex does not meet CHL criterion (i) for Indigenous values</p>

Photographs



Figure 5. HC Coombs Building from above, 1965 (Source: ANU Archives)



Figure 6. HC Coombs Building, 1966 (Source: ANU Archives)



Figure 7: October 22 1962. R.G. Menzies, CH, QC, MP, Prime Minister, laying the HC Coombs Building Foundation Stone. (Source: ANU Archives)



Figure 8: Portrait of HC Coombs located on in top floor foyer of the HC Coombs Building. (Source: ANU Heritage Office 2011)

Photographs



Figure 9: Hedley Bull Building interior. (Source: ANU Heritage Office 2011)



Figure 10: Coombs Theatre June 1968. Start of University lectures, led by Chancellor Dr HC Coombs and Professor Sir Keith Hancock. (Source: ANU Archives 2011)



Figure 11: Main Entrance to the H C Coombs Building under construction with Skipper's Screens Installed. 1963. (Source: ANU Archives)



Figure 12: Southern view of the main entrance to HC Coombs Building. (Source: ANU Heritage Office 2011)

Photographs



Figure 13: Main entrance to HC Coombs Building showing screen sculptures by Matcham Skipper (Source: ANU Heritage Office 2011)



Figure 14: Internal view of HC Coombs Building. (Source: ANU Heritage Office 2011)



Figure 15: Western view of HC Coombs Building including landscape. (Source: ANU Heritage Office 2011)



Figure 16: Eastern view of Hedley Bull Centre (130) and HC Coombs Extension (8) from Garran Road (Source: ANU Heritage Office 2011)

Management Issues

Constraints and Opportunities

Constraints arise from the identified heritage values of the HC Coombs Complex 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 HC Coombs Complex, as indicated in the attributes above, should be conserved wherever possible.

The HC Coombs Complex is of high heritage value and meets the EPBC Commonwealth Heritage criteria a) historic and 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 Hedley Bull Building is of neutral heritage value as it does not embody, reflect or demonstrate Commonwealth or National Heritage values. Hedley Bull Building does not make any contribution to the site nor does it detract from the overall heritage values of the ANU Acton campus.

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 HC Coombs Complex is able to tolerate some level of change through development whereby the historic, representative and associative attributes and characteristics are conserved and interpreted. The Hedley Bull building can tolerate a substantial level of change.

Opportunities arise from the identified heritage values of the HC Coombs Complex. The history of the HC Coombs Complex should be interpreted to maintain the historic, representative 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

A Heritage Management Plan should be developed for the HC Coombs Complex detailing the best practice conservation and management of the identified heritage values.

The HC Coombs Complex should be nominated to the CHL.

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 HC Coombs Complex.

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