

# Register of Significant Twentieth Century Architecture

**RSTCA No:** R080

**Name of Place:** Giralang Primary School

**Other/Former Names:**

**Address/Location:** Canopus Crescent GIRALANG 2617

Block 1 Section 80 of Belconnen

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Listing Status:	Registered	Other Heritage Listings:	
Date of Listing:	July 1987	Level of Significance:	
Citation Revision No:	2	Category:	Educational
Citation Revision Date:	November 2004	Style:	Late Modern

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Date of Design:	1974	Designer:	Enrico Taglietti
Construction Period:	1975-76	Client/Owner/Lessee:	NCDC
Date of Additions:		Builder:	ACT Builders P/L

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## Statement of Significance

The Giralang Primary & Infants School, Hall, Child Health Clinic and Pre-School complex is an example of significant architecture and an educational resource. The complex in general and the Primary and Infants School and associated Assembly Hall in particular, are excellent examples of the Late Twentieth-Century Organic Style (1960-) and are notable for displaying the design skill of the architect Enrico Taglietti. The design incorporates one of the two features that are specific to the style, that being its free, asymmetrical massing.

The following design features are of additional significance; the way the complex angular geometry complements nature, the use of horizontal roof planes contrasting with the steep pitched roof forms of the main elements, highlight windows, horizontal 'boarded' metal fascias, the timber lined eaves, face concrete brickwork, clear timber finish internally, open planning, internal courtyards, colour scheme and varied ceiling heights (including the original ceiling to the Assembly Hall).

The 'free' design of the complex demonstrates an important development in architectural style in the 1960s to the 1970s by contrast with the more rationalist architecture in Canberra at that time.

The school has an important association with the establishment of the ACT's own education system founded on community involvement and school based curriculum. The school was designed to be up with international trends; open planned to facilitate the new philosophy of education that was about learning in flexible, multi-purpose spaces that enabled teachers to work in teams to cater for the individual needs of students. It is believed to be one of the few occasions when architecture has been successfully used to reinforce an educational idea. From its inception, the school was run on a teacher participation basis with development of school-based curriculum and school-based decision-making. It was later to be the first ACT school to embark on the new field of computer education and the use of IT in administration. The School Based Financial Management system now used throughout the ACT was developed at Giralang.

The complex was awarded the RAI ACT Chapter Canberra Medallion in 1977 and the RAI ACT Chapter Twenty Five Year Award in 2001.

The complex is important for its strong association with the talented architect Enrico Taglietti who is considered a key practitioner in the Late Twentieth-Century Organic style in Australia. This complex is featured in a number of important publications. Enrico Taglietti played and still plays a significant role in Canberra's cultural history. He is one of the most important local architects to practise in Canberra and this is a major work in his career. He believes that this project is of utmost importance in his architectural career as he was able to realize most of his philosophical

and spatial principles. Enrico Taglietti was awarded a Life Fellow of the RAI in 2001.

The Giralang School and Health Centre complex is one of the two most important works of architecture in Canberra by the leading local and nationally significant architect Enrico Taglietti. The other being Dickson Library, Dickson, 1969.

The architecture of this complex may contribute to the education of designers in their understanding of Late Twentieth-Century Architectural styles by locating the building in its historical and environmental contexts and placing it within the knowledge domain of architectural, urban and environmental histories. Through its open planned class spaces, associated educational philosophy and educational function this school is a valuable educational resource for teacher education and research

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## **Description**

The Giralang Primary & Infants School, Hall, Child Health Clinic and Pre-School complex, 1976, by Enrico Taglietti, is an excellent example of the Late Twentieth-Century Organic Style (1960-) with its free, asymmetrical massing.

Giralang is a northern suburb of Belconnen abutting onto the Barton Highway to the north. The Primary School is located centrally, to the south of the suburb, surrounded on three sides by Giralang District Playing Fields. The part Radburn planning of the suburb has in general created a pedestrian flow for the children from home to school. The school opens out directly onto the unfenced playgrounds and further on to the ovals.

The entrance to the school is beyond the Giralang neighbourhood shopping centre off the concave enclosing form of Canopus Crescent and past the aesthetically linked Health Centre. It is approached from the northeast along a path. Car parking is provided to the east, in front of the Assembly Hall. The "free" plan of the Primary and Infant School and Assembly Hall is based on a cruciform with interconnecting teaching areas under one roof. At the centre of the cruciform is the library, the heart of the school, surrounded by the open plan classrooms on three sides and an internal landscaped courtyard on the fourth side. Additional internal courtyards are cut into the plan to provide natural light and to enhance the feeling of openness.

The Principal's office, staff room, boardroom and administration office are located off the northern entry, at the top of the "Y" axis of the cruciform plan. The floor plan steps down the site with a circulation ramp leading from the administration wing down towards the large central landscaped internal courtyard in front of the library. The wide passage splits in two directions to enter the teaching areas either side of the courtyard and library. Restricted views into the courtyard are provided through porthole windows from the passage and teaching areas. Further open ramps either side of the library provide continuity between teaching areas. Each teaching area has separate withdrawal rooms, wet areas and teachers' offices providing for large and for small teaching groups and varied activities. The teaching areas open out onto the playground and smaller courtyards, some landscaped and others paved. The teaching areas are all linked through the open planning.

There are a small number of raised levels to the southern end of the school for special activities on the upper levels with wet areas below. There are two mini stepped theatres, one of which is associated with the kindergarten. These are also used as separate private teaching areas. The teacher office rooms have extensive glazing to allow supervision of the whole area.

The kindergarten is to the west on the "X" axis and is slightly separated from the adjoining class areas and the central library. The kindergarten has its own north east facing, partly enclosed grassed playground, however, due to the limited number of teachers, the kindergarten children play with the older children in the combined playground to the south. This area is now used as an outdoor teaching facility.

To the east along the "X" axis the Assembly (Communal) Hall is excised from the plan and is located away from the classrooms, with the canteen, connected via a wide enclosed passage. The hall is a clearly articulated separate form that expresses its dual function: it was planned to be used, and is still used, during school hours as well as an out of hours community facility,

along with the canteen, for the residents of Giralang.

The Assembly Hall has its own separate entry lobby for out of hours use. The hall proscenium arch is quite low, in scale with the young performers. A false ceiling has been installed, to reduce heating costs, which detracts from the original space with its high raking ceiling and full-length highlight windows.

The school canteen is located in the wide link foyer between the class areas and the assembly hall enabling it to also be used out of hours with the assembly hall during functions. During the school day the children approach the canteen off the link foyer through separate glazed doors from the southern playground.

The cruciform plan of the school is expanded at the internal corners where the rooms extend out in plan with 55 degree external walls. This planning is reminiscent of FL Wright in his later years when he used 60 degree grids to form the basis of his designs. Here the whole planning grid is on a square module and these 50 degree walls are planned in a 2:3 (X:Y) angle cut across the grid.

The central location of the library forms the learning 'heart' of the school with access provided from two sides. The dynamic space has a raked ceiling with highlight windows over half of the floor area. The bulkhead and vertical surface of the highlight wall are timber lined. To the north the full width glazing, with timber lining below sill height, allows a view out over the large internal courtyard while to the south the library steps up a half flight to an intimate mezzanine space that cantilevers out over the southern open plan class areas with a bush-hammered insitu concrete walled "balcony". This area was originally an intimate reading area but is now used as the computer lab. Below the mezzanine, down a half level, is the librarian's office and teacher resource store. The librarian's office has extensive glazing to allow supervision of the main area of the library.

To the south of the library there is an important spatial relationship where the ceiling rises to its greatest height along the open plan teaching spaces. Externally this space is expressed as a similar sculptural form to the Assembly Hall structure. Internally the vista extends along a exceptional three-dimensional space where the sculptured masonry walls and library cantilevered concrete 'balcony' combine to frame vistas that at their ends extend on out to the playgrounds through vertical windows at the angled perimeter walls.

A secondary visual axis extends across the southern teaching areas and the two internal courtyards where there are 'porthole' windows in all the walls providing a vista from one side of the playground through the building to the other side of the playground.

"It is like an adventure playground turned to educational use." AR

The school is constructed in a steel frame on a 6m module. Throughout the buildings the metalwork (windows, doors, light fittings and exposed steel posts) is painted red. External and internal walls are cement brick. Internally the original face brick walls have been painted and the roof is metal deck with a wide white painted metal fascia to the flat roof areas. The school colours are yellow and blue and these prime colours were incorporated in the design. Prominent vertical square hollow metal pipes are attached to the fascias acting as down pipe spitters. These were originally painted yellow, but have been repainted white. They give a vertical rhythm to the facades that contrasts with the strong horizontal form of the white metal fascias. The stormwater pipes of the Child Health Clinic have not been repainted white and are a faded yellow.

Internally the carpet is blue, some would appear to be original. Much of the original internal timber joinery is intact and has a natural finish. Most wet area joinery has been replaced with laminex veneered units. Some of the original light tan coloured acoustic ceiling panels have been replaced with new white panels, some in new two way exposed suspension systems, and in places, hiding the previous raked ceilings. The boardroom and staff room have highlight windows and raked ceilings.

A partition wall has been installed dividing the large teaching area at the southern end of the school and the originally unpainted bush-hammered insitu concrete to the library upper mezzanine has been painted white.

The internal masonry walls are sculptured, including part circular forms, and combined with the varying ceiling levels, the whole creates a complexity of form and architectural interest of outstanding and dramatic affect. The innovative design solution provides a school that has elements of “fun, surprise and drama” Taylor, reinforced by refined architectural detailing and dynamic yet appropriate scale.

The large landscaped courtyard located between the administration area and the library is paved with ceramic tiles designed by the children as a Bi-Centenary project in 1988. ‘Giralang’ in the Wiradjuri language means star, and the celestial theme of the tiling is directly related to the suburb and its street names. The trees and large stormwater ‘bowls’ are also important design elements. In the foundations below the tiles is a time capsule placed by the children at the time of laying the tiles.

Other architectural elements of the Late Twentieth-Century Organic style (1960-) displayed by the building that relate to the external forms are:

- the complex angular geometry complements nature;
- horizontal roof planes, and
- highlight windows.

The additional significant design features are; the steep pitched roof forms of the major elements, horizontal ‘boarded’ metal fascias and timber lined eaves, face cement brickwork, clear timber finish internally, open planning, internal courtyards, colour scheme and varied ceiling heights (including the original raked ceiling to the Assembly Hall).

The Pre-School is located to the west of the school and is constructed in the same aesthetic and similar materials with the deep fascia painted blue.

The Child Health Clinic is located to the north east of the school and is constructed in the same materials and retains the original colour scheme to the exterior.

Comparisons with other Canberra examples of the Late Twentieth-Century Organic style buildings are interesting because the comparison will most likely be with other buildings designed by Taglietti. The complex can be compared with the Dickson Library, 1969, that has, in principle, a similar cruciform plan. Both buildings have in common the display of free, asymmetrical massing and design features typical of the style: the way the complex angular geometry complements nature, the use of horizontal roof planes, highlight windows and strong horizontal fascias. The location of the school library at the centre of the plan can be compared with the Dickson Library that had as its ‘heart’ a raised reading area, which has now been ‘cut out’ for reasons of supervision. Externally the grey concrete brickwork of the School and Health Centre can be compared with the boarded concrete walls of the Dickson Library. The internal courtyards of the school can be compared with the corner courtyards of the library. The parkland setting of the school and health centre can be contrasted with the urban setting of the Library.

The schools, hall and health centre are well maintained and in good condition. There are minor internal alterations to some areas, ceilings have been replaced and walls painted, and the raked ceiling to the hall has been hidden by a flat suspended ceiling system. Externally, retro-fitted services have partially obscured the architectural aesthetic.

The builder was ACT Builders (interstate) Pty Ltd.

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## **Condition and Integrity**

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## **Background/History**

The school is one of four schools Taglietti has designed in Canberra, it was the third he designed and is the most significant architecturally. Other Primary schools he designed are: Latham, a traditional school with individual classrooms; Flynn, a school with four large classrooms planned to

educate children with the same academic level but possibly with varying ages, and Gowrie which was similar to Flynn but with the large spaces only connected through outdoor passageways.

Organic architecture is imbued with the principles and teachings of F L Wright. Wright was one of the most important figures in modern architecture and influenced architects throughout the world during the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. His "Prairie" style of the first 20 years of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century emphasized the horizontal using cantilevering forms, extensive roof overhangs and open free planning with extensive areas of glazing, often crafted with leadlight designs.

During the 1960s and 1970s the National Capital Development Commission required schools to be located in the new residential suburbs that were being built following the expansion of the nation's capital, through the implementation of the NCDC's new urban plan for Canberra called the "Y" plan. These schools were sized to accommodate the infant and primary aged school children of the newly developed suburb and were usually centrally located and adjacent to neighbourhood playing fields and parks.

Interestingly the houses in the suburb of Giralang were more or less built before the school was constructed and the Giralang children were bused to the adjoining suburban Kaleen Primary School, a suburb that at that time had few houses constructed.

In 1974, the ACT established its own education system founded on community involvement and a school based curriculum. The education authority's new policy at the time was for open plan classrooms in preference to the previously formal enclosed individual classrooms and associated education philosophy of previous years.

The brief for the Giralang Primary and Infants School, compiled by the First Assistant Secretary of the Commonwealth Department of Education Mr A Foskett, "stated that the school was to be open plan to facilitate the new philosophy of education filtering through from Britain and the USA. Open plan education was about learning in flexible, multi-purpose spaces that enabled teachers to work in teams to cater for the individual needs of students. The ACT had just taken over responsibility for education from NSW and was keen to be up with international trends." DI

"Mr Len Childs, who had joined the fledgling ACT Schools Authority from...head of the NSW Teachers Federation, was appointed Principal. He worked with Enrico Taglietti on the design features and the internal fit-out of the school."DI This included a designated school board room, a first in any Canberra School. It is of interest to note that the NCDC were adamant that users of buildings and the architect were not to meet and discuss their projects since the brief had been provided through their consultation process and changes were not to be implemented without NCDC control. Nevertheless the principal and the architect did work together.

"The school has inbuilt flexibility in that there are numerous areas for children to study and learn. This is so for small or medium-size groups. Large groups are easily accommodated." The flexible plan enables teaching options to vary throughout the school day. The provision of teacher's offices in the class areas with extensive glazing to allow straightforward supervision was another innovation at the time.

At the time of completion the school was believed to be the largest in area and the most economical primary school built in Canberra. It was also believed that it was unique and would not be repeated as other school plans in the ACT were. . It was planned for a school population of 660 children but today there are only 180.

On its completion the Chief Education Officer Dr H Beare wrote in a letter to the NCDC Mr Tony Powell dated the 14 December 1976:

"I inspected Giralang Primary School this morning. May I say how delighted I was at the joyfully creative design. It is a school modeled for children full of interest, unusual corners and nooks, and yet with a king of overarching majestic quality in its total architecture. Furthermore because it has been made available well before the first students are due to be admitted, we have been able to recruit the community support for the school and lay the foundations for its opening day."

Just after the completion of the school the first principal, Mr Len Childs, wrote of a gathering with the architect and the year 5 and 6 students:

"I'd told him and the 5/6 that a school should be fun, places to hide, jump, swing, places and nooks to work quietly, architectural structures to stimulate thought like the soaring peaks of the Tibetan mountains, the round windows giving a vista view throughout the school, the quiet of the large inverted stormwater drains, the echo of the chase, the coolness of the concrete. "Fantasising again" I thought, but I had no idea that an architect could build such a convoluted, centrifugal fun palace."

In the 1978 'Comparative Capital Costs of Government and Non-Government Schools in Australia' report for the 'School Commission, State Departments of Education and Public Works, and Commonwealth Department of Education and Construction' it stated of the school:

"An excellent example of the possibilities for novelty in school buildings with an uninhibited architect working from an established brief." And "A modern building with appealing external features and an exciting interior." And "A school worthy of continuous monitoring to gauge acceptability of experimental allocation of spaces."

"The type of schooling offered at Giralang was very different to that of a traditional, single classroom school. During the early years there was a great deal of controversy over the teaching methods, grouping of students and curriculum. ... Even though many talented teachers were appointed to the school, criticism was a constant feature." DI

These early years saw team teaching as the norm with "Mixed age grouping (Children do not mature at same rate). Helps teachers to cope with wide ability groups – children go to work groups which are all based on ability – helps meet individual needs of children. Home groups encourage social aspect/security." (Board Info.

"In 1988 Mr John Griffin was appointed Principal. Giralang became the first ACT school to embark on the new field of computer education and the use of IT in administration. Mr Griffin was also a pioneer of School Based Financial Management in Schools. He developed this system successfully at Giralang. It is now used throughout the ACT." DI

The flexible plan was designed to meet the open plan education philosophy of the time. "The total effect is both charming and appropriate; and must be accounted one of the very rare occasions when 'Architecture' has been used to reinforce an educational idea." AR Sept 78 "The school was run on a teacher participation basis with development of school-based curriculum and school-based decision-making."

The Child Health Clinic was included as part of the original NCDC brief and it housed a Resident Salaried Medical Doctor, two dental nurses and a Community Nurse. The provision of "bulk-billing" salaried neighbourhood doctors practising from government surgeries located in government owned neighbourhood health centers was an important community health policy in the ACT that was unique in Australia. This important community program was ended and many of the centers hastily demolished under the Carnell Liberal Minority Government of the ACT. A private medical practitioner now rents the clinic

"The Pre-School attached was a semi-autonomous body; the building being under the control of the Principal and the administration being under the control of the Pre-School Authorities."

"There are special 'Community Facilities' at the school. These facilities are used at any time during the day by parent groups and at any time during the night by local community groups". Childs The Assembly hall is also used as the school gymnasium with exercise fixtures and climbing ropes. At present the hall is used at night for callisthenics, and on Sundays by the Giralang Christian Fellowship. The Christian Fellowship works closely with the school preparing Wednesday breakfast for the school children that is served next to the canteen.

The school is greatly valued by the Principal and staff while the Principal believes the community values the school and assembly hall. This is evident in the continued out of hours use of the hall by community groups and the school. DI

The philosophy and goals of the school are enhanced by the architecture. These are:

“Encourage self reliance, self discipline and self motivation leading to the development of a positive self image and pride in achieving an acceptable standard. Such self assurance is to enable the child to cope with life in a complex changing society.”

The school’s flow chart diagram of Integrated Language Arts Program places the library at the centre with the activities and functions placed around it. The school motto is “Adventure in Learning, Caring and Achieving”.

In the mid 1990s a fire damaged parts of the library and destroyed many books.

## **Enrico Taglietti**

"Enrico Taglietti came to Australia from Italy to design the Italian promotional display for a department store in Sydney. While in Australia he was invited to design the Italian Embassy."  
JT89

"The exuberance and formal play of Taglietti's architecture has no parallel in the country. It strangely combines the gaiety of much Italian, free form construction with the sobriety of the heavy forms of Japan's post-war architects. It is an architecture fashioned for mood and visual delight."  
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He established his own architecture practice in Canberra in 1955 and is responsible for the design of some of Canberra's most dynamic buildings. "The freedom of his work contrasts with the functional rigidity of much of Canberra's architecture." "Baffle walls and mouldings, stepped and curved forms, come not from the rational dictates of structural determinism, but from his abstract patterning of the shapes of the building to create interest through striking visual spatial effects."

Taglietti has written of his architecture: "Architecture is the Art of making spaces work for people, is human made environment on which the lives of our children will unfold, is the Matrix that transforms static places into a dynamic assembly of voids that excites emotions alive with users. Is 'Piazza del Palio', 'Central Park', 'Chartre', the Opera House... is the 'Invisible Canberra' of my dreams."

Taglietti studied architecture at the Milan Polytechnic after the WWII, having spent much of his youth in Eritrea. Gio Ponti was a Professor at the Polytechnic, a Bauhaus modernist and one of Italy's most important architects and founder, in 1928, of the journal *Domus*. Taglietti believes Ponti was an excellent teacher and influenced him in these early years, however, it was the ideas of Bruno Zevi at the School of Rome that had the greatest influence on Taglietti. Zevi had recently returned from the USA and brought with him the knowledge of F L Wright and his 'natural' or organic architecture as opposed to 'rational' architecture. Zevi headed the Istituto Nazionale di Architettura in Rome and also edited the journal *L'Architettura Cronache E Storia*. Taglietti found himself being educated in Milan but his preferred philosophy of architecture was being taught in Rome. Another early influence on him was the poetic style by reference to tradition and local environment of the work of the BBPR.

Taglietti's interest in concrete and its plastic forms, comes directly from his early experiences in Italy. In Italy reinforced concrete is a relatively inexpensive construction material compared with other construction materials such as steel. The concrete has a long history of being used in exceptionally innovative ways in the work of Nervi, Montuori, Figini & Pollini, Michelucci, Valle, Mollino and others.

The use of geometric forms and extensive cantilevers, while partly based on F L Wright's early work, is also a theme in modern Italian architecture and can be seen in the work of Valle, Sartago and Moretti. At the base of Moretti's apartment and office building in Via Rugabella, Milan, the tower sits into the lower level with the lower level wall cut at an angle, similar to Taglietti's angled cuts into perimeter walls to some of his buildings.

The Giralang Primary & Infants School, Hall, Child Health Clinic and Pre-School was awarded the RAIA ACT Chapter Canberra Medallion in 1977, the most prestigious award in Canberra for architectural excellence. It was later awarded the RAIA ACT Chapter Twenty Five Year Award in 2001, an honour awarded to places of architectural significance that deserve heritage protection.

Enrico Taglietti was made a Life Fellow of the RAIA in 2001. He is a Knight of St Gregory and Knight Officer of the Italian Republic.

Other examples of his work include the Town House Motel, 1961, (demolished), Cinema Centre, Civic, 1966, (now extensively altered internally), ACMA Conference Centre, Barton, 1967, (altered), Embassy Complex for the Republic of Italy, Deakin, 1967, Apostolic Nunciature and Chapel, Red Hill, 1977, Australian War Memorial Repository, Mitchell, 1979, the schools previously mentioned, Forrest Child Care Centre, Forrest, Woden Youth Centre, Philip, and various houses including Dingle House, Hughes, (De Quetteville), Paterson House, Aranda, McKeown House, Downer.

There are important works in Sydney including the Smith House, Pennant Hills, 1965 and St Anthony's Church, Marsfield, 1968. He also produced work in Hobart and Melbourne.

The Giralang complex is featured in major national and international publications and is considered by Taglietti to be one of his most important works.

Taglietti's buildings have received many awards in addition to the awards for the Giralang complex including: nine Architecture Merit awards from the RAIA ACT Chapter and a 25 year Award for the Dickson Library. The RAIA ACT Chapter considers Taglietti one of the two most eminent members still practising in Canberra, the other being Romaldo Giurgola who is semi-retired.

Enrico Taglietti is considered a key practitioner of the Late Twentieth-Century Organic style in Australia. He believes that this project is of utmost importance in his architectural career and it is where he was able to realize most of his philosophic and spatial principles.

From an educational point of view, the heritage aspects of architectural and building form, in addition to the space, structure and materials, are most readily identified through insitu experiences. Documentation, and access to documentation of many heritage buildings, is often limited and even where there is full-documentation, including that incorporated in heritage citations, this material can only ever be an inadequate substitute for the full educational value of experiencing the building, both externally and even more importantly internally. That this building is a special building contributes to its significance and educational heritage value both nationally and locally.

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### **Analysis against the Criteria specified in Schedule 2 of the Land (Planning and Environment) Act 1991**

*(i) a place which demonstrates a high degree of technical and/or creative achievement, by showing qualities of innovation or departure or representing a new achievement of its time*

The creativity of the architect Enrico Taglietti is apparent in the design of the The Giralang Primary & Infants School, Hall, Child Health Clinic and Pre-School complex, 1977, which was innovative when compared with other school complexes built in Canberra. The complex is one of the two most important works of architecture in Canberra by the leading local and nationally significant architect Enrico Taglietti. The other being Dickson Library, Dickson, 1969. Taglietti believes that this project is of utmost importance in his architectural career where he was able to realize most of his philosophic and spatial principles.

The use of a cruciform modular design to provide open plan classrooms was innovative planning in the 1970s.

The school is one of four schools designed by Enrico Taglietti in Canberra commissioned by the NCDC and is the most innovative and significant architecturally.

*(ii) a place which exhibits outstanding design or aesthetic qualities valued by the community or a cultural group*

The Giralang Primary & Infants School, Hall, Child Health Clinic and Pre-School complex is a significant example of the Late Twentieth-Century Organic Style (1960-) and is notable for displaying the high design skill of the architect Enrico Taglietti. One of the two main characteristics of the style is exhibited here; its free, asymmetrical massing. (It should be noted that the other particular architectural element specific to the Late Twentieth-Century Organic Style (1960-) is *natural setting retained*, which in this case could not be achieved since it is located in a developed suburb, albeit a parkland setting.)

The following design features are of additional significance; the way the complex angular geometry complements nature, the use of horizontal roof planes contrasting with the steep pitched roof forms of the main elements, highlight windows, horizontal 'boarded' metal fascias, the timber lined eaves, face concrete brickwork, clear timber finish internally, open planning, internal courtyards,

colour scheme and varied ceiling heights (including the original ceiling to the Assembly Hall).

The complex is highly valued by the RAIA as an excellent example of this style of architecture by a leading local and nationally significant architect. It was awarded the RAIA ACT Chapter Canberra Medallion in 1977, the most prestigious award in Canberra for architectural excellence. It was later awarded the RAIA ACT Chapter Twenty Five Year Award in 2001, which is awarded to places of architectural significance that deserve heritage protection.

Enrico Taglietti is considered a key practitioner in the Late Twentieth-Century Organic style in Australia.

The school was greatly valued by the Chief Education Officer of the ACT at the time of construction and the original principal, and is greatly valued by the present Principal and staff as an innovative and unique educational institution in the ACT while the Principal believes the community values the school and assembly hall.

*(iii) a place which demonstrates a distinctive way of life, taste, tradition, religion, land use, custom, process, design or function which is no longer practised, is in danger or being lost, or is of exceptional interest*

The design of the complex demonstrates an important development in architectural style that has extended through the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, by contrast with traditional architectural styles. Relatively few public buildings were built in this style in Canberra. Modern architecture, including Organic architecture, was the most important architecture of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Organic architecture had as its origins the work of F L Wright in USA. Walter Burley Griffin worked for Wright and brought the ideas of organic modern architecture to Australia when he was awarded the design of Canberra. While there are no buildings designed by Griffin in Canberra there are a small number in State Capital Cities. Canberra is one of the few 20<sup>th</sup> Century designed cities in the world. The combination of modern architecture and urban design is of exceptional interest.

The 'free' design of the complex adds to its interest and demonstrates a contrast with the more rationalist architecture in Canberra at that time.

In 1974 the ACT established its own education system founded on community involvement and school based curriculum. The brief for the Giralang Primary and Infants School, compiled by the First Assistant Secretary of the Commonwealth Department of Education Mr A Foskett, "stated that the school was to be open plan to facilitate the new philosophy of education filtering through from Britain and the USA. Open plan education was about learning in flexible, multi-purpose spaces that enabled teachers to work in teams to cater for the individual needs of students. The ACT had just taken over responsibility for education from NSW and was keen to be up with international trends." The school includes a designated school board room, a first in any Canberra Primary School.

At the time of completion the school was believed to be the largest in area and the most economical primary school built in Canberra. It was also believed that it would be unique and not repeated as some other school plans in the ACT were.

The type of schooling offered at Giralang was very different from that of a traditional, single classroom school. Mixed age grouping (children do not mature at the same rate) helped teachers to cope with wide ability groups, the children worked in groups which were all based on ability helping to meet individual needs of the children. Home groups encouraged social aspect/security.

The flexible plan was designed to meet the open plan education philosophy of the time, and is possibly one of the few occasions when architecture has been used to reinforce an educational idea. The school was run on a teacher participation basis with development of school-based curriculum and school-based decision-making.

In 1988 Mr John Griffin was appointed Principal. Giralang became the first ACT school to embark on the new field of computer education and the use of IT in administration. Mr Griffin was also a pioneer of School Based Financial Management in Schools. He developed this system successfully at Giralang. It is now used throughout the ACT.

The Child Health Clinic was included as part of the original NCDC brief and it housed a Resident Salaried Medical Doctor, two dental nurses and a Community Nurse. The provision of “bulk-billing” salaried neighbourhood doctors practicing from government surgeries located in government owned neighbourhood health centers was an important community health policy that was unique in Australia. This important community program was ended and many of the centers hastily demolished under the Carnell Liberal Minority Government of the ACT. The centre is now rented by a private medical practitioner. This public health option is no longer practised in the ACT.

The school is particularly interesting as it demonstrates the organic outlook of the architect, the educational open class philosophy and the Principal's expectations as unofficial client.

*(iv) a place which is highly valued by the community or a cultural group for reasons of strong or special religious, spiritual, cultural, educational or social associations*

The school was greatly valued by the Chief Education Officer of the ACT at the time of construction and the original principal and is greatly valued by the present Principal and staff as an innovative and unique educational institution in the ACT.

The flexible plan was designed to meet the open plan education philosophy of the time, and is one of the few occasions when architecture is used to reinforce an educational idea. The innovative design solution provides a school that has elements of fun and drama, reinforced by architectural detailing and scale. The Assembly Hall is of interest in that the proscenium arch is quite low, in scale with the young performers. The present principal believes that the combination of educational with other community facilities is valued by the community.

*(v) a place which is the only known or only comparatively intact example of its type*

The Giralang Primary & Infants School, Hall, Child Health Centre and Pre-School is the only known example of a complex that includes all of these adjacent facilities designed by the one architect in the same architectural style and that includes an open plan school specifically designed to meet the open plan education philosophy of the time, and is most likely one of the few occasions when architecture has been used to reinforce this educational idea.

*(vi) a place which is a notable example of a class of natural or cultural places or landscapes and which demonstrates the principal characteristics of that class*

The Giralang Primary & Infants School, Hall, Child Health Centre and Pre-School is a notable design in the Organic style. The complex contains the key elements of the design in an economic form, as necessary for a government school and health centre that were being provided at a time of unprecedented urban expansion in Canberra.

It is a school that solves a particular functional problem in a significant manner.

*(vii) a place which has strong or special associations with person, group, event, development or cultural phase which played a significant part in local or national history*

The complex is important for its strong association with Enrico Taglietti who played and still plays a significant role in Canberra's cultural history. He is one of the most important architects to practise in Canberra and this is a major work in his career.

Enrico Taglietti was awarded a Life Fellow of the RAI in 2001.

The Giralang School and Health Centre is featured in major national and international publications and is considered by Taglietti to be one of his most important works.

In 1974 the ACT established its own education system founded on community involvement and school based curriculum. The brief for the Giralang Primary and Infants School, compiled by the First Assistant Secretary of the Commonwealth Department of Education Mr A Foskett, “stated that the school was to be open plan to facilitate the new philosophy of education filtering through from

Britain and the USA. Open plan education was about learning in flexible, multi-purpose spaces that enabled teachers to work in teams to cater for the individual needs of students. The ACT had just taken over responsibility for education from NSW and was keen to be up with international trends.”

The type of schooling offered at Giralang was very different from that of a traditional, single classroom school. Mixed age grouping (Children do not mature at the same rate) helped teachers to cope with wide ability groups, the children worked in groups which were all based on ability helping to meet individual needs of the children. Home groups encouraged social aspect/security.

The flexible plan was designed to meet the open plan education philosophy of the time, and is possibly one of the few occasions when architecture has been used to reinforce an educational idea. The school was run on a teacher participation basis with development of school-based curriculum and school-based decision-making.

In 1988 Mr John Griffin was appointed Principal. Giralang became the first ACT school to embark on the new field of computer education and the use of IT in administration. Mr Griffin was also a pioneer of School Based Financial Management in Schools. He developed this system successfully at Giralang. It is now used throughout the ACT.

The Child Health Clinic was included as part of the original brief and it housed a Resident Salaried Medical Doctor, two dental nurses and a Community Nurse. The provision of “bulk-billing” salaried neighbourhood doctors practising from government surgeries located in government owned neighbourhood health centers was an important community health policy that was unique in Australia. This important community program was ended and many of the centers hastily demolished under the Carnell Liberal Minority Government of the ACT. The centre is now rented by a private medical practitioner. This public health option is no longer practised in the ACT.

*(xi) a place which demonstrates a likelihood of providing information which will contribute significantly to a wider understanding of natural or cultural history, by virtue of its use as a research site, teaching site, type locality or benchmark site*

Through its architectural style, planning and urban form this building is a valuable educational resource for designers and planners. Its architecture is characteristic of the Late Twentieth-Century Organic style.

The architecture of this School and Health Centre may contribute to the education of designers in their understanding of Late Twentieth-Century Architectural styles and the heritage value is enhanced by its educational worth for students of architecture. Experiencing heritage buildings enables the visitor to locate the building in its historical and environmental contexts and to place it within the knowledge domain of architectural, urban and environmental histories. These experiences readily enable the establishment, understanding and interpretation of the building's heritage value and significance. This building is an excellent example of the style. Its innovative planning contributes to its significance and educational heritage.

The School and Health Centre can be compared with Dickson Library that has, in principle, a similar cruciform plan. Both buildings have in common the display of free, asymmetrical massing and design features typical of the style: the way the complex angular geometry complements nature, the use of horizontal roof plains, highlight windows and strong horizontal fascias. The parkland setting of the School and Health Centre can be contrasted with the urban setting of the Library.

Through its open planned class spaces, associated educational philosophy and educational function this school is a valuable educational resource for teacher education and research.

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## References

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## Other Information Sources