

## Hyatt Hotel Canberra (Hostel Canberra; Hotel Canberra)

Address

Commonwealth Avenue, Yarralumla, ACT, 2600

Practices

Office of the Commonwealth Architect;  
John Smith Murdoch (Hostel Canberra).  
Daryl Jackson Pty Ltd (Hyatt Hotel Canberra).

Designed

1922 & 1985      Completed      1926 & 1987

History &  
Description

The Hyatt Hotel Canberra is adjacent to the Parliamentary Triangle & Lake Burley Griffin. Originally designed as the Hostel Canberra (later the Hotel Canberra), in what Murdoch called his 'garden pavilion style', for the reception of Members of Parliament, dignitaries from abroad, & high officials of the Commonwealth. The hotel entry & porte-cochere face east, towards the Avenue. The massing & symmetrical plan is reminiscent of Beaux-Arts design. The original entry lobby opened into a central double-height dining room (now the lounge) set perpendicular to the entry & cutting across the central circulation axis. Visual strength was provided to the central pavilion with the placement of the administration offices & staff quarters above the dining room. Smaller attached pavilions are set parallel to the axis. The dining room opened out onto sunken landscaped courts through loggias to the north & south. The guest room pavilions radiated from the centre of each court connected by wide covered walkways serving as verandahs. The single storey pavilions, placed on axes, present a reduced scale with T-shaped plans & hipped roofs. Between them are pavilions, set diagonally, & given greater scale with two storeys & gabled roofs. The pavilions display architectural features of the Inter-War California Bungalow style with visually prominent low-pitch roofs & roughcast render. Other design features include banded columns, deep-set boarding, stained woodwork, blind arches & terracotta roof tiles.

John Smith Murdoch FRIBA (1862-1945) emigrated to Australia in 1886 from Scotland & at the time of the design was Chief Architect of the Commonwealth Government. He was responsible for the design of the Provisional Parliament House as well as many important buildings in the first 30 years of the twentieth-century. Initially a supporter of Walter Burley Griffin after he won the competition for the design of Canberra, the layout of the hostel differed from Griffin's concept of a boulevard lined with urban terraces. Murdoch though drew on Griffin's architecture which was allied to the Prairie style of Frank Lloyd Wright in the USA.

The Hotel Canberra was converted into the Hyatt Hotel Canberra in 1988 by the architect Daryl Jackson & extensively extended to the west with much of the original character retained.

Statement of  
Significance

The original Hostel Canberra is a significant example of civic architecture by one of Australia's notable architects, John Smith Murdoch. His design, conceived on garden pavilion lines for the new garden city, drew on the Prairie style of architecture introduced to Australia by Walter Burley Griffin as well as the Inter-War California Bungalow style of architecture & Beaux-Arts planning principles; in its massing & symmetrical planning. The hostel later became the Hotel Canberra. The building's conversion into the Hyatt Hotel Canberra, with considerable extensions, has been done in a commendable way which has retained much of the original character.

Criteria  
Applicable

N2. Significant heritage value in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics.  
N3. Significant heritage value in establishing a high degree of creative achievement.



Hostel Canberra aerial view 1926.  
(Source: Canberra Following Griffin by Paul Reid, Nat. Archives of Australia).



Hyatt Hotel entry.  
(Photo: Graeme Trickett c.2010).



Two storey pavilion with deep-set  
boarding gable roof.  
(Photo: Graeme Trickett c.2010).



Single storey pavilion, covered  
walkway & double-height central  
pavilion beyond.  
(Photo: Graeme Trickett c.2010).