

Place Citation HOXX 57 Samaria Road, BENALLA

Address	57 Samaria Road BENALLA		
Heritage Overlay	Proposed for Inclusion in the Benalla Schedule to the Heritage Overlay		
Heritage Overlay Map			
Designer/s	Perrott Lyon Mathieson with Carey Lyon	Dates	1998
Significance	Local	Builder/s	Unknown
Heritage Overlay Map		Survey Date	March 2024

**Former Benalla Goulburn Ovens TAFE building
Australian Christian College 2024 -**

Assessment against criteria

The following analysis is based on Victorian Government Planning Practice Note 1: Applying the Heritage Overlay (August 2018).

Criterion A: Importance to the course or pattern of our cultural or natural history (historical significance).

Criterion B: Possession of uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of our cultural or natural history (rarity).

Criterion C: Potential to yield information that will contribute to understanding our cultural or natural history (research potential).

Criterion D: Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural or natural places or environments (representativeness).

Criterion E: Importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics (aesthetic significance).

Criterion F: Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period (technical significance).

Criterion G: Strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons. This includes the significance of a place to Indigenous peoples as part of their continuing and developing cultural traditions (social significance).

Criterion H: Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in our history (associative significance).

Statement of Significance

What is Significant?

57 Samaria Road Benalla, (the Australian Christian College) building is significant.

The context as provided by the setting which includes side and rear setbacks is significant.

Significant fabric includes, but is not confined to:

- the original form, fabric and scale of the building
- the architectural features of the building; including but not confined to: the cruciform plan; the 'cross roads' centre junction entrance; the north, west and east facades with striking metal sunscreens; dark brown curtain walling; the dark bands running around the cruciform and their distortions; the contoured roof profiles formed by extending the roof cleats and the light coloured roofing.

The building is substantially intact and has largely retained its original form.

Alterations from the 2010 are not significant.

How is it Significant?

57 Samaria Road Benalla, the Australian Christian College is of local historical, rarity value and aesthetic cultural heritage significance to the Benalla Rural City .

Why is it Significant?

57 Samaria Road Benalla, the Australian Christian College is of local historical significance as it provides evidence of a place that was specifically designed for 7th Venice Architecture Biennale. The location in Benalla within a broader landscape was integral to the design as an example of Australian architecture that responded through its design to the rural landscape. Criterion A

57 Samaria Road Benalla, the Australian Christian College is a rare example of a building that was designed as part of an exhibition for the 7th Venice Architecture Biennale and built soon after the exhibition. Criterion B

57 Samaria Road Benalla, the Australian Christian College is of local aesthetic significance for its distinctive modern architectural expression that was recognised at the 7th Venice Architecture Biennale at the turn of the millennium. Features such as the cruciform plan; the 'cross roads' centre junction entrance; the north, west and east facades with striking metal sunscreens; dark brown curtain walling; the dark bands running around the cruciform and their distortions; the contoured roof profiles formed by extending the roof cleats and the light coloured roofing contribute to its significance. Criterion E

Additional Controls

External paint controls apply	Yes
Internal alteration controls apply	No
Tree controls apply	No
Outbuildings or fences not exempt under Clause 43.01-4	No
Included on the Victorian Heritage Register under the Heritage Act 2017	No
Prohibited uses permitted	No
Aboriginal heritage place	No
Solar energy system controls apply	Yes

History

Perrott Lyon Mathieson with Carey Lyon designing the building, 1998

In March 1999, *Architecture AU* magazine announced, 'Perrott Lyon Mathieson, with Carey Lyon designing, have built a multi-purpose TAFE building at Benalla. It's a ground-hugging cross (reminiscent of a survey grid), folded and crumpled like a rural landscape.'¹

This structure, built for Goulburn Ovens TAFE, is a significant example of Australian architecture at the turn of the millennium, having been a representative example of Australian architecture in Australia's official presentation at the 7th Venice Architecture Biennale in 2000. The Australian Pavilion, titled 'City of Fiction', 'was a large interactive installation of brick sized postcards depicting Lyons' project work and design propositions. Postcards formed an abstracted image of the Contemporary City. Visitors to the exhibition were encouraged to take a souvenir postcard thereby changing the cityscape day-by-day.'²

A postcard of the Benalla TAFE building was one of the main postcards visitors could take from this Pavilion.³

The building was designed to contain a central conference facility and resource centre along with facilities for teaching hospitality, horticulture, resource management and business studies. In 1998, this project also won a commendation and the BHP Colorbond Award (for architecture in steel) from the RAIAs Victorian chapter.

Architecture AU explained, 'The architectural scheme [was] for a single storey steel structure spreading low across the site with a cruciform plan that places training spaces in the four wings and a "crossroads" entry foyer at the centre junction, complemented by an adjacent restaurant used for hospitality training. Externally, the north, west and east facades [were] equipped with striking metal sunscreens, integrated into the design along with contoured roof profiles formed by extending the roof cleats.'⁴

In 1999, architect **Carey Lyon** said of the project, 'The site is a flat, relatively featureless landscape in central Victoria. This was the first rural project undertaken by our design team and we found ourselves mythologising about the site as the archetypal interior landscape.

'We were interested in reading this "interior" landscape as having a meaning appropriated by our cultural occupation of the landscape rather than as an authentic natural phenomenon. In particular we distilled the horizon as an archetypal image in our cultural and aesthetic representations of this interior landscape. In thinking of the horizon as an image (and therefore cultural not natural), almost in a painterly tradition, a recurring or repeating horizontal line or motif became the dominant element of the project.

Our interest was to also examine a few myths about building within the Australian landscape. Well-worn strategies either position architecture as an environmental machine (the opposite of the natural) or borrow nature into architecture in order to naturalise it in some way. But if landscape is considered as culturally appropriated, then architecture and landscape are closer to the same thing. It might be said, therefore, that architecture can borrow the cultural image of landscape, but not its naturalism.

¹ *ArchitectureAU* magazine, March 1999.

² 'Lyons, City of Fiction, Australian Pavilion, 7th Venice Biennale of Architecture', Global Art Projects, <https://www.gap.net.au/lyons-vbarch2000>, accessed 24 July 2024.

³ Jacqui Durrant was a visitor, and did mail a postcard of Benalla TAFE back to her parents in Benalla from Venice at the time.

⁴ *ibid.*



View to the building

‘The motif of the horizon line repeats as a series of dark bands running around the cruciform to create an explicit graphic quality. The lines are interrupted and distorted off horizontal to create an impression of strange three-dimensional forms represented by stacks of dark contours, like the curious rock and landscape that occur as phenomena within the interior landscape. The mainly light colours of the roof, walls and sunscreens are contrasted against the dark bands—which set the building as if in a permanent stark shadow that reinforces the ‘Australian’ image. The sunscreens to the west and north faces, constructed from painted steel pipes of varying diameters and spacing, provide environmental advantages and visually connect the roof and walls as a single form. They also complete the image and abstraction of the horizon lines. Behind the sunshades are curtain walls of dark brown glass, which also read as horizon lines in the gaps between the screens. With their adjacency to the rural materials of profiled metal cladding and cement sheet, these walls add a distinctly corporate reading to the building.

‘The central foyer was also conceived to have literal allusions to an interior landscape. Its ceiling is composed of a series of naturally light cloud motifs that are figured within the rigour of a conventional ceiling grid to create soft floating forms drifting across the space.

The cruciform plan—like a fragment of the survey grid laid across the landscape or the surveyors mark—creates an equivalence across each of the faces of the building and in all directions in response to the lack of specific focus or hierarchy within the landscape itself.’⁵

⁵ *ibid.*

John Wardle, who visited Benalla as a jury chair for the last RAAI Victorian awards, said of the building in 1999,

‘This project is a controversial response to the landscape of a region which struggles between rural and urban aspirations. It is the first building constructed for the new TAFE campus between Benalla’s aerodrome and suburban fringe. On one side, there are aircraft hangars and a litter of light planes; on the other, a constant edge of the city’s houses. Between, the land is as flat as can be.

‘The scheme draws directly from the site’s sweep of horizon and sky, which appears to have registered a powerful impression on the architects. They have created a building that almost melts, as if in permanent drought. It is wrapped in tonnes of wheat and dirt brown baked onto the Colorbond metal cladding.

‘The design is also a provocative comment on the relationship of many Australian architects to rural landscape.

‘The romance of remote settings has sometimes led practitioners to try to reconcile their constructions to the geography of their sites.

‘But the dilemma remains that architecture is always concerned with artefact and must struggle with nature. This imperative is acknowledged by PLM and Carey Lyon, who responded to this place through an abstraction of the horizon; attempting to eschew obvious naturalism. They accept the horizon line as an abstract romantic motif; the cultural imprint which remains after more banal allusions are rejected. The building accepts the site’s lack of urban definition by having no formal edge. Instead, the contoured profiles of the cruciform-plan structure reflect the spread of the site. The cross-plan is a reference to the star pegs used by surveyors to chart plains with few natural references. This arrangement organises the four specialist teaching facilities—hospitality training, horticulture, resource management and business studies—into well-defined zones. But that rational organisation is belied in the exterior expression; where the usual junctions of walls and roof are blurred by contoured sweeps of Colorbond steel tray cladding. Sunscreens, set to disfiguring alignments, draw the more vertical glazed elements back towards the bare earth. This theme is continued inside, with lines reflecting the segmented topography of the external formations.

‘The metal cladding raises issues of association. While the landscape is abstracted to an implicit motif, the expression of the coloured metal cladding, with its sensible cover strip detailing, has definite links to the light industrial language often found on the fringes of rural towns and, more specifically, in the adjacent aircraft hangars. Like those sheds, it suggests impermanence and expediency—a not-inappropriate image, given the pressures of resourcing institutions in remote locations.

‘The architecture of this education building is intellectually demanding and the manipulation of form and material (imposing a high degree of difficulty) has been tackled with confidence. The architects’ reference to the infinite horizon also offers an interesting idea about the identity of this fringe of Benalla. But the site’s identity is likely to remain fluid as the town’s edge develops and the campus itself is defined by buildings to come. This is a building for now, and we wait with interest to see how it will read in the future congestion of the emerging Benalla campus.’⁶

⁶ *ibid.*

Relevant Historic Themes as identified in the *Benalla Rural City Gaps Heritage Study: Thematic History*
Prepared by Dr Robyn Ballinger

8. Building community life

8.2 Educating people

Physical Description (requires a site visit for more detail)

The building is a large metal clad building with an asymmetrical contoured metal roof. The walling is distinguished by the contrasting dark bands running around the cruciform plan and these lines are interrupted and distorted off horizontal to create an impression of strange three-dimensional forms represented by stacks of dark contours. The mainly light colours of the roof, walls and sunscreens are contrasted against the dark bands. The sunscreens to the west and north faces are constructed from painted steel pipes of varying diameters and spacing, provide environmental advantages and visually connect the roof and walls as a single form. Behind the sunshades are curtain walls of dark brown glass, which also read as horizon lines in the gaps between the screens.

Comparative example

There are no known comparative examples in Benalla of the region.