

SUMMARY OF STATE HERITAGE PLACE

REGISTER ENTRY

Entry in the South Australian Heritage Register in accordance with the
Heritage Places Act 1993

NAME: City of Mitcham Council Chambers, 1934-54 **PLACE NO.:** 26304

ADDRESS: 131 Belair Road, Torrens Park 5062
CT 3127/86, A2019 Section 245 Adelaide

STATEMENT OF HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

The City of Mitcham Council Chambers, completed in 1934, is an outstanding representative of particular construction techniques and design characteristics. The Place is the earliest of a small group of civic buildings identified in South Australia that were constructed in the modern or Art Deco style of the 1930s. The purpose designed building is largely intact with a high degree of scale and integrity.

The design by architect Dean Berry, possibly in association with Christopher Smith, displays a new development in design, and qualities of innovation, as it introduces and develops the Art Deco style, a departure from Berry's previous work.

RELEVANT CRITERIA (under section 16 of the *Heritage Places Act 1993*)

(e) it demonstrates a high degree of creative, aesthetic or technical accomplishment or is an outstanding representative of particular construction techniques or design characteristics.

The 1934 City of Mitcham Council Chambers building is an outstanding example of Art Deco design in South Australia. It is the earliest of a small group of Art Deco-style civic buildings in South Australia. The purpose-designed building is largely intact with a high degree of integrity. The design by architect Dean Berry, possibly in association with Christopher Smith, displays a new development in design, and qualities of innovation, as it introduces and develops the Art Deco style, a departure from Berry's previous work.

EXTENT OF LISTING

The extent of listing is the 1934-54 Mitcham Council Chamber, as generally indicated on the attached map.

COMMENTARY ON THE LISTING

Description and notes with respect to a place entered in the South Australian Heritage Register in accordance with the *Heritage Places Act 1993*

Physical Description

The Mitcham Council Chambers is a two-storey building of cement-rendered brick, finished in Art Deco style. Features of this style include an imposing decorative parapet which gives the building the appearance of a grand scale on its corner site; decorative panels between the first and second floor windows; and a curved front entrance with a rectangular fanlight above. This is surmounted by a balcony on which the words 'The City of Mitcham' are inscribed in capital letters. The metal framed windows are recessed, with minor decorative elements above the first floor windows, just below the parapet. The concrete steps leading to the front corner entrance are flanked by two lanterns on concrete pillars. The eastern side of the building is undecorated, with six metal framed windows. The interior of the building also has Art Deco features. The modern low scale offices adjoining this building were constructed in 1970.

The extent of listing is indicated by the orange outline on the attached site plan.

The components which are intrinsic to the heritage significance of the City of Mitcham Council Chambers include:

- the exterior form and fabric of the 1934 - 1954 brick building
- cement-rendered brick walls, including all decorative moulded features
- steel-framed windows and entrance doors, particularly the semi-circular doors and surrounds forming the main entrance.
- main entrance steps and flanking piers topped with steel lanterns
- surviving original interior features including decorative plaster ceilings, cornices, fireplace in the Committee Room and original joinery. The entrance foyer and staircase, including terrazzo flooring and curved balustrade is particularly fine.
- Original furnishings to the main Council Chamber including Mayoral Chair and other purpose-built furniture.

History of the Place

Mitcham Village was established in 1840 and by the early 1850s was experiencing rapid growth and development. A number of villages with main road frontages were established across the district, as well as farms, hay paddocks, market gardens, vineyards and almond plantations. The impetus to form a council resulted from

residents' concern about the state of the Bulls Creek Road (now Unley and Belair Roads. Residents met in September 1851 to discuss the roads issue and again in February 1853, when they decided that the only way to improve the quality of local roads was to form a District Council. They discussed the proposed boundaries of the new council area and within a short time, on 12 May 1853, the Governor, Sir Henry Fox Young, proclaimed the District Council of Mitcham. It was the first district council to be proclaimed in South Australia. The Council operated from a variety of premises for the next 55 years, including private houses, hotels and the Mitcham Institute.

In 1917 Council purchased Lots 2, 3, 4, 12 and 13, comprising about an acre, as well as Lot 14 on the opposite corner for £539 from Mr Tom Barr Smith. The Depression intervened and from 1929 interstate and overseas markets for primary products disappeared, unemployment soared and wages plummeted. Consequently, when the new Council Chambers building was designed and constructed, funding was limited and costs were kept to a minimum.

The architect Dean Berry had travelled overseas and witnessed the latest construction techniques being used in New York, including the use of concrete beams and structural steel. He was commissioned to design the Council Chambers at Mitcham, with the commission stipulating that the building be designed in the modern style. The building was described at the time as being 'of simple design with modernistic tendency'.

The builders were Messrs J Grove & Son and the cost was £5,250.

References

This Record has been adapted from the assessment report in:

- Twentieth Century Survey Vol 2 (2008) by Peter Bell, Carol Cosgrove, Susan Marsden & Justin McCarthy

Refer to the survey for a more detailed historical description and a list of references.

SITE RECORD

City of Mitcham Council Chambers, 1934-54
131 Belair Road, Torrens Park

PLACE NO: 26304

FORMER NAME:	N/A
DESCRIPTION OF PLACE:	Prominent two storey building of cement-rendered brick, in <i>Art Deco</i> style. Listing applies to all exterior and any surviving internal features of the original c1934 – 1954 building only.
DATE OF COMPLETION:	1934, 1954
SA HERITAGE REGISTER STATUS:	Description: Provisionally entered Date: 22 August 2012
LOCAL HERITAGE STATUS	Inserted in the City of Mitcham Development Plan through an amendment authorised 22 September 2005
CURRENT USE:	Description: Council Offices and Chamber Dates: From 1934 to present
PREVIOUS USE(S):	Description: N/A Dates: N/A
ARCHITECT:	Name: Dean Berry (& possibly Christopher Smith) Dates: 1934
BUILDER:	Name: J Grove & Son Dates: 1934
LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA:	Description: City of Mitcham
LOCATION:	Unit No.: – Street No.: 131 Street Name: Belair Road Town/Suburb: Torrens Park Post Code: 5062
LAND DESCRIPTION:	Title Type: CT Volume: 3127 Folio: 86 Lot No.: A219 Plan: F12732 Hundred: Adelaide

PHOTOS

City of Mitcham Council Chambers, 1934-54
131 Belair Road, Torrens Park

PLACE NO: 26304



Mitcham Council Chambers, 2012, looking SE from Belair Rd (c2000 additions to the right).



Mitcham Council Chambers soon after completion of the 1934 section (possibly c1940) shows the exterior is little changed (Mitcham Local History Collection).

SITE PLAN

City of Mitcham Council Chambers, 1934-54 PLACE NO: 26304
131 Belair Road, Torrens Park



Aerial view of Mitcham Council Chambers showing extent of c1934 – 1954 structure.