

**ASSESSMENT OF HERITAGE VALUE:**

- (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 original Adelaide Fire Station was opened in September 1882 and was demolished to make way for the current Adelaide Fire Station that was opened by Deputy Premier Jack Wright on 23 May 1985.

The new building was designed by Adelaide architect Rod Roach and Woodhead Australia and built at a cost of \$16 Million and included state-of-the art facilities. Public Buildings Department officers acted as project managers and supervisors. The first stage of the work including demolition of earlier buildings and site preparation began in January 1983 with construction beginning later the same month.

The building was recognised by the Royal Australian Institute of Architects (SA Chapter) as significant 20<sup>th</sup> Century architecture.

The following details of architect Rod Roach are taken from the University of South Australia Architects Data Base concerning Rod Roach (born 18.11.1938).

Since coming to the practice of architecture through related fields, Rod Roach has followed an innovative path by arguably creating the first 'design studio' in South Australia and through his extensive opus of built work.

Roach was born in Calcutta, India on 18 November 1938 and grew up in Cawnpore (now Kanpur), a major railway hub in the centre of the country. His parents, Gerald and Enid Roach, were both born in India of British and French stock. His father worked for the British Imperial Railways as an engineer, then joined the British Imperial forces at the outbreak of the Second World War working in supply and distribution. Even though Gerald and Enid had lived their whole lives in India, as holders of British passports they, along with thousands of others, were forced to leave in 1947 when Britain relinquished control and the country was partitioned to form East and West Pakistan on either side of India. The family emigrated directly to Australia, sailing on the SS Mulbera. Roach was then aged almost nine and his sister Anna was two. The Roaches were originally destined for Goulburn, NSW. However, en route, the family disembarked in Adelaide on the advice of a friend already residing there, who had described it as 'a friendly city'. They decided to stay. Rod's younger brother, David, was born in Adelaide. Roach continued his schooling firstly at Brighton then Mitcham Primary School and Christian Brothers College (Roach and Sellick to McDougall June 2008).

Upon leaving school, Roach went to work with the building company J. Grove & Son which specialised in hotels, hospitals, schools and large residential works. While with this firm, he studied Quantity Surveying at the South Australian School of Mines and Industries, starting in 1957, and was a trainee quantity surveyor for three years. During this time he learnt project estimating and builder's bills of quantities, skills that have been invaluable throughout his professional career (Roach and Sellick to McDougall June 2008).

Adelaide architect James Hall was impressed by Roach's drafting line work at J. Grove & Son and suggested he change to architectural drafting. When enrolling for this subject, Gavin Walkley, then Head of the School of Architecture at the South Australian Institute of Technology, encouraged him to switch to architecture instead because he believed Roach had the necessary skills. As a result he commenced studying architecture part-time in 1960. He finally graduated with an Associate Diploma in Architecture in 1971, as his studies were in addition to working full time, marriage and raising two children (Roach and Sellick to McDougall June 2008; Page 1986; 'President's Medal' 2003).

In 1961, Roach's employer, Brian Grove, recommended that to advance his career, he should work in an architectural practice. Roach contacted Jack Cheesman who agreed to employ him as an architectural draftsman while he studied architecture. Whilst at CheesmanDoley Brabham & Neighbour (CDBN), Roach admired and was influenced by Roy Brabham who was one of the first development orientated architects in Adelaide. Significant mentors in the firm were architects Ralph Knowles and Bob Shannon who gave him a solid grounding in technical drafting and architectural documentation (Roach and Sellick to McDougall June 2008).

Roach does not cite any mentors in relation to design, but he admired and learnt from the designers of the day, Arnis Siksner and Peter Page. Siksner, who was also from CDBN, was a practical designer who worked with Roy Brabham in creating 'development' architecture (where the owner of the building gets a financial return on investment; a novel outcome in those days). Peter Page was a brilliant perspective renderer who excelled in watercolour. Roach developed both of these skills later in his professional career and beyond, having participated in set design for Adelaide's Independent Theatre Inc. Of note for the company, was a stark black and white composition including innovative spotlighting for the world premiere of the published version of the play 'Never the Sinner' by John Logan in 1994 (Roach and Sellick to McDougall June 2008).

In 1963, Roach was 'lent' to Caradoc Ashton Fisher Woodhead & Beaumont for two years, returning to CDBN in 1965. In 1968 he moved to Dean Berry Gilbert & Polomka. Upon his graduation in 1971 Roach took up a partnership with Gray & Partners and then became a partner in Walter Roach Brooke from 1975 to 1980. He gained experience in commercial office, retail and medium density housing before commencing his own firm, Rod Roach Studio Pty Ltd in 1981 (Roach and Sellick to McDougall June 2008).

This change was motivated by Roach's need to be autonomous and his desire to establish a design studio. Historically, the usual structure of an architectural practice was generally strictly hierarchical, with directors and partners in offices separate from the architectural and drafting staff. Roach wanted a more open and egalitarian structure with one principal working in close collaboration with, and proximity to, all members of the design team. He also wanted to employ young talented graduates, to assist them personally to develop their design skills and to effectively translate theory into practice. In 1983 he changed the firm's name to Rod Roach Architecture because some of the more enterprising staff members wanted to become associates. In addition, the practice was completing major projects in Adelaide and the 'Studio' tag was deemed no longer appropriate from a commercial perspective (Roach and Sellick to McDougall June 2008). In nominating Roach for Year of the Built Environment (YBE) 2004 Exemplars – Design for All, Francesco Bonato FRAIA, wrote, 'Rod Roach could arguably have started the first architecture practice in Adelaide to work as a 'design studio'. His extensive portfolio of built work is an architectural legacy for South Australia' (Design for All: 66).

In 1990 Greenway Architects purchased Roach's firm. He was retained as Senior Design Consultant and Project Initiator 'to promote major projects in Adelaide and to act as design stimulator' ('President's Medal' 2003: 7). From 1992 onwards he has been sole proprietor and director of his own practice (Roach and Sellick to McDougall June 2008).

In 2003 Roach was awarded the Sir James Irwin RIAA SA Chapter President's Medal with his reputation as an innovative and original designer being particularly noted ('President's Medal' 2003). He was a guest lecturer in Design at the University of South Australia during the 1980s and Chairman of the National RIAA Convention held in Adelaide in 1986 (Roach and Sellick to McDougall June 2008).

Roach's works are many and varied and have won numerous RIAA Awards of Merit or Commendations. Influenced by his building background, he believes that design ideas should be easily translated into reality and that over-elaboration of design elements does not contribute to the integrity and ease of construction of designs. The 'less is more' and 'form follows function' principles underpin his whole approach to design. He believes that buildings should be cost effective while still having architectural flair and innovation (Roach and Sellick to McDougall June 2008).

In considering influences upon his work, Roach points to buildings created by the local South Australian firm Hassell Architects in the 1970s and 80s, such as the David Jones Department Store and the Adelaide Festival Centre. Internationally he singles out Mies van der Rohe and Eero Saarinen in the USA and Mario Botta in Italy. The advent of the curtain wall, which is a non-load bearing external wall, also contributed to his approach to design and a majority of his buildings have this feature (Roach and Sellick to McDougall June 2008).

Roach's opus includes Montefiore Apartments on Jeffcott Street, North Adelaide (1981) and Victoria Grove Apartments, East Terrace, Adelaide (1982) which he describes as an attempt at Post-Modern, in that it has a degree of decoration which emulates past forms and shapes. The building he designed for Kinhill de Rohan & Young, 200 East Terrace, Adelaide (1980) 'gave him great satisfaction in solving a client's special needs' (Page 1986: 290). The client, Malcolm Kinnaird wanted a campus style design which resulted in an office building with adjoining housing for use by staff and visitors. Roach had designed other office buildings at 28, 49, 58 and 191 Greenhill Road during the 1970s and number 49 Greenhill Road had received an Award of Merit from the RIAA in 1977. For Roach the building for Lincolne Scott at 28 Greenhill Road, Wayville (corner of Greenhill and Goodwood Roads) is notable in that all façade members are structural steel, in other words, the steel fabric forms the architecture of the building (Roach and Sellick to McDougall, June 2008).

He is well known for the Metropolitan Fire Service Headquarters (1983), 87-91 Wakefield Street, Adelaide, which appears on the AIA (SA Chapter) Twentieth Century Significant Architecture list. This was designed in conjunction with Woodhead Hall. There had been a lengthy period of discussion between the parties responsible for the financing and administration of the fire services and 'even after sketch plans were approved in 1976, another six years had to pass before all the arguments had been settled ...' (Page 1986: 290). The complex '... clearly expresses its function, with transparent garage doors revealing the fire engines behind ... it has a bold front which enlivens this quiet part of the city' (McMahon 2001: 222).

Two further prominent buildings by Roach in the city of Adelaide are Southgate (1989) and Westpac House (1989). With the former, on the corner of King William Street and South Terrace, Roach was able to maximize height allowances on the site by amassing plot ratio. The use of graded colour façade cladding was the first instance of its application in Adelaide. The latter, which was originally built for the State Bank of South Australia in conjunction with Woods Bagot, was then the tallest building in Adelaide. It was initially designed as a 40 storey tower (ten floors higher) with a lighting tower, however the ten storeys were disallowed by the Department of Civil

Aviation (Roach and Sellick to McDougall June 2008).

After the refurbishment of the Commonwealth Centre (1999-2000) at 55 Currie Street, Adelaide, for the Motor Traders Association Superannuation Fund, Roach's foyer design attracted the attention of the National Trust and a local television program 'Postcards' as part of their review of such building features in Adelaide. In order to direct visitors to the lift well on the western side of the huge atrium, he created a winding stone pathway through a specially woven ribbed carpet. Glass sculptures, and kentia palms in above balconies completed the effect ('Foyers of Adelaide' nd). Roach's considered and creative approach to the needs of a building has more recently been in evidence with his 2008 renovation of the Reserve Bank Building (1962) on Victoria Square. Among a number of changes, a new main entrance off Flinders Street features a colonnade with 'exquisitely detailed timber columns atop marble bases and the new marble and aluminium-panelled entrance portico is a seamless insertion into the Flinders Street façade ... evidence of a respectful understanding of the qualities of this extraordinary building' (Cys 2008: 46).

Alison McDougall

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## REFERENCES:

*Advertiser*, 24.5.1985

Michael Queale and Nicolette Di Lernia, (comp.), *Adelaide's Architecture and Art*, Wakefield Press, Adelaide, 1996.

*South Australian Builder*, November 1984, pp. 23, 24.

University of South Australia, Architects database:  
<http://www.architectsdatabase.unisa.edu.au/>

**SITE RECORD:**

**FORMER NAME:** n/a

**DESCRIPTION OF PLACE:** Seven-storey red brick building

**DATE OF COMPLETION:** 1983–85

**REGISTER STATUS:** **Description:** n/a

**CURRENT USE:** **Description:** Fire station  
**Dates:** 1985

**PREVIOUS USE(S):** **Description:** n/a  
**Dates:** n/a

**ARCHITECT:** **Name:** Rod Roach  
**Dates:** 1983

**BUILDER:** **Name:**  
**Dates:**

**SUBJECT INDEXING:** **Group:**  
**Category:**

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA:** **Description:** Adelaide City Council

**LOCATION:** **Unit No.:** -  
**Street No.:** 101  
**Street Name:** Wakefield Street  
**Town/Suburb:** Adelaide  
**Post Code:** 5000  
**Region No.:**  
**Region:** Adelaide

**LAND DESCRIPTION:** **Title Type:** Torrens Title  
**Volume:** 5346; 5761; 5833  
**Folio:** 494; 799; 791  
**Lot No.:** Town Acre  
**Section:**  
**Hundred:** Adelaide

**SITE RECORD (Cont.):**

**AMG REFERENCE:**

**Zone:  
Easting:  
Northing:  
Map Sheet:  
Map Scale:**

**OWNER:**

**Name:  
Address:  
Town/Suburb:  
Post Code:**



**PHOTOGRAPH:**

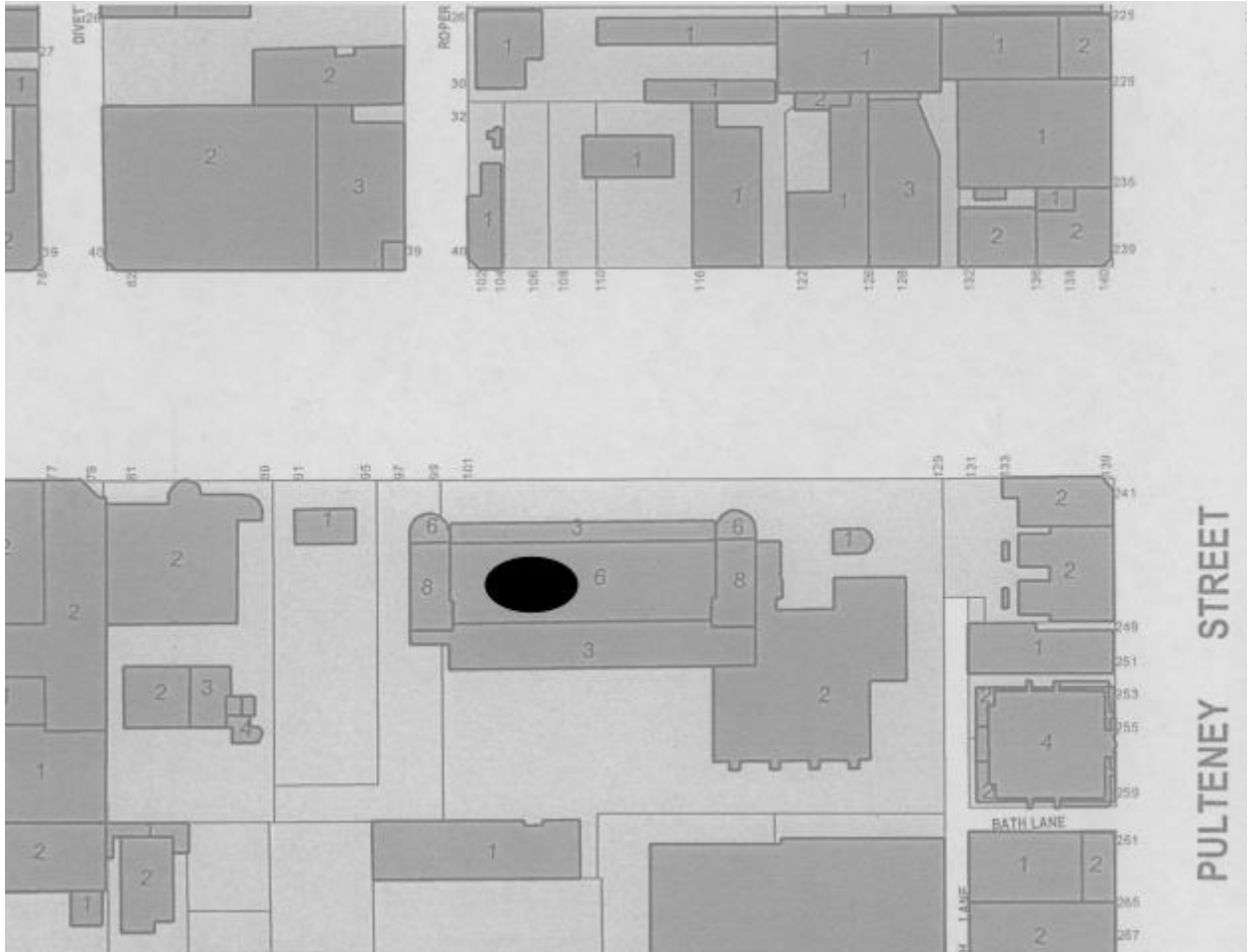
**Film No.:**

**AHS0433**



*Fire Station, 101 Wakefield Street – View to southeast*

Location Map



Location of Adelaide Fire Station