

MODERNIST MELBOURNE BUILDINGS NAMED AMONG AUSTRALIA'S TOP 10 CONCRETE PUBLIC ARCHITECTURAL WORKS

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Two of Melbourne's best-known modernist structures – the Victorian State Offices and the Melbourne University car park – have been named among the top 10 most outstanding concrete public architectural works in Australia of the past nine decades.

A judging panel comprising some of Australia's best-known architects and building experts today unveiled the first ever list of the 10 most outstanding concrete public buildings in the country.

The Victorian State Offices, which was built in 1966-69, and the Melbourne University car park, built underground beneath the university's south lawn in 1971-72, have both been named on the list.

The publication of the Top 10 List marks the 90th anniversary of the establishment of the organisation that represents the heavy construction materials industry, Cement Concrete & Aggregates Australia (CCA).

The other structures in the Top 10 List are: the Australian Academy of Sciences' Shine Dome in Canberra; Australia Square in Sydney, which was the country's first "round" skyscraper; the Gladesville Bridge in Sydney; James Cook University Library in Townsville; the Queensland Art Gallery, in Brisbane; and the Punchbowl Mosque in Sydney.

The chair of the judging panel, Peter Poulet, a former Government Architect, said the Victorian State Offices was an example of modernism at its best.

"Structural precast and column free spaces make for a building built on innovation yet with longevity - historically sensitive, true to its time and clearly of its place," Mr Poulet said.

Another member of the judging panel, Jill Garner, who is the Victorian Government Architect, described the Melbourne University underground carpark as a "poetic piece of pragmatic infrastructure" that created a "wondrous space from simple geometry".

"The car park accentuates the inherent fluid nature of concrete to create a dynamic space, allowing for deep soil planting for trees above," she said. "It represents an ingenious bringing together of engineering and architecture – and it thoroughly deserves its place among the Top 10."

The Chief Executive Officer of CCA, Ken Slattery, said the Top 10 List highlighted the aesthetic, environmental, and social contribution concrete has made, and continues to make, to Australia's urban landscapes since the organisation began nine decades ago.

“Since 1929, Cement, Concrete & Aggregates Australia has promoted the inherent qualities, flexibility and sustainability of concrete as a building and construction material,” Mr Slattery said.

“To mark our 90th year, we embarked on a quest to find Australia’s most important and distinctive concrete public architectural landmarks, highlighting the central role that concrete has played in Australia’s urban landscape throughout the past nine decades.

“Some of the Top 10 structures sit in harmony with the landscape, while others are proudly uncompromising; some have Brutalist, geometric composition while others have continuous free-flowing forms, but collectively, this list captures the limitless potential of concrete.”

Mr Poulet said the judging panel had whittled down a long list of 45 nominations to 23 finalists, before reaching a consensus on the Top 10.

He said the selection was based on three criteria: Architectural Merit (the form, function and structure of the building); Innovation in the use of concrete as a material, as a structure, and aesthetically; and finally, Exemplar of the time, which determined whether the project redefined and expanded concrete’s potential.

“These buildings and structures remind us of the resilient, enduring beauty of concrete - and it is this durability that makes it a key enabling material to put society on a sustainable transition path,” he added.

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For further information, contact Cannings Strategic Communications:

William Roberts – *Senior Consultant*

M: 0431 318 893

E: wroberts@cannings.net.au