SUMMARY OF STATE HERITAGE PLACE

REGISTER ENTRY

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

NAME: Adelaide Fire Station
PLACE NO.: 26356

ADDRESS: 81–129 Wakefield Street, Adelaide
(CT 5782/242, CTs 5761/798–799, CT 5346/494, CT 5346/689
CTs 5943/887–888)

STATEMENT OF HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

The Adelaide Fire Station is significant as one of the most notable fire station buildings in South Australia, and is an outstanding example of post-modern architecture. Noted for its innovative design and high quality construction, the building was designed by architect Rod Roach, in partnership with Woodhead Australia, between 1976 and 1983, and references the fire station it replaced as well as indicating the future scale and role of the Metropolitan Fire Service.

The main building is particularly notable for its dramatic elevation to Wakefield Street in which prominent semi-circular brick towers ‘bookend’ the central section of the building. The central facade also includes a projecting horizontal storey, beneath which is double-height articulated glazing, providing visual and physical access to the fire engines within. The concrete training tower and smaller auxiliary buildings to the west along Wakefield Street and to the north adjacent Angas Street employ some of the same design ideas as the main building, contributing to the design integrity of the whole site.
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 Adelaide Fire Station is an outstanding representative of post-modern architecture, displaying a high degree of technical and creative design, as well as exceptional construction techniques. The whole site was designed together (between 1976 and 1983), with attention being paid to the function of the various buildings as well as the symbolism of the main building.

Architect Rod Roach designed the main building to be clearly identifiable as a fire station, and to provide a powerful demonstration of the importance of firefighting and fire fighters to the community. The seven-storey structure also referenced the earlier fire station building, with the flanking red-brick cylindrical towers as an echo of the earlier projecting bays. At ground level, the main building has a five-bay series of opening glazed doors behind which the waiting fire engines can clearly be seen. The glazed doors are articulated by geometric metal glazing bars chosen to evoke the mechanical nature of the building and its function.

Similar design elements and construction methods are used for other buildings at the site, including the use of curved red-brick towers on the administration building; the use of geometric metal glazing to the display building and on the administration building gate; the use of red-brick construction for the Angas Street building; and a curved element on the concrete training tower.

The strength and quality of the design was recognised in 2009 when the Royal Australian Institute of Architects (SA Chapter) chose the Adelaide Fire Station as the recipient of the Jack Cheesman 25 Year Award for Enduring Architecture, on the basis that ‘The building projects a robust image which dramatises and illustrates its function. The ancillary buildings, designed to a lesser scale fit the whole complex into the streetscape.’
Adelaide Fire Station – Site Plan

[Generally indicating the important elements and features of the place (outlined in red)]
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

A multi-storey post-modern building constructed for the Metropolitan Fire Service (MFS). The complex comprises four separate buildings, central operations, administration, training and stores. The main seven-storey building is constructed from red brick, at each end of the main rectangular volume is a semi cylindrical element, referential of the bow windows of the fire station it replaced. The glazed northern façade is broken up by a rhythm of contrasting rendered geometric elements. At street level the transparent garage doors reveal a glimpse of the machinery and inner workings.

The components identified as being intrinsic to the heritage significance of the Adelaide Fire Station include:

- Main fire station building including attached glazed metal-framed display building to east;
- Separate red-brick office buildings to east main fire station building, including curved projection and gate with metal-framed detailing.
- Concrete training tower
- Red brick maintenance and storage buildings to south of main fire station, including building abutting Angas Street

The extent of listing excludes:

- Any structures and fixtures not included in original design.

History of the Place

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. The former Public Buildings Department officers acted as project managers and supervisors during its construction. 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 fire station building represents a point in time where the state had to respond to the changing needs of the community. It was a highly collaborative project, involving a number of different sectors including state and local government.

In Sculptors in Space (p290), Michael Page states:

> The Fire Service building presented all those concerned with its design and construction, including the Public Buildings Department, with a unique series of problems. The building was the first metropolitan headquarters to be built for the fire-fighting services since 1892, and for about 20 years it had been the subject of a five-sided wrangle between all those involved in the financing and administration of the fire-fighting services: the Fire Brigade Board, the insurance companies, the State Government, the Fire Fighters Association, and the Local Government Association. The historic fire station on Wakefield street, described by the Fire Fighters Association as a ‘rundown rabbit warren’, was obviously unsuitable for a city that had grown so enormously since the station was built, but South Australians are traditionally reluctant to pay for fire protection and the bureaucracy always resisted the idea of building a new headquarters. Even after sketch plans were approved in 1976 another six years had to pass before all arguments had been settled, and the designers could set to work on a building which had to incorporate hose towers, engine houses, a communications centre, training areas, offices, workshops, firemen’s quarters, and spaces for many other special purposes.

The University of South Australia’s Architects of South Australia Database states:

> He [Rod Roach] 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).

The Adelaide Fire Station is included on the Australian Institute of Architects (SA Chapter) list of significant 20th Century architecture. In 2009, it was also awarded the Jack Cheesman 25 Year Award for Enduring Architecture as follows:

> This year the jury has selected the Adelaide Fire Station in Wakefield Street opened by the Deputy Premier on 23 May 1985 as the recipient of the Jack Cheesman 25 Year Award for Enduring Architecture. The ‘design architect’ was Rod Roach and the ‘project architect’ was Woodhead Australia.

> The building projects a robust image which dramatises and illustrates its function. The ancillary buildings, designed to a lesser scale fit the whole complex into the streetscape. Twenty-five years on, the building continues to add character to the area.

> The Adelaide Fire Station building has endured to be well-loved by the general public and still does much to advertise the essential service it houses.
References

- Advertiser, 24 May 1985
- Donovan and Associates 2009, City of Adelaide Heritage Survey (Southern Adelaide), City of Adelaide.
- AIA Architecture Awards:
  www.dynamic.architecture.com.au/i-cms?page=1.64.34.12292.12889.12891
- University of South Australia, Architects of South Database:
  www.architectsdatabase.unisa.edu.au/
**SITE DETAILS**

**Adelaide Fire Station**  
81–129 Wakefield Street, Adelaide  

**PLACE NO:** 26356

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Date: 4 January 2010 |
| **LOCAL HERITAGE STATUS** | n/a |
| **CURRENT USE:** | Fire station  
Dates: 1983 to present |
| **PREVIOUS USE(S):** | n/a  
Dates: n/a |
| **ARCHITECT:** | Rod Roach + Woodhead  
| **BUILDER:** | Hansen Yuncken |
| **LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA:** | Adelaide |
| **LOCATION:** | n/a  
Street No.: 81–129  
Street Name: Wakefield Street  
Suburb: Adelaide  
Post code: 5000 |

**LAND DESCRIPTION:**

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Summary of State Heritage Place: 26356  
Agreed to by Register Committee on 8 October 2014
Adelaide Fire Station
81–129 Wakefield Street, Adelaide

PHOTOS

Adelaide Fire Station, 81-129 Wakefield Street Adelaide, View from north (Hamish Angas, July 2014)

Adelaide Fire Station, 81-129 Wakefield Street Adelaide, View from north-east (Hamish Angas, July 2014)
PHOTOS

Adelaide Fire Station, 81–129 Wakefield Street, Adelaide

PLACE NO: 26356

Adelaide Fire Station, 81-129 Wakefield Street, View of training tower from north
(Hamish Angas, July 2014)

Adelaide Fire Station, 81-129 Wakefield Street Adelaide,
View of western office building from north-west (Hamish Angas, July 2014)