West Portal Cafeteria, Parkes, ACT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Finance ID Number</th>
<th>DFD-61007</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Commonwealth Heritage List (CHL) Place ID Number</td>
<td>Nominated: <a href="http://example.com">105554</a> Parliament House Vista Extension - <a href="http://example.com">105474</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Current Status (including CHL Place ID Number)</td>
<td>The West Portal Cafeteria (CHL ID: <a href="http://example.com">105554</a>) has been nominated to the Commonwealth Heritage List. The nomination has been referred to the Australian Heritage Council for assessment. The West Portal Cafeteria is included on the Commonwealth Heritage List as part of the Parliament House Vista Extension (CHL ID: <a href="http://example.com">105474</a>).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ownership</td>
<td>West portal Cafeteria is managed by the Department of Finance on behalf of the Commonwealth.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>The West Portal Cafeteria is an isolated free standing buildings located adjacent to the north side of Lake Burley Griffin, flanking ANZAC Parade between Constitution Avenue and Parkes Way, Parkes and is included in the Parliamentary Zone, Canberra, Australian Capital Territory.</td>
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The West Portal Cafeteria is located on Constitution Avenue, Parkes, on Block 7, Section 3 of Parkes, which includes the Anzac Park West Building.

Source: Google maps

**Description**

The West Portal Cafeteria was designed to create an environment quite different from the adjoining offices. It was to provide not only food services but also a relaxing environment with an outlook southwest across Parkes Way to Commonwealth Park and the lake beyond. A dense landscape was designed to enclose and separate the southeastern and northwestern exterior spaces from their surrounds. This was in contrast to adjacent monumentality of the Anzac Park West Building.

The West Portal Cafeteria is a low single level rectangular building of approximately 18.5 x 29.5 metres (internal) oriented north south and raised above the surrounding open ground by an average of 1.2 metres. The building is enclosed by exposed brick on three sides of the northern end and by full height glazing and a wide verandah to the three sides of the southern end. The building has a very low-pitched, hipped main roof with concave cantilevered, copper tile clad roof sections extending out approximately three metres around all four sides of the roof. The roof also features a copper clad lantern and curved spire located centrally over the dining area below.

The undersides of the roof and the perimeter of the former dining room ceiling are battened with Western Red Cedar with mitred junctions to each corner. The verandah section is gently angled upwards and curves even further upwards at the ends to meet the roof fascia and copper gutter. The former dining room ceiling is coffered in the centre section in a structural grid. The very central 3.6 x 3.6 metres coffer continues up to be a central lantern and clerestory with the lantern ceiling also being timber clad to match the perimeter of the former dining room. The dining room suspended concrete floor was originally covered with 'finger' parquetry blocks and the rear or northern internal wall is clad with Queensland Maple battens laid vertically.

External steps of exposed aggregate concrete lead up to the verandahs and directly lead onto the east and west entrances to the former dining room through glazed internalised airlocks. The original entrance airlock to the east appears to have been replaced by larger airlock at some point and now includes pressure activated rubber floor mats. Battered stonewalls and planter boxes are located to the east, west and south sides of the southern end of the building and outside the former dining room.

The roof of the cafeteria is bronze coloured galvanised metal roofing to the upper roof area, with a concave curved perimeter section sheeted in small lapped copper sheets, similar in affect to shingles.
Centrally mounted on the roof above the main space is a copper-clad lantern and spire with a lower section comprising angled glazed panels, and the upper section being a spire with curved sides. The spire finishes with a single rod decorated with fine parallel metal bars.

Internally all the former kitchen and toilet fittings have been removed due to fire damage. The building plan consists of a square (former) dining room open section and a closed rear services section.

The building has brown Bowral face brick walls enclosing the service areas to the northeast, and these walls extend some distance along the northwest and southeast sides.

The rest of the building, indeed most of the building, has glazed exterior walls. These glazed walls have a concrete up-stand with pebble-crete type of finish. The windows extend to the underside of the eaves and between the structural steel posts. The window frames are made of bronze coloured anodised aluminium, and have sliding glass lower panels, and fixed glass panels above. The sliding windows have flyscreens and some are deteriorated or missing.

There are pairs of glazed doors on the southeast and northwest sides. These are also anodised aluminium with a centre rail panel of timber. The timber ply panel was stained but has been painted and is deteriorated. The doors on the northwest side are side hung.

The section of face brick wall on the northwest side has a series of anodised aluminium windows with top hung sashes.

The northeast side of the building is the location for services and the service entry. This includes a brickwork and concrete loading dock and stairs, with edges reinforced by checker-plate.

The cafeteria displays a number of distinctive architectural features including:

- its square in 'golden rectangle' pavilion form with encircling terrace and broad over hanging eaves as an extension of the internal ceiling finish
- horizontal character of the floor, ceiling and roof
- solid battered stone base and broad floating roof form sandwiching a continuous 'ribbon' glass wall
- elegant roof form including the use of curves and angled elements, with a lantern/spire adding a contrasting vertical element
- the dining room with its encircling windows, use of timberwork, central coffered ceiling and skylight
- use of quality materials including stone, timber and copper.

Part of the creative achievement of the Cafeteria design is reflected in the setting of the building, the way it was intended to be viewed in the landscape and the way the landscape was to be viewed/experience from the building.

The elevated single level setting of the cafeteria is not part of the portal concept embodied in the Anzac Park East and West buildings; rather it provides a
contrast to these monumental buildings through its form, proximity to Anzac Park West and its placement within a park-like landscape setting inside the broader Portal Building precinct.

| Landscape Setting | The West Portal Cafeteria is located adjacent to Anzac Park West, which together with Anzac Park East are known as the ‘Portal Buildings’. For more information on the Parliament House Vista Extension - Portal Buildings, Anzac Parade please refer to the Heritage Register entry.

The urban landscape setting of the Portal Buildings and the West Portal Cafeteria comprises views to and from Anzac Parade, Parkes Way and Constitution Avenue. The settings of the cafeteria and Portal Buildings have wide mown grassed verges dominated by three staggered rows of evenly spaced Eucalyptus bicostata (Blue Gum). Native plantings from 1965 onwards have predominated with the only formality in their placement being on the Anzac Parade side of each building. The trees are of a height that mostly screens the buildings when viewed from a distance. |
| Heritage Objects and Collections | There are no significant objects or collections associated with the West Portal Cafeteria. |
| History and Summary of Uses | The West Portal Cafeteria is located on the traditional lands of the Ngunnawal people and their descendants continue to live in Canberra and the surrounding region.

The West Portal Cafeteria is one of only three remaining cafeteria buildings built in the 1960s in Canberra at an important stage in the development of the public service in the new capital. The other two cafeterias built around the same time are the former Russell Offices Canteen, now the Russell Hill Early Childhood Centre and the former (Old) Parliament House Kiosk, now the Pork Barrel Restaurant (also known as the Lobby Restaurant). |
In developing Canberra, a key component was the provision of office accommodation for government departments. The West Portal cafeteria is linked to the development of Anzac Park East and West (the Portal Buildings). East and West Block were conceived as landmarks on the opposite bank of the lake and a portal gateway to the long vista up Anzac Parade to the War Memorial.

From at least the 1950s, the Australian Government provided cafeterias or canteens for use by public servants. These were associated with government offices or other facilities, and were different from the Army, Navy and Air Force messes, which have a much longer history. The Department of Labour, in its various forms, was the lead agency (Interdepartmental Committee on Food Services, 1970).

The Department of Supply advised a cafeteria was needed because its officers ‘will be unable to return to their homes for lunch’ because of the distance to travel (Woodhead, 2012). The cafeteria to seat 350 people was proposed to serve the occupants of the Anzac Park East and West Buildings. Over the life of the design process the designed seating capacity was reduced to 240 people.

The West Portal cafeteria was planned and implemented by the National Capital Development Commission, under the control of its Director of Architecture, Mr Gareth Roberts, who commissioned private architectural firms to finalise the design and document the buildings for construction. In September 1966, O’Mahony, Neville & Morgan were commissioned for the project, and the architects engaged Julius, Poole & Gibson to provide mechanical, electrical and structural engineering design services. Following a public tender in May 1968, SDC Kennedy & Bird Pty Ltd were selected as the builder in June. The building was constructed in 1968-69 with practical completion on 5 May 1969 for a final cost of $192,386. The West Portal Cafeteria was opened on 19 May 1969.

The inclusion of the sculpture Meeting Place by Stephen Walker as a centrepiece in the dining area is suggestive of the building’s perceived important social function. The sculpture was apparently installed in early 1970 and removed later - its current location is unknown.

In 1977, the Government decided to transfer operational responsibility of the cafeterias and canteens from the various departments and agencies to Commonwealth Hostels Ltd, a company fully owned by the Australian Government. In 1978, the company changed its name to Commonwealth Accommodation and Catering Services Ltd, and in 1988, it was sold into private enterprise and became Advanced Food Services.

The West Portal Cafeteria operated until the 1990s when it was leased to a private contractor. In 2000, the cafeteria building was leased to the National Capital Authority for use as a temporary display facility. In about 2001 to 2004, the cafeteria was leased to Alan Honey for catering and function use, and the business was called The Spire Events Centre. The cafeteria is currently vacant.
### Commonwealth Heritage List – Finance Nominated Statement of Significance

| **Finance's Summary Statement of Significance** | The West Portal Cafeteria and its open setting have a range of heritage values related to its history, uncommon design features and for its creative achievement. The cafeteria has important historical value for its association with the development of early government office accommodation in Canberra in the 1960s. The cafeteria was part of the Anzac Park East and West Buildings complex and therefore is a representative part of the government’s efforts to establish Canberra as the location for Australian Government administration in the 1960s.

The cafeteria also has historical interest as part of the social history of the provision of food services to public servants as a substantial feature of Australian Government employment. The West Portal Cafeteria was one of at least 8 such services in the ACT in 1970, and part of the network of at least 74 services nationwide. The provision of such services by Government ended in 1988. It is one of only three surviving and ex government cafeterias and has the most physical integrity.

The Cafeteria has uncommon architectural value as a free standing and well-resolved architectural composition in a uniquely integrated setting employing high quality materials such as copper, timber and stone. It employs a range of architectural features such as exaggerated horizontal planes, large overhanging timber lined eaves and a large extent of glazing in a restrained, proportionate and harmonious way. |

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| **Department of Finance’s (Finance) updated heritage assessment** | The Former ‘Anzac Park West Cafeteria’ or West Portal Cafeteria building and its remaining open landscaped setting have a range of heritage values related to its unique and strong history, uncommon design features and for its creative achievement.

The cafeteria has uniquely important historical value for its association with the development of early Government office accommodation in Canberra in the 1960s. The cafeteria was part of the Anzac Park East and West Buildings complex and therefore is a representative part of the Government’s efforts to establish Canberra as the location for Australian Government administration in the 1960s. |
It is one of only four surviving ex-government office cafeterias in Australia all in Canberra and of those, it retains physical integrity of the external fabric.

The Cafeteria also has uncommon architectural value as a free standing and well-resolved architectural composition in a uniquely integrated setting employing high quality materials such as copper timber and stone. It employs a range of architectural features such as golden mean planning, raised stone-faced plinth, wide verandahs, exaggerated horizontal planes, large cantilevered timber lined upturning eaves and a great extent of glazing in a restrained, proportionate and harmonious manner.

Source: Eric Martin and Associates, 2014

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<tr>
<th>Criterion A - I</th>
<th>There are no official values as the West Portal Cafeteria is a nominated place.</th>
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**Non-Statutory Listings**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Register of the National Estate</th>
<th>Register of the National Estate: Place ID 102813. Registered (26/10/1999).</th>
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**Additional information**

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<th>Property Access</th>
<th>West Portal Cafeteria is not currently open to the public.</th>
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**Consultation**

Department of Finance consulted with the key stakeholders, including people with a particular interest in, or associations with the place; and those that may be affected by the management of the place.

Any additional consultation with other interested parties should include the [Compliance, Environment and Heritage team](#), Department of Finance.

**Conservation Documents/References**

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<td>Woodhead (2010), West Portal Cafeteria, Heritage Assessment, Department of Finance.</td>
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**More information**

For further information regarding the West Portal Cafeteria, please contact the [Department of Finance](#).