

## SUMMARY OF STATE HERITAGE PLACE

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### REGISTER ENTRY

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

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**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)

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### STATEMENT OF HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

The Adelaide Fire Station complex noted for its innovative design is an outstanding example of postmodern architecture. Designed by architect Rod Roach, in partnership with Woodhead Australia, between 1976 and 1983. The design 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, smaller auxiliary buildings and landscape elements on the site employ the same design language as the main building, contributing to the design integrity of the complex.

### 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 Complex is an outstanding representative of postmodern architecture that displays a high degree of technical and creative design. The complex was designed between 1976 and 1983, with attention being paid to the function of the various buildings as well as the symbolism of the main building.

The Adelaide Fire Station Complex was designed by Rod Roach in the postmodern architectural style. Postmodern architecture largely developed as a reaction against the stark ideology of modernist architecture, seeking to replace the ideal of 'less is more' with designs that referenced styles and elements from the past. Using postmodernist forms, the Adelaide Fire Station design subtly references the historic fire station it replaced, in particular through the use of red brick, the expressed cylindrical towers and sunken façade, and the clear horizontal banding created by the balcony above the engine bay.

Other features that demonstrate postmodern characteristics include the strong symmetry of the pared-down design and reinterpreted classical elements demonstrated through the columns, portico and the plinth created by the Wakefield street frontage of the complex.

The design of the fire station complex is heavily dependent on the main building, which is the element that establishes the postmodern style most strongly. The auxiliary structures reference the prominent main building, particularly the BATA Building adjacent to Wakefield Street (which is also redbrick with similar curved and geometrical elements) and the training tower, where the design is resolved to combine postmodern elements with the specific functional requirements of the structure. Other buildings to the rear of the main building reference the principal design ideas but to a lesser extent.

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 Complex 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.'

# SITE PLAN




Adelaide Fire Station  
81-129 Wakefield Street, Adelaide

PLACE NO: 26356



**ADELAIDE FIRE STATION, 81-129 WAKEFIELD STREET, ADELAIDE**  
Site Plan

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-  Boundary of State Heritage Place
-  Building of Exceptional Significance
-  Building of Considerable Significance
-  Building of Some Significance
-  Building of Minor Significance

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## 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*

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#### Physical Description

The Adelaide Fire Station is a multi-storey postmodern building complex 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.

#### *Buildings of Exceptional Significance:*

*Building 1: Main Building including: Exterior details and finishes, Internal engine bay roller doors (northern and southern) and ceiling details. Historic Fire Engine Display Portico including external and internal details and finishes, historic engine*

#### *Buildings of Considerable Significance:*

*Building 2 – Wakefield Street Garage*

*Building 4 – BATA Building including: only exterior details and finishes*

*Building 5 – Training Building and Tower: only exterior details and finishes*

#### *Buildings of Some Significance:*

*Building 3 – Gymnasium extension to SE of Main Building*

*Building 7 – Secondary Engine Garage to rear of Main Building*

#### *Buildings of Minor Significance:*

*Building 6 – Storage Building to Angas Street*

#### 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 complex that was opened by Deputy Premier Jack Wright on 23 May 1985.

The new complex 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 Adelaide Fire Station complex 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 complex 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

- *The Advertiser*, 24 May 1985
- Donovan and Associates 2009, *City of Adelaide Heritage Survey (Southern Adelaide)*, City of Adelaide.
- McMahon, Bill 2001, *The Architecture of East Australia: An architectural history in 432 individual presentations*, Edition Axel Menges, Stuttgart, p.222.
- Page, Michael 1986, *Sculptors In Space - South Australian Architects 1836-1986*, p.290.
- Page, Michael and Malcolm Bryant 1983, *Muscle and Pluck Forever!: The South Australian Fire Services, 1840-1982*, SA Metropolitan Fire Service, Adelaide
- Queale, Michael and Nicolette Di Lernia, (comp.), *Adelaide's Architecture and Art*, Wakefield Press, Adelaide, 1996.
- *South Australian Builder*, November 1984, p.23, 24.
- AIA Architecture Awards:  
[www.dynamic.architecture.com.au/i-cms?page=1.64.34.12292.12889.12891](http://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/](http://www.architectsdatabase.unisa.edu.au/)

## SITE DETAILS

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

**PLACE NO: 26356**

<b>FORMER NAME:</b>	n/a						
<b>DESCRIPTION OF PLACE:</b>	Fire station complex including seven-storey redbrick fire appliance building with attached display building, detached concrete training tower and detached smaller-scale red-brick buildings to west and south.						
<b>DATE OF COMPLETION:</b>	1983–85						
<b>SA HERITAGE REGISTER STATUS:</b>	<b>Description:</b>	Nominated					
	<b>Date:</b>	4 January 2010					
	<b>Description:</b>	Provisionally entered					
	<b>Date:</b>	8 October 2014					
	<b>Description:</b>	Confirmed					
	<b>Date:</b>	16 September 2015					
<b>LOCAL HERITAGE STATUS</b>	n/a						
<b>CURRENT USE:</b>	<b>Description:</b>	Fire station					
	<b>Dates:</b>	1983 to present					
<b>PREVIOUS USE(S):</b>	<b>Description:</b>	n/a					
	<b>Dates:</b>	n/a					
<b>ARCHITECT:</b>	<b>Name:</b>	Rod Roach + Woodhead					
	<b>Dates:</b>	1976–1983					
<b>BUILDER:</b>	<b>Name:</b>	Hansen Yuncken					
<b>LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA:</b>	<b>Description:</b>	Adelaide					
<b>LOCATION:</b>	<b>Street No.:</b>	81–129					
	<b>Street Name:</b>	Wakefield Street					
	<b>Suburb:</b>	Adelaide					
	<b>Post code:</b>	5000					
<b>LAND DESCRIPTION:</b>							
<b>Title Type:</b>	CT	CT	CT	CT	CT	CT	CT
<b>Volume:</b>	5782	5761	5346	5761	5346	5943	5943
<b>Folio:</b>	242	798	494	799	689	888	887
<b>Lot No.:</b>	705	659	9	668	7	690	704
<b>Plan No.:</b>	F181547	F181501	F16490	F181510	F16490	F181532	F181546
<b>Section:</b>	PT TA 342	PT TA 371	TA 343	PT TA 371	TA 343	PT TA 342	PT TA 342
<b>Hundred:</b>	ADELAIDE	ADELAIDE	ADELAIDE	ADELAIDE	ADELAIDE	ADELAIDE	ADELAIDE

## PHOTOS

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

**PLACE NO: 26356**



*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

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*Adelaide Fire Station, 81-129 Wakefield Street Adelaide, View from South West & Interior (Simon Carter, July 2014)*



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

## PHOTOS

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

**PLACE NO: 26356**

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