

## 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:** Kathleen Lumley College **PLACE NO.:** 26350  
Including Amenities Wing, Residential Wing,  
Master's Residence, Central and Front Gardens,  
Transformer Building, Southern Boundary Walls and Gates

**ADDRESS:** 51 Finnis Street North Adelaide 5006  
(Property location also documented as 123 Mackinnon Pde)  
CT 6045/420, Part Lot 1, D80242

### STATEMENT OF HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

The College is an outstanding representative of twentieth century Australian Regionalism, and an important project from prominent South Australian architects, Dickson & Platten, who are credited with developing a local adaptation of modernism.

The buildings are noteworthy from the architectural qualities of scale, craftsmanship and detailing, and for their expressive use of materials. The relationship of buildings around a central courtyard demonstrates a high degree of integration of architecture and landscape, characteristic of progressive architectural projects of this era, and critical to the work of Dickson & Platten.

Designed by Newell Platten, the College was a landmark project for the firm as a demonstration of its innovative handling of medium density residential work, and the forerunner of Platten's influential work on that typology for the South Australian Housing Trust. The College siting, overlooking and visually connecting with the University of Adelaide Sports Grounds, is also a significant continuation of University Colleges located on the Adelaide Parklands frontages, and an exemplary use of this valued public edge. The College has been well maintained, and improvements have been carried out with sensitivity to the original fabric and garden, and in consultation with the architects.

### **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,***

Kathleen Lumley College demonstrates a high degree of creative, aesthetic and technical accomplishment and is an outstanding representative of the 'Late Twentieth Century Adelaide Regional' style of architecture, of which Dickson & Platten are regarded as key practitioners (Apperly et al).

Winner of the 1969 Royal Australian Institute of Architects (RAIA) Award of Merit, Kathleen Lumley College is considered to be one of the best examples of its time of an architectural approach which adapts a domestic ethos into medium-sized buildings.

Kathleen Lumley College is a consistent and thorough rendition of the palette Dickson & Platten developed in their conscious pursuit of 'regional expression'. It employs a signature architectural vocabulary they evolved in the late 1950s to the mid 1970s, of sturdy red brickwork, expressed off-form concrete structural elements, tiled roofs, 'Solomit' straw ceilings, dramatic exposed timber trusses, and robust internal carpentry. Its design is an exercise in 'simple shapes, freely composed' and its pitched roofs, well-shaded verandahs, wide eaves and gentle site contours are typical of the specific manner in which the Adelaide Regional style responds to the local climate and topography (Apperly et al). In addition to the developed aesthetic of the architectural style, the complex is a cohesive demonstration of Dickson & Platten's sensitive reinterpretation of the rational master planning, massing and structural principles of Modernism.

- (g) *it has a special association with the life or work of a person or organisation or an event of historical importance.***

Kathleen Lumley College has a special association with the work of the historically important architectural practice of Dickson and Platten, and particularly with the life and work of Newell Platten.

The College is one of two projects for which the partnership is now best known, the other being the contemporaneous State Heritage listed University of Adelaide Union Building (SHP 17619) (Ward). Each partner took responsibility for specific projects, though they collaborated instinctively and continually in the office/ studio space they shared. Platten had major responsibility for Kathleen Lumley College (1969-71), while Robert Dickson worked on the University Union (1967-1975).

The College therefore is an exemplar of what Platten brought to the partnership, and given its high state of preservation, constitutes the best remaining example of Dickson & Platten's public- scale works.

### **Extent of Listing**

The extent of listing is the Kathleen Lumley College including Amenities Wing, Residential Wing, Master's Residence, Central and Front Gardens, Transformer Building, Southern Boundary Walls and Gates as generally indicated on the attached site plan. The extent of listing *excludes* the four cottages facing Finnis Street, and 2008 freestanding three-storey accommodation block in South West corner.

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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 place comprises a group of structures and grounds collectively known as Kathleen Lumley College, a residential college providing accommodation for 81 post-graduate students attending South Australian Universities. The site includes a two-storey amenities wing containing a common room, study, dining room and kitchen, the L-shaped three and four storey residential wing, connecting bridge, Master's Residence, central garden, transformer building, southern boundary walls and gates. The complex was built in stages from 1968 and 1971.

The site also incorporates four renovated cottages facing Finnis Street currently used as Administration Office, Recreation Room and additional student accommodation. These are not included in the extent of listing.

The components that are *integral* to the heritage significance of the Kathleen Lumley College include:

- External form, materials and appearance of the 1968-1971 built structures, including two-storey Amenities Wing, L-shaped three and four storey Residential Wing, connecting bridge, Master's Residence, Transformer building and red-brick screen wall, central and front gardens, light fittings and southern boundary walls and gates.
- Original internal materials and components including face red-brick walls, off-form concrete structural members, timber roof framing, clear-finished timber joinery, timber ceilings, and Solomit ceilings, joinery and hardware, light fittings, floor and wall finishes; copper fire canopy in the Common Room (Amenities Wing).

#### **History of Kathleen Lumley College**

Kathleen Lumley College was established by formal resolution of the Council of The University of Adelaide on 8 November 1965 as a non-denominational residential college for postgraduate students. The prime movers in the founding of the College

were the then Chancellor of the University of Adelaide Sir Kenneth Wills, Vice-Chancellor Sir Henry Basten, President of the Postgraduate Students' Association Colin Philips and the Chancellor's sister, Mrs Kathleen Lumley. A gift of \$60,000 from benefactor Mrs Lumley, matched by a State Government grant of \$60,000 and a Commonwealth grant of \$120,000 enabled the project to proceed.

Adelaide architectural firm Dickson & Platten was commissioned to develop plans in late 1966, with Newell Platten appointed project architect. The brief stipulated that the College would grow to a maximum of 120 residents over several funding triennia. Platten envisioned the College as a social organism where the architecture should contribute to sharing and to community. Inspiration for the design came from 'Kaisariani', an eleventh century Byzantine monastery near Athens. In particular Platten refers to the relationship between built form and garden, noting the intrinsic knit between spaces, defining walls, terraces, materials and planting and the centrality of the garden to the daily occupation of the monastery. A similar relationship is clearly discernible in the spatial layout, vistas and circulation of the completed College.

As an interim measure Dickson prepared plans for renovating three existing cottages on the site as accommodation for the Master and a small number of students. The preliminary master plan had meanwhile been sent to the Australian Universities Commission (AUC) for comment. In this scheme, 'motel style' study-bedrooms with balcony access and private bathrooms formed a large U on the western side of the site, rising from three stories facing the parklands to four stories on the north. The two story amenities wing sat hard on the eastern boundary, and the garden was enclosed by these wings, with a gap between to provide access from Mackinnon Parade and a view through to the parklands.

Tenders were called in October 1967 for Stage One, to include a residential wing with fifteen single study-bedrooms, three two-room suites for married couples and an amenities wing with common room, study, dining room and kitchen. Alan Tosolini was selected as the builder and construction began late in 1967. Major materials were locally produced red brick (from the coal-fired Hoffman kiln) with cut and struck tooled joints (a Dickson & Platten refinement on conventional joints), off-form white concrete, structure, oregon structural timber (clear finished internally, stained externally) and clear finished Australian oak joinery. One of the few changes was the substitution of timber ceiling for 'Solomit', due to a drought which affected the supply of the compressed straw material.

Platten designed the courtyard garden during this time, tracing the grid of the buildings column grid horizontally in strips of mortar-bedded brickwork and walls, and filling spaces between with dry-laid brick paving, steps, planter boxes and garden beds for plane trees and orange trees (recalling the Kaisariani planting), as well as a lawn area and barbeque. Landscape architect Ray Holliday was invited in to complete the landscaping with mainly native plants. The college is also an example of the productive collaboration with structural engineer, Phillip Fargher of Hosking,

Fargher & Oborn Pty Ltd, who was consultant to Dickson & Platten on several of their most substantial works. At Kathleen Lumley this is apparent in the exposed paired trusses of the amenities wing, but also in the pared back timber and concrete sections and elegant bolted junctions of the stairs, bridge and balconies.

The College was officially inaugurated on 15 February 1968 with the unveiling of a plaque at the Mackinnon Parade frontage by Mrs Lumley. Malcolm Fraser, then Federal Minister for Education, was guest speaker at the inaugural College Dinner.

Plans for Stage Two, including twenty-four study bedrooms in a three and four storey extension to the north end of the first stage residential wing, were completed in early 1970. A basement television room was later added to the plan. Builder Alan Tosolini was again the successful tenderer, and the project was completed by July 1971.

Tosolini's also built the Master's Residence in 1971, which Dickson & Platten had designed for the adjoining eastern site on MacKinnon Parade as a complement to the college buildings. Two-storeys and with three bedrooms, the house is a fitting termination of the College's MacKinnon Parade presence, both in its compact yet robust scale, and its specific demonstration of the domestic design that underpins the architectural style of the College as a whole.

On his retirement Platten handed over preliminary sketches for future development to Ratcliffe and in 2008 an extension of the residential accommodation was undertaken. The college's heritage value is augmented by a comprehensive collection of original documentation of the project, archived in the University of South Australia Architecture Museum, including sketch and tender drawings, and specifications.

### **Newell James Platten (1928- )**

Newell Platten graduated from the University of Adelaide with a Bachelor of Engineering (Architecture) in 1951. He first worked for the Adelaide architectural practice Lawson, Cheesman and Doley, where he became a partner in 1955, before leaving in 1958 to establish **Dickson & Platten** with Robert Dickson. Further information about his architectural work, and about the firm of Dickson & Platten is provided in the Assessment Report by Rachel Hurst.

Established in 1958 Dickson & Platten are significant not just as one of the first post-war practices to be working from its inception with Modernist ideals, but also because of the quality of their work. The firm is recognised as one of the State's most distinguished architectural practices of the latter half of the 20th century, as evidenced by their inclusion in the publications of Ward, Taylor, Apperly et al, and also the 1981 international publication *Process: Architecture*, where their works constitute five out of thirty three nationally selected projects representing contemporary Australian architecture. They were in the vanguard of practitioners who both introduced Modernism to the South Australian context through their earliest residential works, and later challenged the associated connotations of an International Style via their interest in specific regional responses and expression.

From the mid-1960s onwards Dickson & Platten were one of the leaders in South Australia '...of a widespread movement away from the flat-roofed, glass-walled box towards a more relaxed and friendly form of modernism' (Apperly et al). Together with the University of Adelaide Union Building Kathleen Lumley College is considered to be the culmination of an architectural idiom Dickson & Platten developed over a period of some ten years. Originating at a domestic scale, their regionally inflected form of modernism was developed through a series of award winning designs, including many houses, the Arkaba Hotel Restaurant at Fullarton (1965) and, during a particularly productive time from the late 60s to early 70s, through the concurrent works of the Union and Kathleen Lumley. Both Dickson and Platten were made Life Fellows of the RAlA in 1981 and 1996 respectively. Platten was awarded the RAlA President's Medal in 1993 and Dickson in 2000.

## References

This report is based on:

- Rachel Hurst, *Assessment of Heritage Value: Kathleen Lumley College*, prepared for the Department of Environment Water and Natural Resources (December 2009).

Additional references include:

- Richard Apperley, Robert Irving & Peter Reynolds *A Pictorial Guide to Identifying Australian Architecture*, (Angus & Robertson: Sydney. 1989).
- Rachel Hurst, 'Modest Revolutionaries: the Architecture of Dickson & Platten' in *LIMITS: Proceedings of the 21st Annual Conference of SAHANZ* eds. Harriet Edquist & Helene Fricot, Melbourne Sept 2004.
- Rachel Hurst, 'Stories of gardens and dolls: Dickson & Platten's Kathleen Lumley College' in *Cultural crossroads: Proceedings of the 26th International SAHANZ Conference*, ed. Julia Gatley, Auckland July 2009.
- Platten, N, Unpublished essay on Kathleen Lumley College (KLC) (July 2007) quoted in Hurst 2009.
- 'Kathleen Lumley College' in *Adelaide University Graduates Union (A.U.G.U) Monthly Newsletter & Gazette*, (March 1968).
- Michael Page, *Sculptors in Space: South Australian Architects 1836-1986*, (RAIA SA Chapter, 1986).
- David Saunders & Shigeru Yura [eds.] 'Modern Australian Architecture', in *Process Architecture* (Tokyo 1981).
- *RAIA Register of Significant 20th Century Architecture in South Australia*, (RAIA SA Chapter, 1986)
- Jennifer Taylor, *Australian Architecture since 1960* (Canberra: National Education Division of the RAlA, 1990).
- 'Architectural Awards' in *Royal Australian Institute of Architects News* (November 1969), 8-9.
- Peter Ward, 'State of the Union good enough for judges' in *Adelaide Review* (August 2004) [http://www.adelaidereview.com.au/archives/2004\\_07](http://www.adelaidereview.com.au/archives/2004_07) accessed 10.5.07

- Philip Goad & Julie Willis (eds), *The Encyclopaedia of Australian Architecture*, Cambridge University Press (2010).
- Kathleen Lumley College website: <http://www.kathleenlumleycollege.com.au/about-us>

## SITE RECORD

**Kathleen Lumley College  
Including Amenities Wing, Residential Wing,  
Master's Residence, Central and Front Gardens,  
Transformer Building, Southern Boundary Walls and Gates**

**PLACE NO.: 26350**

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<b>FORMER NAME:</b>	N/A	
<b>DESCRIPTION OF PLACE:</b>	Residential college comprising two, three and four-storey buildings grouped around a central courtyard, and adjacent two-storey Master's residence.	
<b>DATE OF COMPLETION:</b>	1971	
<b>SA HERITAGE REGISTER STATUS:</b>	<b>Description:</b>	Provisionally entered
	<b>Date:</b>	22 September 2010
<b>LOCAL HERITAGE STATUS</b>	<b>Local Heritage Place</b>	City of Adelaide Development Plan authorised March 2006
<b>CURRENT USE:</b>	<b>Description:</b>	Residential College
	<b>Dates:</b>	1967-present
<b>PREVIOUS USE(S):</b>	<b>Description:</b>	N/A
	<b>Dates:</b>	
<b>ARCHITECT:</b>	<b>Name:</b>	Newell Platten
	<b>Dates:</b>	1928-
<b>BUILDER:</b>	<b>Name:</b>	Alan Tosolini
	<b>Dates:</b>	1967-1971
<b>LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA:</b>	<b>Description:</b>	City of Adelaide
<b>LOCATION:</b>	<b>Postal Address:</b>	51 Finnis Street
	<b>Property Location:</b>	123 Mackinnon Parade
	<b>Town/Suburb:</b>	North Adelaide
	<b>Post Code:</b>	5006
<b>LAND DESCRIPTION:</b>	<b>Title Type:</b>	CT
	<b>Volume:</b>	6045
	<b>Folio:</b>	420
	<b>Lot &amp; Plan No.:</b>	Part lot 1, D80242
	<b>Hundred:</b>	Yatala

## PHOTOS

**Kathleen Lumley College  
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**PLACE NO.: 26350**



Mackinnon Parade streetscape; looking north east to 1968 Residential Wing . (Note the 2008 Residential Wing addition shown on extreme left.) (image: Hurst 2009)



Mackinnon Parade streetscape; south west end. (image: Hurst 2009)

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Entry from Mackinnon Parade: Amenities wing on right, looking north. (image: Hurst 2009)



Amenities Wing stair, looking NW from balcony (image: Hurst 2009)



Central garden looking south toward residential wing. (image: Hurst 2009)



Common Room – note copper fire hood (image: Hurst 2009)

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**PLACE NO.: 26350**



Amenities wing and stair, looking north (image: Hurst 2009)



Master's House, Mackinnon Parade elevation, looking north  
(image: Hurst 2009)

## SITE PLAN

Kathleen Lumley College  
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Site Plan showing extent of listing