

HAROLD HOLT SWIM CENTRE

1409-1413 HIGH STREET MALVERN, Stonnington City

VHR Number	H0069
File Number	HER/2001/001278
Other Names	Harold Holt Memorial Swimming Centre Harold Holt Swimming Pool
Municipality	Stonnington City
Extent of Registration	<p>General: The landscape and original plantings including Bhutan Cypress (<i>Cupressus torulosa</i>), Canadian poplar (<i>Populus canescens</i>) and Canary Island Date Palm (<i>Phoenix canariensis</i>).</p> <p>1. All of the buildings and features marked as follows on Diagram 0069 held by the Executive Director: B1 Indoor Pool Centre (including three pools, change rooms, offices) B2 Outdoor change room - mens B3 Outdoor change room - womens F1 Wading Pool F2 Olympic Pool F3 Spectator seating F4 Diving pool F5 Dive tower</p> <p>2. All of the Land marked L1 on Diagram 0069 held by the Executive Director.</p>
General References	<i>Survey of Suburban Public Swimming Pools in Victoria, 1950s-1960s</i> , Gardiner, Renée, 2007, Heritage Victoria
Spatial Information	-37.85752, 145.04455
Heritage Act Categories	Heritage place

Click on the arrow below to view the Item Categories.

▼ Item Categories

Item Group	Item Category
Recreation and Entertainment	Baths/Swimming Centre

Click on the arrow below to view the Statement of Significance. Note: Some records may not yet have a Statement of Significance.

▼ Statement of Significance

What is Significant?

The Harold Holt Swim Centre is a complex of indoor and outdoor public swimming pools and facilities. It was built in 1969 on the site of the original Malvern Swimming Baths. The then Malvern City Council decided to name the Centre in memory of Australian Prime Minister Harold Holt following his disappearance and presumed drowning at Portsea.

The swimming complex was designed by local architects Kevin Borland and Daryl Jackson and is one of the earliest buildings in Victoria of the Brutalist style.

The Harold Holt Swim Centre originally consisted of two indoor pools and, outdoors, an Olympic-sized pool, diving pool with dive tower, wading pool and changing rooms. The indoor centre is a glass and concrete structure distinguished by its unpainted concrete block and off-form concrete construction in which the patterns created by the timber form-work are clearly seen. The principal components of the building's functional and structural system are emphasised as positive elements of the building's form, in particular the circulation elements including concrete pedestrian ramps and semi-circular stair. There is a transparency through the entire site and natural light is maximised by glass walls on the indoor pool complex, enabling a clear line of sight from the diving pool on the northern boundary through the pool complex to High Street on the southern boundary.

In response to changing needs and continued functioning of the Centre, there have been several alterations to the original design. In 1988 multifunction rooms, offices and spa were added, the enclosure of part of the mezzanine concrete access ramp and the addition of an indoor therapeutic pool. In 1998 the original laminated timber truss members and ceiling of the indoor complex were replaced by painted steel decking and a small light tower was added to the main chamber. In 1999 the plant room was enlarged and painted. Alterations to the building have generally been sympathetic, although the addition of offices on the mezzanine level has restricted access around the indoor centre, interrupting the intended pattern of movement. There has been some loss of original texture, colour scheme, and transparency through the building due to alterations to the ceiling and plant room. These changes have to some extent compromised the original design of the building, however the intention of the design is still easily read in the external concrete forms and internal spaces. Unlike many Brutalist buildings, much of the off-form concrete remains unpainted leaving the imprint of the form-work clearly visible in the finished concrete

Kevin Borland is noted for his co-design of the 1956 Melbourne Olympic Pool, and the inventive Clyde Cameron College (1977). Daryl Jackson is considered an important proponent of Brutalism in Victoria. The Harold Holt Swim Centre is the earliest of Jackson's Brutalist designs and pre-dates other early Brutalist buildings in Victoria, notably the important Plumber and Gasfitters Union Building designed by Graeme Gunn (1970). Jackson continued his use of massed off-form concrete forms with function dictating design in such structures as the Princes Hill Secondary College (1972) and the M.L.C. Resources Building, Kew (1973). The garden setting for the pool complex retains a number of plantings from the earlier Malvern Swimming Pool gardens, including Bhutan Cypress (*Cupressus torulosa*), Canary Island Date Palm (*Phoenix canariensis*) and Canadian Poplar (*Populus canescens*).

The Harold Holt Swim Centre was awarded a Citation, Recreation Category, Victorian Chapter of the R.A.I.A. Architectural Awards in 1969.

How is it Significant?

The Harold Hold Swim Centre is of architectural significance to the State of Victoria.

Why is it Significant?

The Harold Hold Swim Centre is architecturally significant, being amongst the most notable, expressive, early and intact examples of the Brutalist movement that emerged in Victoria in the late-1960s. It represents the aesthetic, as well as ethical imperatives of the Brutalist style. The bold articulation of forms in textured off-form concrete and concrete blocks and glass, provides a sculptural imagery which is fundamental to Brutalist architecture. The heavy forms are balanced with focused transparency through the site, achieved by extensive use of natural lighting and the careful planning of the interior spaces.

Brutalism's ethical concern with social responsiveness is expressed through the expression of the construction materials as finished surfaces and the centrality of the user in the design of the building. This is clearly evident in the emphasis on circulation elements (the use of expressed ramps and stairs) and the articulation of the functional systems (ramps, skylights, service ducts, mezzanine observation deck and in the overall clarity and integration of the building, pools and gardens).

The Harold Hold Swim Centre is architecturally significant as the work of two important Victorian architects, Kevin Borland and Daryl Jackson. The design of the Centre reflects the development of architecture in Victoria through the 1970s, including the purposeful arrangement of masses and voids; the expression of the materials of construction as finished surfaces; the expression of structural form; and transparency for the user through directional internal planning.

The Harold Holt Swim Centre is of some historical and social significance as a memorial to the local member and then incumbent Australian Prime Minister, Harold Holt who disappeared, presumed drowned at Cheviot beach near Portsea, prior to the opening of the complex.

At the local level, the site is important for the provision of aquatic recreation for the people of the south-eastern suburbs from the construction of the original Malvern Baths in 1926 to the present. The place retains the planted banks of the earlier pool, as well as the square of parkland fronting High Street