

CITY OF SOUTH PERTH LOCAL HERITAGE INVENTORY

Management
Category

C

PLACE RECORD FORM

Prepared by *Heritage Today*, March 2000
Most recent update by City of South Perth, November 2015

Place No: SPCv 5 City of South Perth Civic Centre



(Gina Fraser, City of South Perth, January 2007)

LOCATION

Name of Place	<i>City of South Perth Civic Centre</i>
Other / former names	Council offices; Civic Centre
Address	59 Sandgate Street
Suburb	South Perth
Local Government Authority	City of South Perth
Scope of listing	This heritage listing applies to the buildings comprising the Administrative Offices, Council Chamber and associated Council Members' facilities, Reception Area, Library, Community Centre comprising the Community Hall and other community facilities, War Memorial, and Memorial Gardens. The listing does not include any improvements on the adjoining Lots 1 and 2.

LISTINGS BY OTHER BODIES

Name of Body	Reference No.	Grade of Listing	Date
Heritage Council of Western Australia	2399	Data base only – not listed	-

LAND DESCRIPTION

Reserve No.	Lot No.	Location No.	Plan/Diagram	Vol/Folio
-	3	P385, P386	14563	V 1748 F 108

PERIOD	Post-War (c1940-c1960)
Design Style	Post War International style with 'brutalist' elements
Construction Date	1960
Source/Details	Florey, Cecil C. <i>Peninsular City: A Social History of the City of South Perth</i> , City of South Perth, WA, 1995.

USE(S) OF PLACE

Original	Council Chamber, City Halls, City Offices and Library
Present	Council Chamber and associated facilities, City Centre comprising a hall and other community facilities, Administrative Offices, Library, War Memorial, Memorial Gardens
Other / former	

HISTORICAL NOTES

The first library for local children was founded in the South Perth district in 1945, and after much debate and deliberation, plans for a South Perth public library for adults were drawn up by 1959. The Murdoch Library was opened in 1960 by Sir Walter Murdoch, well-known former Professor of English at the University of Western Australia, popular writer and local resident for many years. The Library was part of the *City of South Perth Civic Centre* complex constructed in 1960. However, by 1964, the South Perth Library was considered too small and inadequate according to State Library standards and a branch Library was built in Manning in 1964 to supplement the main library.

In 1955, South Perth had the status of Road Board, having been 'demoted' from Municipal status in 1922. In 1955 it was proposed that South Perth revert to Municipal Council status. The reversion was gazetted in 1956. In 1958, plans for a Civic Centre were drawn up by Duncan Stephen and Mercer, Architects and Engineers. In 1959, the Council petitioned the Governor to declare the Municipal District of South Perth a 'City', and this was approved in April 1959.

The *City of South Perth Civic Centre* complex was opened in December 1960. The builder was A Doubikin. It comprised a Council Chamber, City Offices, public Library, and two City Halls – a main hall and a lesser (undercroft) hall. After fifty-five years of use, the 1904 Road Board Offices in Mill Point Road / Mends Street were no longer used for Council administration and were leased out for private use over the subsequent thirty years.

HISTORICAL NOTES (cont'd)

A popular decorative feature of the new 1960 administration building was a large linoleum mosaic fresco depicting the history of the City, with images including the first indigenous inhabitants, the Old Mill, a black swan and the river, among others. The fresco, approximately 6 metres wide and 1.2 metres tall, had been fixed to a dado wall above the original 'Rates/Finance' counter in a prominent location in the front foyer. Unfortunately, no graphic or photographic record of this iconic fresco exists to the City's knowledge. The idea of the fresco was initiated by Mr John Mercer, partner of Duncan Stephen and Mercer, who was in charge of the project. He discussed the concept with his mother, Edith McLean, who had lived in Coode Street, South Perth from 1905 to 1913, and together they built up an image of South Perth from 1900 to 1960. John Mercer produced a set of draft sketches based on old photographs and from memory. These were forwarded to Michael Nairn and Co Ltd, at Albion in New South Wales. John Swinbourne, pattern-maker and artist with the company, put all of the concept sketches together and produced the final mural.¹

Over the years, the original Administration building has been modified and expanded periodically as the size and needs of the staff accommodated in the building changed and increased. The key changes to the buildings are itemised below:

- **1970:** Additions and modifications to existing kitchens to the Main and Lesser City Halls, by Duncan Stephen and Mercer, Architects and Engineers were undertaken at an estimated cost of \$36,000.
- **1974:** Alterations and additions to the offices, under the management of Duncan, Stephen and Mercer, Architects, with Bruechle, Gilchrist and Evans Pty Ltd as Consulting Engineers. These works involved the addition of a new Reception Room for use by Council functions, and the creation of new Engineering offices and a large engineering drawing office. All of these areas were located along the north-western side of the building overlooking the Ernest Johnson Oval, with garaging and a new staff room beneath. Until that time, the staff facilities consisted of two small rooms – a male and a separate female lunch room, adjacent to the respective toilet facilities near the back stairs.
- **1978:** Major additions to the front (south-eastern side) of the Walter Murdoch Library, designed by Banham and Associates, Architects, included Librarians' offices and additional Library display area and shelving space. These works also included a new entrance ramp leading from the carpark.
- **1982:** Further alterations and additions to the lower ground floor of the Library, by builder, W T Boardman. These works were estimated to cost \$2,233.
- **1988:** Major two-storey additions to the Administration building occurred at the rear of the building overlooking the Ernest Johnson Reserve, at the same time creating expanded undercroft garaging for the City's fleet vehicles. This work was designed by R J Knott and Associates, Designers and plans were approved in January 1990.
- **1988:** A War Memorial was built in the grounds of the Civic Centre, with the surrounding grounds named the 'Memorial Gardens'. In 1923, a World War I Memorial had been built at the corner of Labouchere Road and Angelo Street, but noise from traffic and zoo animals proved to be problematic to services being held at that location. The new Memorial alleviated these problems, and has become the site of formal remembrance services on ANZAC Day (25 April) and Armistice Day (11 November) each year.

¹ Information about the fresco was provided by J K Duncan, of Duncan Stephen and Mercer, Architects and Engineers, in a letter dated 24 March 1987, to Mr Scott Limb, a Librarian with the City at that time.

HISTORICAL NOTES (cont'd)

- **1989:** R J Knott and Associates were responsible for advising the City on possible major additions to the Library. He suggested three options: to expand the building in its current location; to build a new Library on a portion of the carpark beside the City Halls; and to build a new Library at the Sandgate Street end of Ernest Johnson Oval between the Civic Centre and the Rotary Hall. In December 1989, the Council ordered that *“all planning and work on the redevelopment of the existing Civic Centre Library stop”*, to enable the alternative locations to be further examined for suitability. A major consideration in the Ernest Johnson Oval option was the fact that this section of the site had previously been used for the dumping of rubbish which would need to be excavated, refilled and compacted, thereby adding to the cost. This option was also strongly opposed by neighbouring residents. After considering various options for the expansion of the Library, the Council decided to extend the existing building rather than relocating it.
- **1989:** R J Knott and Associates were engaged to expand the Councillors’ Room in a westerly direction over an undercroft area, at an estimated cost of \$16,000.
- **1993:** A colonnaded portico was added to the Administration offices and Council Chamber entrances, designed by Robin Knott and Associates. Also, further major changes, designed by Woodhead Australia Interior Design were made to the partitioning of the administration offices. During this period, some staff were housed temporarily in prefabricated buildings on a portion of Ernest Johnson Reserve, while others were relocated to the Main Hall which had been divided into departmental work areas (with the Chief Executive’s office on the stage!).

A major part of this work was a change to office operations by the replacement of the former individual departmental customer counters with a single, long, curved customer counter serviced by customer service officers in an expanded central foyer area. Unfortunately, These extensive internal changes required the removal of the large linoleum mosaic fresco in the front foyer of the administration building.

- **1993:** The Library was further extended, according to plans prepared by Donaldson and Warn Architects. The builder was K R Stewart Pty Ltd. These additions extended the Library to the north-west, with additional shelving space and reading and study areas in ‘wings’ overlooking Ernest Johnson Oval. The administrative officers were rehoused in new areas at the lower ground floor level.
- **1994:** A new administration building and operations centre was constructed on the southern side of Thelma Street, and the whole of the City’s Infrastructure Directorate (including engineers, works, parks, environment and related administrative officers) relocated from the *City of South Perth Civic Centre* to the new Operations Centre at Thelma Street. This also freed up the land formerly occupied by the City’s 1955 works depot at the eastern end of the street block bounded by Thelma Street, Bland Street, Ryrie Avenue and Blamey Place. In 1995, the old depot was demolished and the land was subdivided into 31 new housing lots. A new small street servicing this subdivision was named ‘Forman Court’, in honour of a former City Engineer of more than 33 years, Edward McKenzie (Max) Forman (14.10.1926 - 30.6.1994). Prices of the lots ranged from \$100,000 to 131,500. The sale of the land provided useful funds for the City.
- **2000:** A large proportion of the undercroft parking area of the administrative offices at the Civic Centre was converted into a staff lunch/recreation room and a training area, at a cost of \$21,000, by King and Nugent, Builders.

HISTORICAL NOTES (cont'd)

- **2005:** Multi-million dollar renovations and expansions to the Administration building and Council Chamber were undertaken during this period. Peter Hunt Architect designed the improvements, estimated to cost \$350,000. One of the main elements of this project was a major refocus on community interaction and service, which saw the creation of a dedicated customer focus team, a security-separated public reception area, a Concierge/receptionist position, and a semi-secure counter for the cashiers; the introduction of a Call-Centre, a community publicity and liaison team, and dedicated customer meeting rooms in the front foyer offering privacy for customers. All of this work again required the temporary relocation of office staff to enable the City's business to continue uninterrupted – some were located in prefabricated buildings on the front car park, and others were located in the large reception room which had been temporarily partitioned into small work areas for the duration of the works. The City's Rangers were also relocated to the recently acquired South Perth Police Station site, continuing the building's role in community 'policing'.

The same upgrading program included a complete internal redesign of the layout and fit-out of the administration office, with expansion of the City's records and archive areas on the lower ground level, and the introduction of a lift as part of the City's disabled access inclusion policy. The Council Chamber was also enlarged and modernised, with an auditorium having a gallery seating capacity of over 100, and audio and visual electronic facilities for Council Members and the gallery. A new Mayoral parlour and a Council Members' lounge were also provided.

- **2009:** The next stage of upgrading, described as 'Stage 3', involved the City Halls and the Civic Centre Branch of the Walter Murdoch Library at the Civic Centre. Peter Hunt Architect designed these works, with Badge Constructions as the builder, and BPA as the Structural and Civil Engineers. The project manager was the City's Director, Financial and Information Services, Michael Kent. The \$11.5 million project was partly funded by a \$2 million Commonwealth Government grant under the Community Infrastructure Scheme, and a further \$1.5 million by Lotterywest. In 2010, the (then) Deputy Prime Minister, Julia Gillard, visited the construction site to view progress. The 'new' Hall has a capacity of 450 people standing, or 300 seated, with fully integrated high quality visual technology. It is expected to have a 50 year lifespan.²

The two-storey Hall building originally housed the Main Hall at the upper level and a Lesser Hall at the lower level. As part of the 2009 project, the Lesser Hall was replaced with community rooms, including the South Perth Life Long Learning Centre and the Child Health Centre.

During this period, Library functions were temporarily dispersed to the Manning Library and the Mends Street Police Station building, and the City's Rangers were relocated from the Police Station back to the Civic Centre.

The nominated builders, Badge Construction, took possession of the Civic Centre buildings in August 2009, and work concluded in January 2011, with the 'new' buildings being opened to the public the following month.

- **Various years:** Installation of a telecommunications tower on the site of the Civic Centre for multiple carriers, including Vodaphone in partnership with Optus Mobile Pty Ltd, Hutchison 3G Australia Pty Ltd (2002), Telstra (2006), Vividwireless (2009).

In addition to the large number of building works undertaken over the years, between 2000 and 2002, the City underwent a change in political and administrative procedures, when a Commission into certain City procedures resulted in the Council being stood down and temporarily replaced by three governing Commissioners. Following the departure of the Commissioners, the number of Council Members was reduced from 15 (three Members for each of five Wards) plus the Mayor, to 12 (two Members for each of six Wards) plus the Mayor. In November 2013, this number was further reduced to 8 (two Members for each of four Wards) plus the Mayor.

² City of South Perth 'Peninsula' newsletter, June 2010.

DESCRIPTION

In 2014, the State Government, under Liberal Premier, Colin Barnett, mounted a proposal for local government reform throughout the State, involving the reduction of the number of metropolitan local governments by half. At the time, there were 30 metropolitan council areas. The City of South Perth was proposed to be amalgamated with the Town of Victoria Park, together with a sizable portion of the City of Canning. In objection to this proposal, the City's electors requested a 'poll' under Section 8 of Schedule 2 of the *Local Government Act 1995*, to enable the ratepayers of each local government area to vote on the issue. The poll took place during January-February 2015, with the question: "*Should the City of South Perth and the Town of Victoria Park be abolished and amalgamated to form a new local government?*". In order for the poll to prevent the amalgamation from proceeding, at least 50% of electors from either local government were required to vote, and of those, more than half needed to vote against the proposal. At the conclusion of the poll on 7 February, the majority had voted against the proposal and the local governments remained as separate entities. The working name of the new amalgamated local government comprising predominantly the City of **South** Perth and the Town of Victoria **Park**, was 'City of South Park', also meaningful because of an early subdivision estate between Sandgate Street and Canning Highway which had been marketed under that name in the early twentieth century.

The setting

The *City of South Perth Civic Centre* complex is located at the corner of Sandgate Street and South Terrace, and is oriented diagonally across the site. An open levelled site, the Ernest Johnson Reserve, adjoins the rear of the complex. Earthworks undertaken prior to construction of the Civic Centre have resulted in a fall in the ground level from Sandgate Street towards the Ernest Johnson playing fields to the west. The difference in levels has been used to advantage within the building, with a lower floor of the linear complex at the playing field level, and 'at grade' public access to the civic buildings at the upper level.

The two-storey Hall building, originally housing the Main Hall and a Lesser Hall is still a two-storey community facility. The building is located at the south-western (South Terrace) end of the complex, with the Library in the centre and the Administration Offices at the north-eastern (Sandgate Street) end. The Memorial Garden is at the south-eastern corner of the site.

Construction materials

Originally, the predominant materials included salmon-coloured pressed brick masonry with painted, pressed cement brise soleil block panels set flush with the painted reinforced concrete frame, with some sections of rendered and painted concrete frame as reveal linings containing metal framed curtain wall elements. Some pink-hued exposed aggregate panels completed the architect's original palette.

To a large extent, as a design element the roof has been subjugated by means of a low pitch. The various roofs are of corrugated zincalume sheeting, replacing the previous asbestos sheeting. The entrance paving and pedestrian forecourt is square pre-cast pressed cement slabs.

None of the original fabric of the Library remains. The building was completely rebuilt in 2009 and this introduced a wider range of materials and colours, in contrast with the original salmon-coloured brickwork of the other buildings within the complex. A curved yellow structure encloses portion of the Library. The Library had also been extensively altered and extended in 1994.

The Council Chambers were originally fitted with jarrah furniture and wall cladding, with textured render above, and a fine blackbutt parquetry floor in the ante-Chamber. Both the Council Chamber and the Administration Offices have been extensively altered and internally, little of the original fabric remains.

DESCRIPTION (cont'd)

The War Memorial in the Memorial Garden is a grey granite obelisk reminiscent of that in King's Park, but smaller in size. The Memorial is also set across the diagonal of the intersection, the rose garden areas being delineated by Toodyay stone, and brick paving, with grassed areas and a stand of flagpoles. The gardens retain some shade trees.

The condition of the remaining original fabric of the complex is good and the level of integrity is moderate. Much of the fabric was modified, renewed and exchanged during the major renovations and additions which have taken place over the years, particularly those of 2005.

The 2009 modifications to the Civic Centre Halls involved retention of the outer walls, but the interior was modified considerably.

ASSOCIATIONS**ASSOCIATION TYPE**

James Lynch	Founder Community Centre Association
James Christou and Partners	Architects of 2005 alterations
Peter Hunt	Architects of 2009 Library redesign

HISTORIC THEME / Sub-theme**CATEGORIES OF SIGNIFICANCE**

Community Effort/ <i>Government, local government and politics</i>	Aesthetic
	Historic
	Social
	Representative

RATING AND ASSESSMENT**High****Low**

Aesthetic value (streetscape, setting)	1	2 ✓	3	4	5
Architectural merit (design features)	1	2	3 ✓	4	5
Rarity value	1	2	3 ✓	4	5
Value as part of a group/precinct	1	2 ✓	3	4	5
Condition	1	2 ✓	3 ✓	4	5
Integrity	1	2	3	4	5

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The *City of South Perth Civic Centre* complex has aesthetic, historic, social and representative cultural heritage significance. Opened in 1960, the building was a fitting symbol of the newly acquired City status which the City of South Perth gained in April 1959. It has been appropriately upgraded over the years to remain the hub of civic life for the City of South Perth.

MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS**Management Category C : Moderate significance**

Conservation desirable. Any alterations or additions should be sympathetic to the heritage values of the place and original fabric should be retained where feasible. Photographically record the place prior to any significant alteration or demolition.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION / BIBLIOGRAPHY

- City of South Perth Municipal Heritage Inventory (No 1) 1994.
- Reviews of Municipal Heritage Inventory by *Heritage Today* in 2000 and 2006.
- Florey, Cecil C, *Peninsular City: A Social History of the City of South Perth*, City of South Perth, WA, 1995.
- Crowley, F K, *The History of South Perth*, Rigby Limited, Perth, 1962.
- Architectural Assessment by D Kelsall, Heritage Architect, 1999.
- Long serving Officers, City of South Perth.

HISTORY OF HERITAGE LISTING BY CITY OF SOUTH PERTH

	Date Adopted by Council
Town Planning Scheme No. 5 – Schedule G	Gazetted 25 September 1986
Initial listing in MHI	December 1994
Update of MHI	February 1996
Update of MHI	December 1996
Update of MHI	December 1997
Review of MHI by <i>Heritage Today</i>	June 2000
Update of MHI	June 2002
Update of MHI	March 2003
Review of MHI by <i>Heritage Today</i>	February 2006
Interim Heritage List – Policy P313 ‘Local Heritage Listing’	April 2013
Updated in renamed LHI	November 2015



View of the City of South Perth Civic Centre across Ernest Johnson Oval.
 (Gina Fraser, City of South Perth, June 2015)

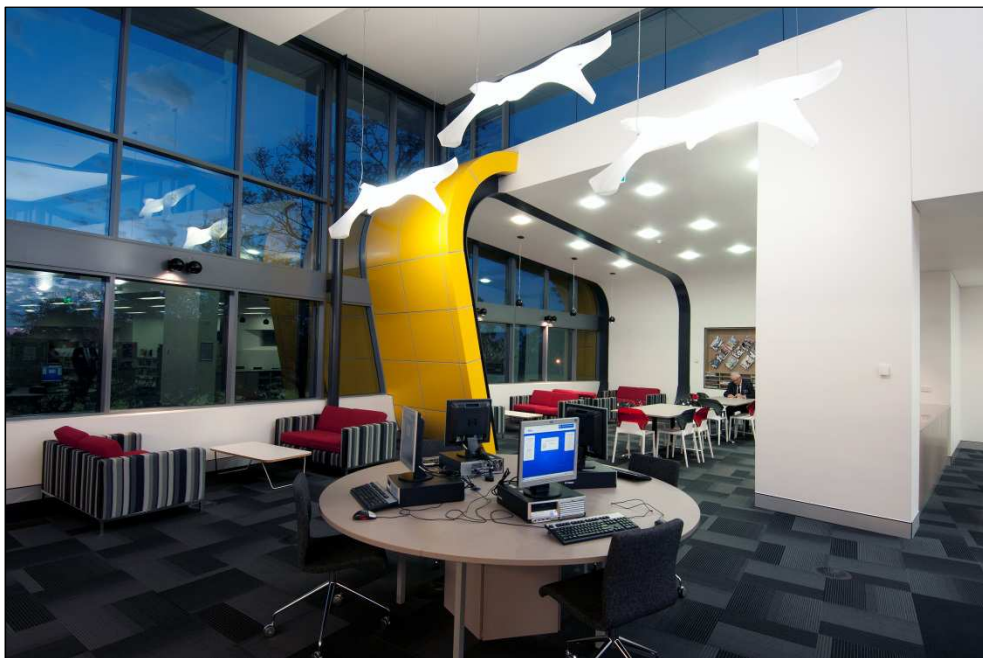


Two views of some of the 2005-06 renovations of the Civic Centre.
Above: Canopy to the public entrance to the Council Chamber and the administrative offices, looking in the direction of Sandgate Street.
Below: The Sandgate Street end of the extended administration block.
(Gina Fraser, City of South Perth, January 2007)





The new South Perth Library (right) and Community Hall (left).
(City of South Perth, October 2011)



Portion of the interior of the South Perth Library at the time of its opening, 2011.
(City of South Perth, 2011)



Interior of the remodelled and expanded Council Chamber 2011.
(City of South Perth, 2011)



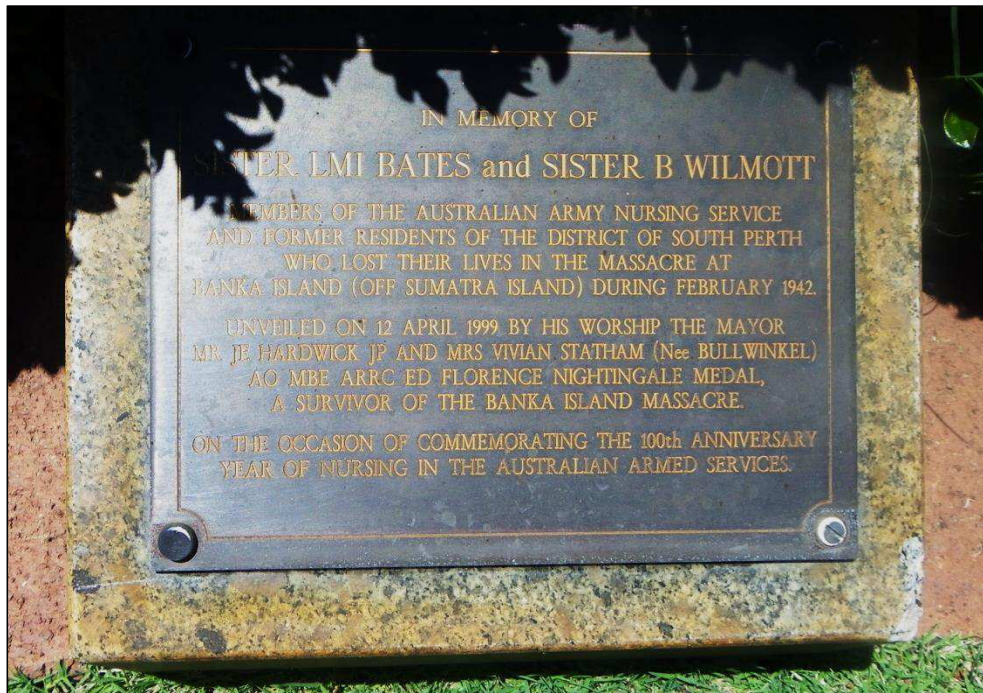
Interior of the Community Hall at the time of its opening, 2011.
(City of South Perth, 2011)



Memorial Gardens, viewed from the corner of Sandgate Street and South Terrace.
A small fountain forms part of the entry to the Gardens.
(Gina Fraser, City of South Perth, 9 December 2015)

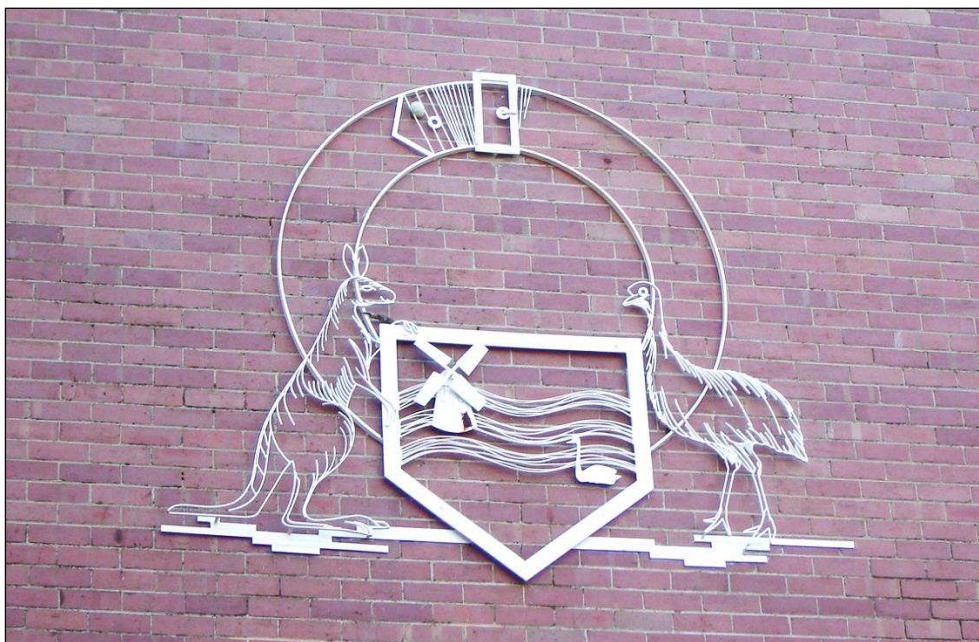


South Perth War Memorial, after the service on Memorial Day, 11 November 2009.
(Gina Fraser, City of South Perth, 11 November 2009)



Plaque in the Memorial Gardens. The plaque reads:

***“In memory of SISTER LMI BATES and SISTER B WILLMOTT
members of the Australian Army Nursing Service and former residents of the district of South Perth
who lost their lives in the massacre at Banka Island (off Sumatra Island) during February 1942.
Unveiled on 12 April 1999 by his worship the Mayor Mr JE Hardwick JP and
Mrs Vivian Stratham (Nee Bullwinkel) AO MBE ARRC ED Florence Nightingale Medal,
a survivor of the Banka Island Massacre.
On the occasion of commemorating the 100th anniversary year of nursing in the Australian Armed Services.”***
(Gina Fraser, City of South Perth, 9 December 2015)



**A stylized version of the City’s crest which had been attached to the southern wall
of the City Hall prior to the modification of the building in 2009.
The Crest was removed from the wall as part of that upgrading and reconstruction work.**
(Gina Fraser, City of South Perth, September 2009)



Demolition of the City Library in preparation for its reconstruction, 2009.
(Gina Fraser, City of South Perth, 1 September 2009)



**A view of the front of the building and the entrance to the
City of South Perth Civic Centre.**
(Heritage Today, 1999)



The entrance and forecourt leading to the Walter Murdoch Library (left) adjacent to the rear of the Council Chamber and Mayor's Parlour (right).
(*Heritage Today*, 1999)



An elevation showing the Lesser Hall below the main Hall.
(*Heritage Today*, 1999)



The north-western side of the City hall facing Ernest Johnson Oval, prior to the 2009 renovations.
(City of South Perth, 2009)



Administration offices and Council Chamber, City of South Perth Civic Centre.
The offices (right) and the Council Chamber (left) have separate doorways,
accentuated by their respective entrance canopies, 1980-90.
The office doorway was relocated during the 1993 office renovations.
(Picture South Perth Photograph Collection)



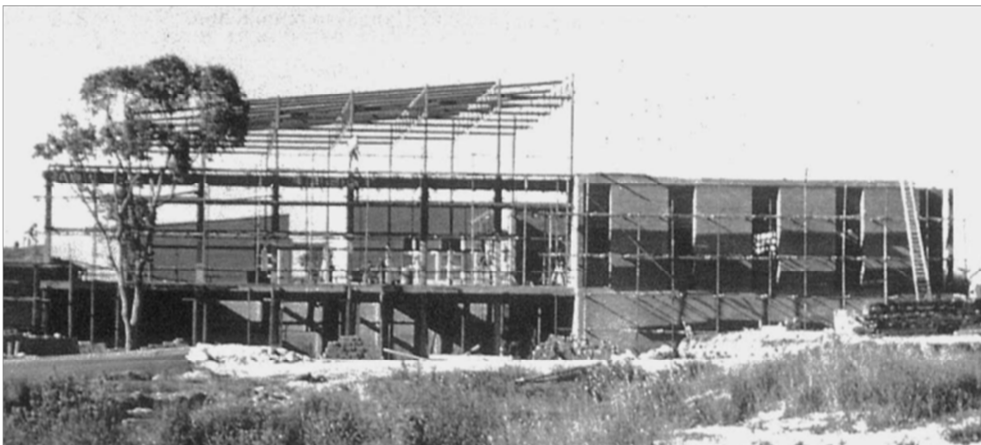
Opening ceremony of the City of South Perth Civic Centre, 10 December 1960.
The administration offices are pictured above.
(Picture South Perth Photograph Collection)



Opening of the City of South Perth Civic Centre, 10 December 1960.
The Main Hall is pictured above. (The Lesser Hall, below the Main Hall,
accessed from a lower level car park, is out of view in this photo.
(Picture South Perth Photograph Collection)



**Photograph of the new Civic Centre complex published in the
'West Australian' newspaper on 12 December 1960.**
(Crowley)



City Halls under construction, September 1960.
(Florey, page 256)

LOCATION MAP

(Digital Cadastral Data supplied by Landgate, WA. P295)