

26 February 2021

The Hon. Don Harwin MLC
Minister for Public Service and Employee Relations,
Aboriginal Affairs and the Arts
Vice President of the Executive Council
GPO Box 5341
SYDNEY NSW 2001

Via email: heritagemailbox@environment.nsw.gov.au

cc. Kate Foy, Deputy Secretary, Community Engagement

Dear Minister

Urgent request for Interim Heritage Order – Ryde Civic Centre

I write to request an **urgent Interim Heritage Order** be applied to stop the demolition of the classic mid-century office building known as Ryde Civic Centre on the basis of the building's significance and it being in imminent threat". The demolition of the building is scheduled to commence this Monday, 1st March 2021.

The Ryde Civic Centre, designed by Buckland and Druce, is a classic example of the post-World War 2 International Style, with its location and siting resulting in it being an iconic Sydney landmark.

Urban Taskforce sought the views of the former NSW Government Architect, Chris Johnson. Mr Johnson's review of the heritage value of this important building are attached below.

A heritage asset as significant as the Ryde Civic Centre should be preserved.

I look forward to your urgent response.

Yours sincerely



Tom Forrest
Chief Executive Officer

COMMENTS ON RYDE CIVIC CENTRE

By Former NSW Government Architect Chris Johnson

BACKGROUND

There has been local controversy over the Ryde Civic Centre where Ryde Council has voted to demolish the building so that a new competition winning design can be built. The Mayor of Ryde - Jerome Laxale, used his casting vote to progress the demolition and redevelopment after a group of five councillors called for an extraordinary meeting to discuss deferring the project.

The Civic Centre is not on council's Heritage List but it is clearly a significant building both in its architectural expression and in its impressive location on a ridge looking over the municipality. Having looked at the building's history and at its relativity to other buildings of that era, including the AMP tower on Circular Quay and Council House in Perth, I believe the building should not be demolished and have put together the following statement.

STATEMENT

"The Ryde Civic Centre, designed by Buckland and Druce, is a classic example of the post-World War 2 International Style. It was opened with great fanfare in 1964, only two years after the heritage-listed AMP tower at Circular Quay, with which it shares key design characteristics. The subtle curve and the gridded glazing pattern of the curtain-wall facade are very similar to the AMP building and the location on a ridge in Ryde gives this civic centre a dramatic appearance and iconic symbolism as the centre of governance for the Ryde area."

"Amazingly the City of Ryde Council has approved the demolition of the building and refuses to accept that it has any heritage significance. A quick look at the Ryde heritage listings shows that a substation at 293 Pittwater Road or a fountain at the junction of Blaxland and Victoria Roads are on council's heritage list as well as a couple of single storey shops at 113-115 Tennyson Road. Yet a seriously important modernist building like the Civic Centre misses their cut?"

"Council could keep this significant building and develop a new civic centre on another site if councillors feel the need for a fresh architectural statement. While metropolitan councils must encourage new development this needs to be balanced against the importance of protecting icons from the past."

"An outstanding example of preserving a modernist-style council building is the preservation of the 1963 Council House in Perth. The building now has colourful new facade lighting and is promoted in tourist publicity as one of Perth's great 20th century modern landmarks."

ILLUSTRATIONS



1. Ryde Civic Centre as it looks today (opened 1964)



2. Ryde Civic Centre - circa 1960s



3. The Heritage Listed AMP Building at Circular Quay (1962) has strong similarities to the Ryde Civic Centre (1964)



4. Council House in Perth (1963) has been preserved as a heritage item.