

Iconic avant-garde buildings dominate national architecture awards

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Australian buildings pushing new boundaries – including a ‘testosterone-charged’ creative learning centre in Queensland, an iconic sporting venue in China, and a ‘determinedly avant-garde’ house in the Victorian countryside – are among major winners at this year’s top architecture awards.

The **Australian Institute of Architects’ National Architecture Awards** are Australia’s most prestigious annual architecture prizes. The 2008 awards were presented to the nation’s most inspiring recent architectural projects, and the architects who created them, at a special ceremony in Adelaide. A total of 31 awards and commendations across 12 categories were awarded to projects in Queensland, Victoria, Tasmania, the ACT, NSW, Western Australia, South Australia, China and Singapore.

Presenting the awards and commenting on this year’s winners, Jury Chair and widely acclaimed architect Alec Tzannes said: “2008 represented an exceptionally strong year for architecture, with new benchmarks set in a number of key categories – such as public architecture, single housing and multi-residential architecture, along with heritage. In particular, public architecture was very well represented, with many outstanding submissions from urban, suburban and regional locations. The most remarkable were projects involving private secondary school buildings.”

Topping the list is the recipient of Australia’s top annual national architecture award - the **2008 Sir Zelman Cowen Award for Public Architecture**, awarded this year to the ‘robust’ **Cherrell Hirst Creative Learning Centre at Brisbane Girls Grammar School** by dynamic young Brisbane-based architects **m3architecture**. It is the second consecutive year the top public building award has gone to a project in the city of Brisbane.

Mr Tzannes said: “This building is designed for young women and based on research indicating teenage girls’ needs - for social interaction, to congregate in groups, and to see and be seen. The centre aims to develop initiative, creativity and independence by encouraging unstructured student interaction for personal development, in parallel with more typical structured learning. To this end, a multi-level “social interaction” space is integrated with specialised teaching facilities. This space provides an extraordinary learning environment filled with vitality.”

National Awards for Public Architecture were also presented to the **Seaford Life Saving Club** in Victoria by **Robert Simeoni Architects Pty Ltd**, the **Albury Library Museum** in rural NSW by

ARM and another educational facility setting new benchmarks - the **Nigel Peck Centre for Learning and Leadership** in suburban Melbourne by **John Wardle Architects**.

In a quartet of wins that stamped 2008 as their year, and as the masters of educational facilities, **John Wardle Architects** also received a **National Commendation for Public Architecture** for the **Hawke Building** at the University of South Australia (joint project delivery with **Hassell Ltd**), a **National Commendation for Interior Architecture** for the **Queensland Brain Institute** (with **Wilson Architects** architects in association) at the University of Queensland, and the **Emil Sodersten Award for Interior Architecture** for the **Nigel Peck Centre for Learning and Leadership** at Melbourne Grammar.

For the third consecutive year, Australia's most prestigious residential award - the **Robin Boyd Award for Residential Architecture - Houses** - was presented to an innovative house on Victoria's Mornington Peninsular – the **Klein Bottle House** by Melbourne couple Rob McBride and Debbie Lynn Ryan of adventurous practice **McBride Charles Ryan**. The jury said: "This determinedly avant-garde house uses a complex mathematical model as a metaphorical generator for a new spatial experience. The spiral form of the house makes the most of what is potentially a difficult sloping site by slowly twisting out of the dark tea-tree at ground level and reaching up to the light-filled views." They added: "The overall perception of the house is one of a distinctive new language for domestic architecture, a language that draws from mathematics to develop an architecture of excitement, intrigue and new possibilities."

The **Frederick Romberg Award for Residential Architecture - Multiple Housing** was presented to Sydney-based practice **Stanisic Associates** for **EDO** in inner-city Woolloomooloo. The jury said: The architects have demonstrated sensitivity, skill and experience in negotiating an impressive balance between the commercial interests of the client, the comfort and amenity of the occupants and architecture's responsibility to the public domain. They have created an exemplary model for multiple housing in an urban setting.

Australia's top award for international architecture, the **Jorn Utzøn Award for International Architecture**, was awarded to a venue recently intriguing billions of people around the world -- the innovative **Watercube National Swimming Centre Beijing** by the Sydney-led team of **CSCEC + PTW Architects + CCDI + ARUP**. Situated along the main axis of the Olympic Green across from the National Stadium, the National Swimming Centre was one of the two main venues for the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games, with the jury saying: "The "Watercube" and the "Birdsnest" have become the symbols of the Games, and they are worthy companions. The design of the National Swimming Centre combines the idea of the molecular structure of water with the symbol of the square to create an inspired and inventive architecture."

A "modest budget" commercial project required to fit "in a large, open, shopping mall car park adjacent to a freeway and near a railway station" – the **Hume City Council Offices** by

Melbourne-based practice **Lyons** - was awarded the **Harry Seidler Award for Commercial Architecture**. The jury said these issues had “not deterred the architects from creating a bold and inspired design”, adding “these apparent constraints have stimulated invention and set in motion a straightforward, direct approach to the functional, practical and economic parameters that are routine in this type of commission.”

The reinvigoration and sensitive transformation of a vast complex of 120-year old inner-city railway workshop buildings – the **CarriageWorks at Eveleigh** by Sydney practice **Tonkin Zulaikha Greer** - was awarded the prestigious **Lachlan Macquarie Award for Heritage**. The jury said: “The buildings have been transformed to create vibrant performing arts spaces that will, the jury hopes, establish a precedent for the retention of other industrial buildings within this important historic precinct. Eveleigh CarriageWorks demonstrates the benefit of a “less is more” approach to restoration, the importance of appropriate continuing uses and, above all, the need for intervention within historic buildings to be of the highest design quality.”

An iconic address on Sydney Harbour, **The Wharf** by **Vivian Fraser** in association with the **NSW Government Architect**, received the **National 25 Year Award for Enduring Architecture**, being described by the jury as continuing to set an international benchmark for this type of architectural project. The jury said: “It represents a skilful blend of sound urban design, conservation, adaptive reuse and contemporary architecture and as a consequence is an essential aspect of Sydney’s urban culture. The Wharf remains an essential community and tourist facility after more than two decades of continuous, robust use.”

A major new residential and mixed-use development located in the outer western suburbs of Sydney on a greenfield site - **Rouse Hill Town Centre** by **Rice Daubney, Allen Jack+Cottier, Group GSA** – received the **Walter Burley Griffin Award for Urban Design**. “Rouse Hill breaks away from the “big box” model of internal retail centres and creates a network of open and semi-open streets, lanes, squares and public spaces more closely aligned with the values of the traditional small town,” the jury said. “The consortium of architects, planners and developers has worked hard to create a relaxed environment of human scale, pedestrian amenity and material quality over the out on a large greenfield site.”

The **National Award for Small Project Architecture** was presented to the **Children’s Activity Centre** in South Melbourne by **PHOOEY Architects**, with the jury praising the project as providing lessons for architecture of every scale”. They added: “The architects have worked tirelessly and directly with their clients and end users to create a wonderful building that is inventive, flexible, contextually strong and environmentally considerate. Rather than proving a hindrance, the tight budget has become a driver of the project and necessitated some original and creative decision making on the part of the architects. The project has become an important

and well-used part of a disadvantaged community. It provides a valuable resource, much needed infrastructure and a flexible, inspiring space that is full of possibility.”

A project at Melbourne’s new RSPCA kennels - **RSPCA Burwood Redevelopment - Stage 1: Kennels** by **NHArchitecture** – received the **National Award for Sustainable Architecture**. Careful research led the architects to implement a range of strategies effectively minimising the dogs’ stress - reducing barking and increase the comfort of both human and canine occupants. These strategies included a “well-conceived ventilation system, which provides a high air change rate, minimising the transfer of scent, which significantly reduces barking”. They added: “The building’s striking architecture in combination with its happy canine and human occupants has led to increased adoption rates, a tangible example of the benefits of architect-designed facilities.”

The **Colorbond® Award for Steel Architecture** was presented to Hobart-based firm **Heffernan Button Voss Architects** for the **Aurora Operations Facility** in Tasmania, described as “an elegant and inventive building that delights in many ways”. The jury said: “It sits well in the landscape, it uses materials cleverly and it transforms the big industrial shed, taking it to a new level of sophistication. This clever structure demonstrates how long spans can be achieved with minimal steel sections and material quantity. The project achieves internal spans of 38 metres with a 12-metre cantilever for the truck bays, with a modest 460 universal beam.”