

“Crossman House (former)” 151 Finch Street, Glen Iris Statement of Significance July 2020

Heritage Place: Crossman House (former), 151 Finch Street, Glen Iris	PS ref no: HO643
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What is significant?

The former Crossman House at 151 Finch Street, Malvern East, is a double-storey skillion roofed brick veneer residence on a T-shaped plan, with street façade dominated by a projecting central bay with full-height glazing to two sides. Erected in 1976-78 (utilising an existing floor slab that had been laid on the site by a previous owner in 1975), it was designed by noted Melbourne architect Kevin Borland for Jules and Ruth Crossman, who had previously commissioned him to design a much-published block of holiday flats at Launching Place.

The significant fabric is defined as the entire exterior of the house, as well as the original garden wall along the front property line.

How is it significant?

The house satisfies the following criteria for inclusion on the heritage overlay schedule to the City of Stonnington planning scheme:

- Criterion E: Importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics
- Criterion H: Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in Stonnington’s history.

Why is it significant?

At the local level, the house is architecturally significant as an excellent and notably intact example of the work of eminent Melbourne architect Kevin Borland. Borland, who initially secured fame as one of the co-designers of the Olympic Swimming Pool (1953-56), went on to an illustrious career that encapsulated highly-regarded work in both the residential and non-residential sphere, securing him a succession of architectural awards. While Borland designed at least a dozen buildings in what is now the City of Stonnington, several have been demolished or much altered and others are only of limited architectural merit. In a municipality-wide context, the virtually unaltered Crossman House stands out as the most intact of several Borland-designed houses in the City of Stonnington, and also as unique surviving example of his mature residential work of the later 1970s (its only local comparator in that respect, the Silber House, also in Malvern East, having been demolished circa 2010). It is his most important building in the City of Stonnington after the celebrated Harold Holt Memorial Swimming Pool, in nearby High Street, which is included on the *Victorian Heritage Register*. In Borland's broader oeuvre, the Crossman House is also of scholarly interest a follow-up commission from the same family who had engaged him to design their much-published and award-winning block of holiday flats at Launching Place. (*Criterion H*).

At the local level, the house is aesthetically significant as an example of the highly distinctive style that defined Borland's mature work, particularly in the residential sphere, in the 1970s. This aesthetic, broadly characterised by bold angular geometry in plan form and elevation, and the frank expression of unadorned materials, emerged in his work in the mid-1960s and would become something of his trademark for more than a decade thence. The Crossman House, with its irregular skillion roofline, clerestory windows and unusual tripartite façade incorporating a projecting wedge-shaped stairwell/lobby with corner window wall and raked timber slat screen, can be considered a textbook example of his residential work of that period (all the more remarkable when one considers that Borland had been obliged to create the house from an existing rectilinear slab already laid on the site). Some of the more unusual elements of the design, such as the slick double-height window wall, the ramp/staircase that winds its way around an indoor garden, and the curved rear outbuilding, remain more potently evocative of Borland's contemporaneous work in the non-residential sphere (*Criterion E*).

Primary source

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