

To: City of Stonnington Strategic Planning Unit  
 From: Dr Doug Evans, Dr Conrad Hamann  
 Re: Compilation Heritage Amendment C304  
 Date: 23/2/21

Attention Pauline

We write to support the heritage listing of the former Crossman residence (1978) at 151 Finch Street Glen Iris which is included in Compilation Heritage Amendment C304. The architect of this house Kevin Borland was among Melbourne's most significant in the post WW2 decades.<sup>1</sup> This is indicated by the fact that five of his buildings are included in the Victorian Heritage Register. In 2006 we co-authored the only major work to date published on Borland and his creative architectural output. The former Crossman residence was highly regarded by its architect who was at the peak of his career during the 1970s. It was one of the three residential designs chosen by him to form his exhibit in the 1981 exhibition *Seven in the Seventies*. This significant exhibition of contemporary Melbourne architecture, curated by Jenepher Duncan and Conrad Hamann, was held in the exhibition gallery of the Department of Visual Arts at Monash University in October-November 1981. The exhibition was discussed in Melbourne architectural publications at the time<sup>2</sup>, as well as in the popular news dailies.<sup>3</sup>

We acknowledge the excellent work of Heritage consultant Simon Reeves who prepared the citation arguing for heritage protection at the local level. However, we wish to make three additional points.

1. Kevin Borland was a prolific and admired residential designer. During the 1970s when his career was peaking he became best known for rough-hewn, angular timber houses on *rural* and *semi-rural* sites.<sup>4</sup> However throughout his career Borland also designed many *suburban* residences. In these he often used a more varied, masonry-based material palette. For whatever reason few of his suburban residential designs survive in anything close to their original form. The citation arguing for local heritage listing by Stonnington makes the point that 151 Finch Street is the only remaining Borland residential design of any significance in the City of Stonnington. We would go further and suggest that the former Crossman residence is one of a very small number of extant notable *suburban* residential commissions by this highly regarded residential architect. We can think of six others. These are:  
**Former Mollar Residence** (1957), 28 Towers Street Beaumaris. No heritage protection  
**Former Bebarfald residence** (1958), 9 Streton Court, Mont Albert. No heritage protection. This house is in good condition but it has been recently sold and must be considered at risk.  
**Former McDonald Smith residence** (1969), 3 Perry Court, Kew. Substantially intact. Currently protected by an individual heritage overlay: City of Boroondara HO819.

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<sup>1</sup> See for example Norman Day, *Obituary for Kevin Borland*, *The Age*, November 2000; or D. Evans, C. Hamann and H. C. Borland, *Kevin Borland: Architecture from the Heart*, RMIT University Press, 2006.

<sup>2</sup> See for example; Conrad Hamann, Jenepher Duncan, *Seven in the Seventies: an Exhibition*, *Architecture Australia*, 71, 1, January 1982, pp. 50-59.

<sup>3</sup> Norman Day, *An Elegant Pointer to work of the 70's*, *The Age* 13/10/81.

<sup>4</sup> Elsewhere, the former Crossman house has been unfavourably compared to these timber houses but it is clear that the former Crossman house is an architectural response to quite different site constraints than those applying to the timber houses and therefore should be expected to differ in material palette and form. We argue that the former Crossman house is *significant* rather than *inferior* precisely because of those differences. Interestingly Borland agreed with this view. One of the curators Conrad Hamann recalls that Borland argued for the inclusion of the former Crossman house in Monash University's *Seven in the Seventies Exhibition*, 1981, *because* he felt that it extended his design approach into a more typical suburban setting. He considered this a significant move both in relation to the residential work for which his practice was becoming known, and to the then dominant association of 'Australian' architect-designed housing more generally, with the bush and gum trees. See for example: Jennifer Taylor, *Australian Architecture since 1960*, Chapter 9 entitled *Attuned to the Land*, Royal Australian Institute of Architects 1990, and Ian McKay, Robin Boyd and Hugh Stretton, *Living and Party Living: housing in Australia*, Thomas Nelson (Australia), 1971

**H & N Gallagher Residence** (1973-74), 38 Young Street Kew. No heritage protection.

**Former Hildebrand Residence** (1977), 4 Fenton Crescent, Frankston South. Building was enlarged and substantially altered internally (2013) to designs prepared by architects Mihaly, Slocombe. It is protected by an individual heritage overlay: City of Frankston HO63.

Of these, the former Hildebrand residence, on the southern edge of Greater Melbourne's suburban sprawl at Frankston South has been substantially altered. In our opinion, of the six projects listed above, only the former Mollar residence in Beaumaris, and the former McDonald Smith residence in Kew are noteworthy, reasonably intact examples of the many *suburban* residential designs of Kevin Borland.

So, the very intact former Crossman house at 151 Finch Street is one of three extant, reasonably intact notable residences designed by Borland, in Melbourne's inner or middle suburbs and the only one remaining from the 1970s, the decade in which his practice was at the peak of its influence.<sup>5</sup> Thus because of its rarity and the fact that it is the work of one of Melbourne's more significant post WW2 architects the former Crossman house is eminently heritage-worthy.

2. The former Crossman residence is also culturally noteworthy for the fact that it precisely marks a highly significant turning point in the trajectory of creative Melbourne architecture during the 1970s, a decade of radical transformation in Melbourne and Australian architecture. Completed in 1978 it was, as previously noted, one of three residential projects which together comprised Borland's exhibit in the important exhibition *Seven in the Seventies*. Norman Day's review of this exhibition notes Borland's pre-eminence but it was the work of other architects from the rising generation Peter Crone, Greg Burgess and especially Edmond and Corrigan which indicated fresh impulses. In the exhibited early projects of these architects could be sensed the first gusts of the winds of post-modern change. In the following decade and a half, the winds of change became a creative gale which renewed and utterly transformed Melbourne architecture.

The significance of this moment in Melbourne's cultural history was highlighted by the *Seven in the Seventies* exhibition. In this exhibition, the much awarded and regularly published *Resurrection Church and School* (Keysborough, 1976-81) and *Chapel of St Joseph* (Box Hill, 1978), both by the young practice of Edmond and Corrigan, were juxtaposed with the admirable, but so far largely ignored, *Crossman House* (Glen Iris, 1978). Of course Kevin Borland was far from the only notable late modernist Melbourne architect whose work was about to be transformed or swamped by a wave of Post-modernism so ably surfed by Peter Corrigan. However it was Borland whose practice most completely expressed the zeitgeist of the mid 70s. Corrigan was the undisputed leader of the group of younger architects determined to chart a new post-modern course into the 1980s and beyond. The former Crossman residence is the design which marks the point of change, a symbolic finishing post marking the end of the line for late modernism in Melbourne's architectural and cultural discourse.<sup>6</sup> From this point

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<sup>5</sup> Not included on this list because of their rural or semi-rural sites are:

Former **Rice residence** (1951), 69 Ryans Road Eltham. (VHR HO123) Former **Freadman residence** (1966) Koornalla Close Mount Eliza, Former **Crossman flats** (1973) Grandview Road (off Don Road Launching Place. Former **Nichols Residence** (1973), Haldane Road Eltham, Former **Colvin residence** (1974), 3 Lawrence Court Warrandyte. **McCaughy residence** (1975), Mount Hickey Road Tallarook. Former **Marshall residence** (1975), Coora Close Somers. Former **Bram residence** (1976), Merricks Beach Road Merricks. Former **Fitzgerald residence** (1979), Kingston Hobart Tasmania. Former **Roger Evans residence** (1983), 1 Mercer Street Queenscliff. Former **Firestone residence** (1989), 53 Tasman Road Somers. **Westbrook Residence** 489 Mount Mercer Road Durham Lead.

<sup>6</sup> For an overview of the post-modern transformation of Melbourne architecture in the late 1970s and the roles of both Corrigan and Borland in this cultural upheaval see: D. Evans, *The Changing of the Guard: Social and cultural reflection of 'Community' in 1970's Melbourne Architecture*, Fabrications 15:1, 2005, p45.

of view the former Crossman House is not only a fine piece of architecture but culturally highly significant.

3. The former Crossman house is also significant as a pointer to an important, but generally overlooked, international point of reference for its architect. The much admired rough-hewn, rural and semi-rural timber houses with which Kevin Borland's practice is associated are frequently linked to the contemporary timber architecture of the United States West coast typified by the seminal Pacific edge project 'Sea Ranch' by Moore, Lyndon, Turnbull and Whittaker. But Borland's international influences were wider than this. His sympathy for the European late-modernism of Team 10 was clear from a fairly early point in his career. Already in 1966 Borland had travelled to Europe to catch up with what was going on in Europe. In Holland he touched base with Team 10 luminaries Aldo van Eyck and Jakob Bakema. In England he made contact with John Voelcker. In Sweden he visited the formally adventurous, fringe member of Team 10 Ralph Erskine whose well-known commitment to social-democracy Borland (a lapsed Communist) also appreciated. In Helsinki he became acquainted with the wonderful Dipoli student Union building on the campus of the Technical University by husband and wife team Railli and Reima Pietila, also associated with Team 10. Rather than being a somewhat unconvincing pale shadow of Borland's timber rural and semi-rural houses (as has been suggested elsewhere), the former Crossman residence is the most important remaining pointer to this aspect of Borland's mature practice. As such it is eminently heritage-worthy.

**Dr. Doug Evans** is a retired architectural academic. As a student in the Diploma of Architecture Course at RMIT during the 1960s he was taught by both Kevin Borland and Daryl Jackson. Until retirement he was employed in the Architecture program at RMIT University where he held the position of Associate Professor (Design and History). Together with Dr. Conrad Hamann and Huan Chen Borland he co-authored and edited the book *Kevin Borland: Architecture from the Heart*, RMIT University Press, 2006. This book received an Award for Architectural publishing in the annual Awards program of the Victorian Chapter of the Australian Institute of Architects in 2007.

**Dr Conrad Hamann** is Associate professor in Architectural History and Urban History in the Department of Architecture and Urban Design, RMIT University. With Huan Chen Borland he assisted Dr Doug Evans in writing *Kevin Borland: Architecture from the Heart*, 2006, and was author for *Cities of Hope: Australian Architecture and Design by Edmond and Corrigan 1962-*, Oxford 1993 revised and republished by Thames and Hudson, 2012. With Professor Philip Goad and Geoffrey London he wrote *150: An unfinished experiment in Living: Australian Houses 1950 – 65*, UWA Press, 2017 and the Catalogue essay for *Abundant*, the Australian exhibition at the 11<sup>th</sup> Venice Architecture Biennale, Venice Architecture Biennale 2008. He was made Honorary FRAIA for his services to Australian architectural history, 2006.

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