

[PUBLIC]

architects

Suters Prior Cheney Architects

photographyEmma Cross
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caroline springs sports stadium

architect's statement

As part of an integrated development for the Caroline Springs town centre, the Shire of Melton commissioned the development of a 3670-square metre, three-court multipurpose stadium. Over time the stadium will accommodate the addition of two courts, to total five, and a future sporting pavilion that will be integrated into the building.

As part of our initial briefings we were told that there was nothing too distinctive about Caroline Springs; it was jokingly referred to as place of rocks, rabbits and rubbish. As members of an eternally optimistic profession this propelled us into further research and investigations that revealed some very localised and particular geological formations known as the Organ Pipes National Park. Within the park are a series of distinctive columnar basalt formations (this occurs when basalt rapidly cools) – these features only occur in a few locations in Victoria.

The basalt formations were the design drivers for many elements with the buildings such as:

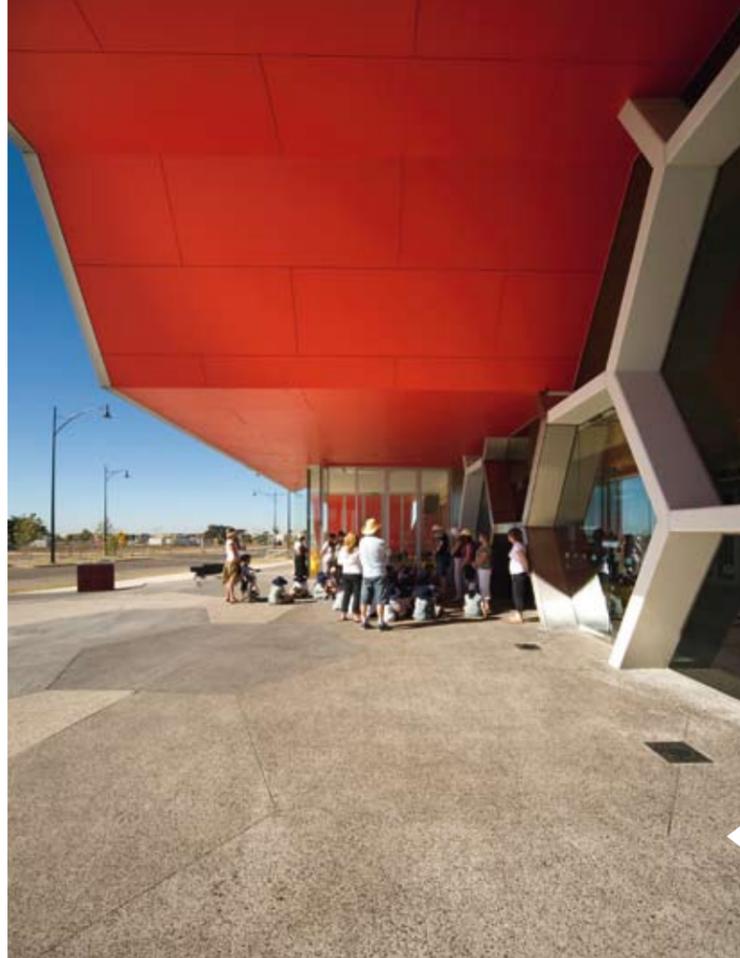
- tessellated/randomised precast walls throughout the building
- large supersized hexagons, which were formed using stepped concrete columns with infill pieces that formed the main entry elements to both buildings, and
- layered canopies, some of which form the roof of the café and entry areas and extend into the ground.

The design employs a clear and logical plan that accommodates large volumes of people moving through the stadium. Court one has been rotated 90 degrees (in plan) to provide an acoustically separated volume for school performances and further increase the flexibility of the building. It is important to acknowledge that in addition to significant community use, two adjacent schools have signed joint use agreements to use the building during the

day and evenings. Court one can be utilised for school performances with the provision of an external back stage crossover with provision of full lighting grids.

Supersized graphic elements provide a layer of pre-information before entering the building to ensure that the large volumes of people accessing the building are able to efficiently access court areas. The south elevation of the stadium has been designed to maximise diffuse natural light in order to minimise recurrent energy use associated with lighting.

A series of folding planes punctuate the large east and west elevations. Using differing sized girts this provides a layering to the building in specific locations on the east/west façade in order to reinforce the linear nature of the building and its connection to the ground. To us it has become more than a 'shed with feeling'.



02

03

caroline springs sports stadium

It comes as a surprise to me on my first visit to Caroline Springs, one of Melbourne's developing outer suburbs, to find a 'mini tower' under construction at the intersection of Lake Street and Caroline Springs Boulevard. It is also pleasing that it is a traffic light intersection rather than a roundabout, that much loved device of traffic engineers that is anti-urban, anti-people and inefficient in its land use. Good intersections have something good in each corner – and here in Caroline Springs things are moving along. Apart from the new commercial podium and squat tower, there is a display suite and offices for Delfin (the developer), a satellite campus of Mowbray College (unfortunately terrible, having seemingly lost the services of Norman Day) and the recently opened Caroline Springs Library. None of these buildings is the subject here – it is the sister building to the library, the new sports stadium, that is our focus. Both designed by Suters Prior Cheney Architects, the sports stadium is set further back, behind the library, but importantly is visible from this intersection.

Both these projects have taken the context seriously and don't suffer from the kind of mediocrity in design that forms a vicious cycle of investment in outer suburban contexts. As an emerging suite of buildings, they make me recall Hans Scharoun's Berlin complex, a suite of buildings in a similar language with distinct profiles and of different cultural programs.



04

On approach to the sports stadium, the building cuts a distinct and clear silhouette on this suburban skyline. Two main volumes are expressed and the scale of the project is not hidden away from the observer, as is often the case in buildings like this. Instead, the scale opportunities are embraced and key moves like the large louvred and slanted wall to the south side exaggerate the size of the form. It is important that buildings like this use their scale in this context, that they be seen, instead of masked or camouflaged through bastardised vernacular or 'natural'



05

01. At night the stadium's enormous form takes on a translucent quality, as light spills from polycarbonate sheeting on the roof and the southern end of the building (not visible here).

02. 03. The hexagonal motif, while serving a narrative function (they were inspired by nearby natural basalt formations), here at the entry also provides structural support.

04. 05. The exterior façade pattern is repeated in vinyl for the foyer's floor, and supergraphics (5.) provide clear navigational cues to visitors.

06. 07. The frenetic on-court activity is mirrored by the scattered rhythm of the yellow and blue ply panel surrounds (7.), and more overtly in tiled supergraphics in the changing rooms.

colouration. Here, a template of Colorbond metallic cladding is used in custom orb steel profile, and this continues the angular language and provides a series of bent bands across the building. These sit proud of each other, slightly overlapping, and graduate in colour tone, from dark to light.

In many ways the plan of the project is not radical – two main halls with supporting smaller ones attached to them. This does not result in a conventional reading from the exterior, as the language of canted walls and the hexagon is transferable at scale. The smallest version of this is the hexagon relief pattern on the excellent precast concrete panels. Each panel is different, the result of reusing a set number of plastic moulds in different configurations. This gives an additional level of reading to this building – initially they appear the same, but as the difference reveals itself a link to geological formations is established.

Entry to the building is under a generous entry canopy, with red soffit lining moving us inside through a large hexagonal frame of steel and concrete. Impressively, this is structural, and is one of a series of moments where the hexagonal motif is 'embedded' into the building rather than employed as pure appliqué. The foyer is a tall and clear space, with the façade pattern repeated in coloured vinyl on the floor, providing access to the café and allowing entry glazed viewing in the two main courts. It is intended that the foyer will extend to the north when the building goes through a planned expansion in a few years' time, which will add new courts to the north and change facilities for an attached 'pavilion' to the west, facing the adjacent oval.

The hexagonal motif recurs in the corridor servicing the changing rooms – here the ceiling and wall lining is formed as a hexagonal extrusion, and there is a sense of being within something, possibly in the ground. The largest spaces inside are the two halls – one is a show court with retractable seating for competition events, and for use as a temporary performing arts venue. Here the steel framed structure is revealed in an open shed language. In both halls, a stained ply surround and floor level wraps the court providing acoustic damping and entry in courtside storage areas. The scattered alternate blue and yellow colouration suggests a strong contrast of object and background, a nod to the frenetic movement of the indoor soccer, netball and basketball that is played here. This is suggested more overtly with abstracted figures in the changing room interiors, pictured in an arrangement of conventional tiles.

At night the building lights up well through the hexagonal structural frame at the entry and down the precast wall. Light also pours through polycarbonate sheeting from the southern end, visible back to the entry sequence and main road. This project has successfully rendered a new civic building in a context that both physically and contractually does not often demand design quality.

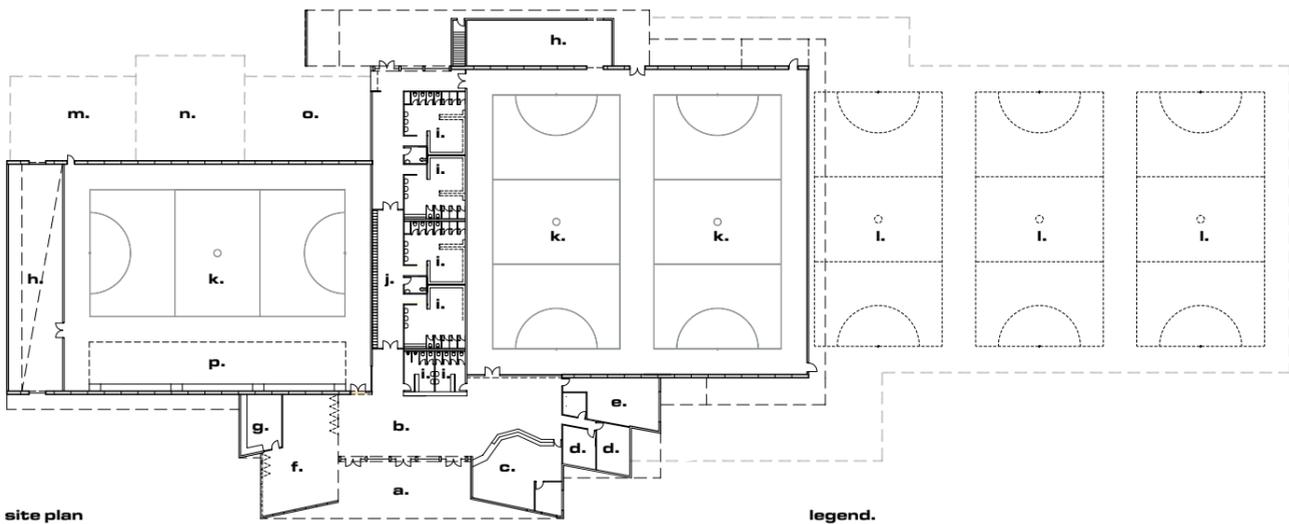
As I stand at the intersection, green man flashing, I consider the Australian outer suburb to be at a kind of crossroads: to either embrace design, density, legibility and sustainability or to go on as before, fostering a place missing a civic language. **ar**



06



07

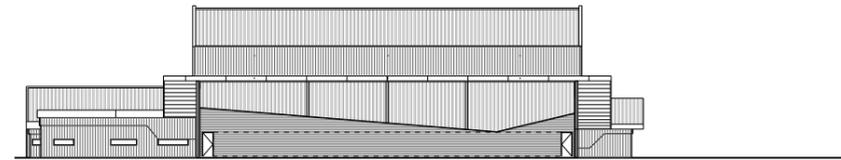


site plan

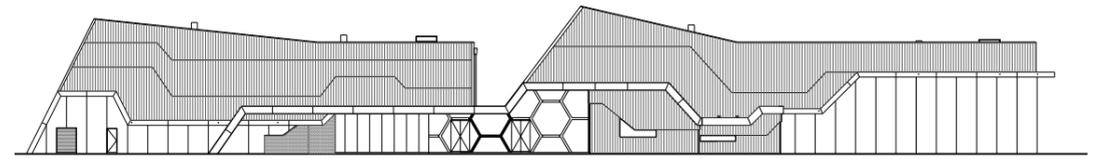
legend.

- a. entry
- b. foyer
- c. reception/control
- d. umpires room
- e. admin office
- f. cafe
- g. preparation room
- h. store
- i. toilets/change room
- j. corridor
- k. court
- l. future courts
- m. future home change room
- n. future social room
- o. future away change room
- p. extended seating
- l. future courts

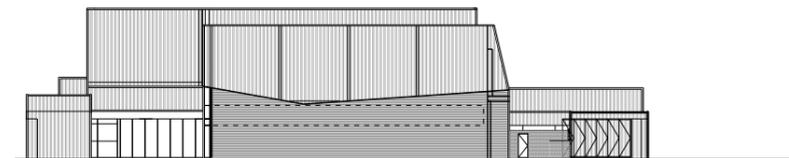
north elevation



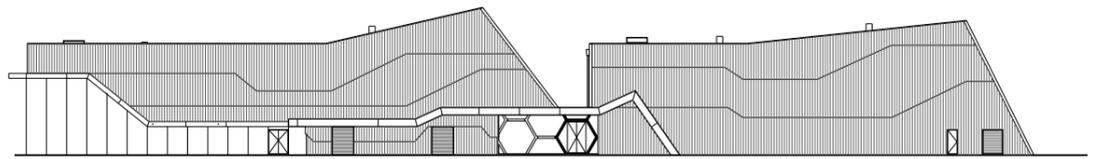
east elevation



south elevation



west elevation



caroline springs sports stadium

principal architect Sutera Prior Cheney Architects **project team** Stephen Cheney, Mark van den Enden, Sam Chine, Dianne Edlin, Alex Hotchin **structural engineer** Brown Consulting **mechanical engineer** Wood & Grieves **electrical engineer** Wood & Grieves **hydraulics engineer** CR Knight **quantity surveyor** Currie & Brown **builder** JA Dodd **landscape architect** Rush Wright **size** 3950sqm **time to complete** 16 months **council** Shire of Melton **client** Shire of Melton **design software used** Autodesk Revit **walls** precast concrete **cladding** corrugated sheet/facia, BHP ColorbondAlucabond **roof** Klip Lok **paint** interiors: sofit (Dulux); precast: Watyl **windows** 150 Flushline **glazing** Viridian **heating/cooling systems** VRV/Exhaust **ceiling** plywood/plasterboard **internal walls** plasterboard **glass** Viridian **sports flooring** PR2 Sprung Floor