



ACT Heritage Council

**AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY
HERITAGE REGISTER
Background Information**

PATERSON HOUSE

BLOCK 10 AND SECTION 43, ARANDA

At its meeting of 10 June 2026, the ACT Heritage Council decided that the Paterson House was eligible for provisional registration.

The information contained in this report was considered by the ACT Heritage Council in assessing the nomination for the Paterson House against the heritage significance criteria outlined in s10 of the Heritage Act 2004.

Description

Paterson House at 7 Juad Place, Aranda is located on a triangular, east-facing, steep 1,244m² suburban block at the end of a cul-de-sac abutting a nature reserve.

Situated among bushland vegetation, the house is a 4-level home, located centrally on the block with views of the nature reserve to the west. On approach, it is notable for its fortress-like appearance with a battered concrete brick front and three prominent, protruding rainwater spouts. Emerging from the site, it features a horizontal roof, wide, overhanging eaves, as well as deep, splayed timber fascias and timber soffits. The house is made of 2 interlocking cubes and a cylinder. The concrete brick, natural wood fascias and timber window frames blend in with the colour of the surrounding bushland, adding to a sense of embeddedness within the landscape. The house has a protected inner courtyard with walls of varying heights.

The living, dining, and kitchen areas are all combined in an open plan, which open onto the wide front terrace with views of trees and Black Mountain. The terrace is enclosed by a concrete brick balustrade, concealing it from the street.

The house is a fine example of late 20th-century organic style of architecture (Apperly et al 1989: 236-239). It is notable for its asymmetrical massing, complex, angular geometry, natural setting, interface with the exterior, expressed timber, horizontal roof, geometric highlight windows, and sculptural elements such as the 3 prominent rainwater spouts on the front façade of the house.

The internal space was designed to maximise panoramic views of hills and surrounding trees from every room, eliminate close views of surrounding houses, enhance privacy, reduce external noise, and encourage social interaction on the inside.

Paterson House was awarded a certificate of merit at the 1969 ACT Architecture Awards. It has since been inscribed on the Australian Institute of Architect's Register of Significant Twentieth Century Architecture and received the Australian Institute of Architects' ACT Chapter's 25 Year Award in 2006 (now known as the Sir Roy Grounds Award for Enduring Architecture). Taglietti considered it as one of his most important residential designs in the ACT alongside Dingle House, McKeown House, and Mijuscovic House (AIA 2010).



Figure 1: The fortress-like front facade of the house with prominent rainwater spouts (Image: Dianna Snape, see Tanner 2013).

History

The owners - Mervyn Paterson (1925-2020)

Enrico Taglietti (1926-2019)

Dr Enrico Taglietti AO (1926-2019) was an Italian-born Australian architect who played a significant role in shaping the architectural landscape of the Australian Capital Territory and Australia (Stead 2025, Tanner 2019). He earned a doctorate in architecture at Milan Polytechnic (1947–1953) and came to Australia in 1955 to design and supervise a promotional exhibition titled 'Italy' at the David Jones Store in Sydney.

He set up his practice in Canberra in 1956. From his Canberra practice he became a leading practitioner of the 20th-century organic style modernist architecture in Australia, designing

buildings in the ACT, New South Wales, and Victoria (Charlton et al 2007). Taglietti's works include several notable dwellings (Taglietti. n.d.). Works of Taglietti that appear on the ACT Heritage Register include the Dickson Library, Dingle House in Hughes, McKeown House in Watson, Giralang Primary School, and the Cinema Center in the City.

Philosophically, Taglietti was influenced in his early training by Italian architects Bruno Zevi, Carlo de Carli and Frank Lloyd Wright. Taglietti's architectural style is characterised by free asymmetrical massing, complex angular geometry, sculptural forms, a dialogue with nature, carefully choreographed entry experiences, central social spaces, interconnected rooms, and varied ceiling heights (Goad 2019).

Leaving a lasting impact on Canberra's cultural history, Taglietti was made a Life Fellow of the Institute of Australian Architects in 2001, had the ACT Award for Educational Architecture named in his honour in 2014, and had his work celebrated in 2018 at the Design Canberra festival (Tanner 2019). He has been recognised with numerous awards, including the Australian Institute of Architects Gold Medal in 2007 (the Institute's highest honour) and a posthumous Officer of the Order of Australia in 2020 (Stead 2025). His life's work was displayed the Canberra Museum and Gallery 2025 exhibition, '*Taglietti: Life in Design*'.

The Paterson family

Mervyn Paterson was a researcher and inventor who worked at the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR, later CSIRO). He moved to do post-doctoral work at the University of Chicago where he met his future wife Katalin. Upon his return to Australia, he worked at the Australian National University (ANU), later becoming a professor in 1978 at the Research School of Earth Sciences.

At ANU, Mervyn Paterson was part of a group of scientists who were all interested in modernist architecture, many whom would go on to commission some of the most highly acclaimed modernist houses in Canberra in the 1950s and 1960s (Cameron, 2012: 4).

Mervyn Paterson was awarded the American Geophysical Union's lifetime award, the Walker H. Bucher Medal in 2004, and was a fellow of the Mineralogical Society of America, and the Australian Academy of Science. He was the inventor of the Paterson Apparatus (a device designed to study the mechanical properties of rocks and minerals under high pressure and high temperature) (ANU 2020).

Katalin Paterson (née Schmidt) was born in Budapest, Hungary in 1923 and was trained as a social worker. In 1946, she emigrated to the US where she studied and graduated with an MA in Social Service Administration. The pair married and they arrived together in Australia in 1952. When they moved to Canberra Katalin Paterson worked in several social worker roles. She worked at the Canberra Hospital, the Heart Foundation, and for the NSW Health Commission. She had an affection for Italy and was the driving force behind persuading Taglietti to take their commission (Mohell & Engledow 2019).

Design intent

The Patersons chose the Aranda site because it was the highest elevation of all available blocks and had many native trees and plants in the area. They engaged Taglietti after having visited McKeown House, Dingle House and the Dickson Library. The house was a complete commission with Taglietti also designing the internal fixtures.

The brief was for a house for a family of four, with a unified living-dining-kitchen area; a main bedroom, bathroom and study; two children's bedrooms with a bathroom, toilet and laundry; and a 2-car garage, a boxroom, and cellar sufficient for 500 bottles of wine. In particular, the house was to achieve a harmony with the natural surrounds. Indoor and outdoor living were to be closely integrated. Outdoor areas were to be sunny in winter, shaded in summer, and protected from prevailing winds. Views from the interior of the house were to maximise vistas of trees and surrounding bushland while providing privacy from the street. The use of light and shade and interaction of the outdoor and indoor spaces was of special importance to the couple.

The use of concrete brick, natural wood fascias, and timber window frames reflects the colours and textures of the surrounding bushland, reinforcing the building's integration with its bush setting. The relationship between the house and its bush context is an important element of the place.

The brief also gave special consideration to the acoustic properties of the house. The lounge was to have good acoustics for music while noise from the living areas was not to affect the other parts of the house. Taglietti responded to this requirement by cladding the ceiling in the living areas with sound absorbing material.

The house has Johnstone River timber flooring in the main living area (as in McKeown House), a cantilevered timber staircase, a built-in timber sideboard in the dining area, built-in timber wardrobes and cupboards throughout, and timber kitchen bench tops.

Katalin Paterson wanted to be included in the social life of the house when she was cooking and did not want a separated kitchen. In response, Taglietti designed the kitchen to be separated from the dining area only by a low wall which subtly hides the fridge. Paterson House was the first Taglietti design featuring an open-plan kitchen, a key contribution of Katalin's. Katalin also specified that there be a prominent fireplace in the living area.



Figure 2: The House is embedded in the hillside and landscape (Image: Dianna Snape, see Tanner 2013).

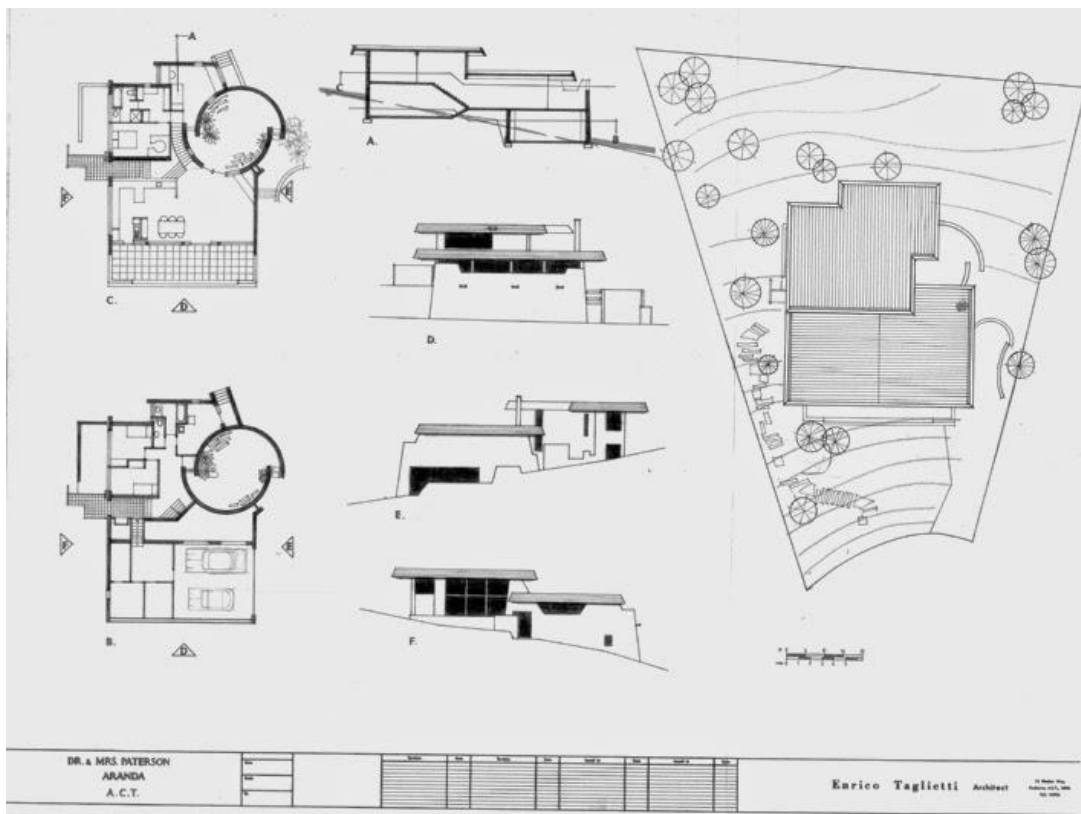


Figure 3: Drawings/plans for Paterson House (Taglietti n.d.)

Integrity

Paterson House shows exceptional integrity and is a complete commission from start to finish, with all original interior and exterior features remaining.

Some additional external metal rainwater drains may not be original.

Physical condition

The timber soffits show significant marking and water damage.

The timber fascias are in poor condition and in need of replacement, buckling in some places.

The concrete on the exterior is cracking in some areas, particularly around the garage.

Mortar on some of the external concrete bricks around the main entrance is becoming brittle.

Water ingress through the roof that has stained some of the sound proofing panels in the living area.

Some of the sound proofing panels are coming undone in the kitchen area

One of the exterior metal drainage pipes is damaged.



Figure 4: Soffits are water damaged and the fascias are buckling (ACT Heritage 2026).

Registration boundary



Figure 5: The registration boundary is the block boundary for Paterson House.

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