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MEDIA RELEASE



AJ+C multipurpose sports hall wins top NSW educational architecture award

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The most recent in a series of international-award-winning sports halls designed by Sydney firm Allen Jack+Cottier (AJ+C) has been named NSW's best new educational building.

Abbotsleigh's Multi-purpose Assembly and Sports Hall and Sports Field was awarded the State's top William E Kemp Award for Educational Architecture at the AIA's 2016 NSW Architecture Awards in Sydney last night. Designed by CEO Michael Heenan, the hall was described as exhibiting "excellence" in multiple ways.

The honour is the latest in a run of awards over the past decade for AJ+C's sports facilities, including the Milson Island Indoor Sports Hall, Berry Sports and Recreation Centre, and the Lake Ainsworth Sports Hall.

Presenting the award, the AIA jury said: *"The excellence of this building can be accounted for on many registers. Its sustainability credentials are significant and include sensate site positioning, the use of life cycle cost benefit considerations, the demand for natural light and ventilation, energy conservation and performance criteria, and the substantial reuse of roof captured rain water. Formally, the building acknowledges the thermodynamic modelling used in the development of the internal environmental performance of the building. In relation to its urban context the project achieves significant gains for the school through the creation of a nuanced and renewed relationship to Ada Avenue to the east. The significant height demand of sports such as netball, indoor tennis and basketball has been carefully addressed and remediated through the use of facades treated with louvres and screens. This project's real achievement however is in its creation of incredibly comfortable spaces to inhabit, which the housing of school sports facilities typically does not support. Internally the building is visually warm and day lit, and a visual and sensorial connection to the outside is constant. Natural cross ventilation ensures that both the sound and the scent of the blue gum forest is never far from the game, while the soaring height of the interior spaces are both inspiring and engaging."*

Mr Heenan said it was an honour to be selected, particularly given the strength of new tertiary, secondary and primary buildings across the State, pushing boundaries to produce education facilities of extraordinary quality.

Design

AJ+C' was commissioned to design the multi-purpose sports hall and sports field, along with a 166-vehicle car park, function rooms, change facilities, an artificial turf sports field, grandstand space and reconfigured access roads, pathways and landscaping. Completed last year, the hall is designed to sit nestled in a forested site. Its southern end curves to transition into an extended roofline beyond the actual building, creating a visually striking profile and conveying a sense of energy and movement. The roof appears disconnected, floating over courts below. Lightweight and ephemeral, nothing superfluous, almost the essence of shelter. A smooth perforated plywood finish performs on many levels. A crisp clean skin forms walls and ceiling, with no visible bracing or wiring, no gutters or downpipes. While providing space for team sports, facades have been broken down by louvers or screens to blend into the environment. Carefully controlled connections allow vignettes to the forest. Materials and finishes harmonise with the surrounding bushland palette. The result: a sense of playing in bushland. Ecologically sustainable design is incorporated throughout, with natural ventilation a key feature. The project is now in contention for a National Architecture Award, to be announced in November.

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