

Jeff Howlett (*The Architect*, June 1965, p.34; c.1972, 21st Anniversary Clay Brick Awards, p.23)

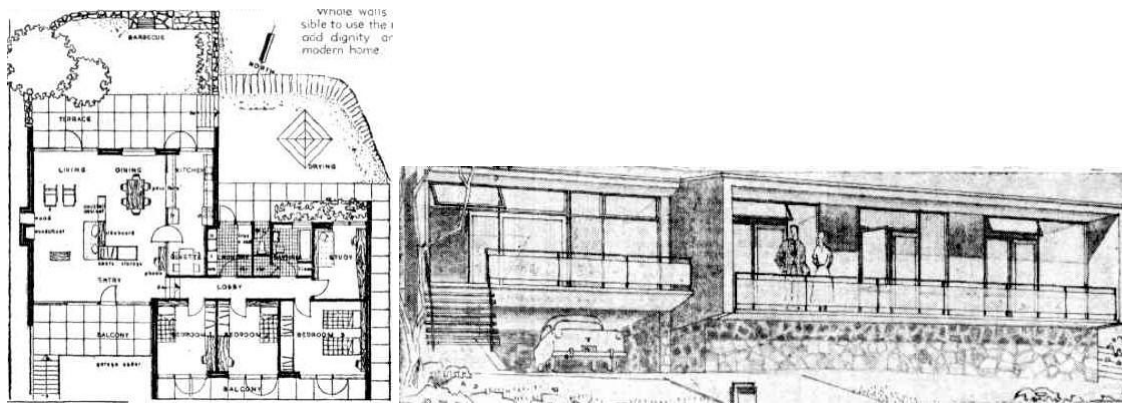
**Jeffrey William Hamilton Howlett** (1928-2005) was born 11 January 1928 in Hyderabad, India. 'Jeff' was the first child of Harold Hamilton (1905-1972) and Edith 'Norma' (nee Oates, 1907-1984) Howlett. The couple went on to have further children Gerald Thomas Hamilton b.1929, Michael John Hamilton b.1931, and Heather Elaine Hamilton b.1932.

Jeff Howlett spent the early part of his life in Hyderabad, with initial education at Bishop Cotton Boys' School at Bangalore (Bengaluru), the "Eton of the East" and one of India's three top-ranked schools. In 1945 Jeff accepted a scholarship to the Architectural Association (AA) School in London. Jeff's son Greg notes that: *'Technically Dad was on an Indian Government Scholarship which had him indentured to the Public Works Department, but his supervisor encouraged him to leave and forgave him the need to complete his three year commitment. Dad said he had no desire to leave India and it was only through the encouragement/insistence of his would-be employer that he departed.'* The experience in Britain, including the exposure it enabled to key figures of post-war modernism, was pivotal in the development of Jeff's architectural sensibilities.

After completing the AA diploma in 1950, Howlett worked for a year in the London County Council under the direction of Sir Leslie Martin (1908-2000) before a return to India and 1951 marriage to Kath, whom he had met in Bangalore when she attended Bishop Cotton Girls' School. With instability following the Partition of India (1947), Jeff's parents had migrated to Perth, Western Australia (WA). Jeff and Kath decided to follow and see if life in WA suited them, and he soon found work with the prolific architects Krantz & Sheldon in 1951-1952. Moving on to another exciting modernist practice, Hawkins & Sands, in August 1952 Jeff was registered with the Architects Board of WA (ABWA reg no 239), permitting

him to practice on his own account. Jeff and Kath commenced their own family, having children Deborah b.1952, Mark b.1954, and Greg b.1956.

Peter Parkinson (1925-2014), another prominent architect in Western Australia during the second half of the Twentieth Century, also studied at the AA until 1950. Arriving at Perth in March of 1952, Peter joined Jeff at Hawkins & Sands and was soon honoured to be asked by the Howletts to become young Deborah's godfather. At this time Perth was, similar to many other places in the world, slowly emerging from the crippling effects of the Second World War (1939-1945). Post-war migration to Australia and returned service personnel brought new ideas into architectural design in the State. The two British-trained graduates were infused with their own ideals of modernism, and would have found Perth, with its fine but aging gold-boom Federation-era and more recent 1930s Deco buildings, an exciting opportunity to develop.



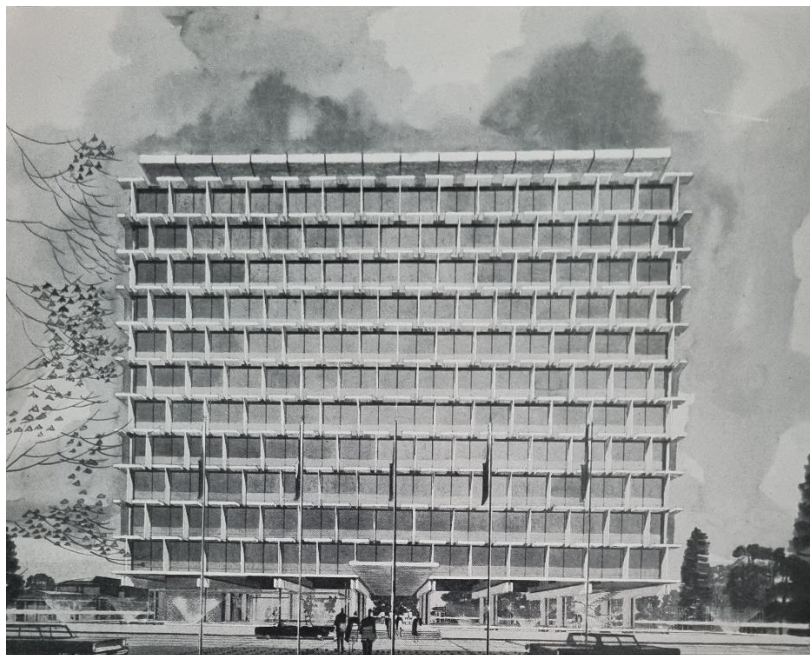
Plan and perspective of 1954 house at Armadale Crescent Mount Lawley [now Coolbinia] (*Sunday Times*, 16 January 1955, p.28)

Commencing his own practice in Perth as a 25 year old, Jeff Howlett worked with Dennis Silver (b.1929, reg no 245) from late 1953 in a firm they named 'Architect Associates'. Dennis was a 1952 graduate of the Perth Technical College architectural course, and had worked for a year at Cameron, Chisholm & Nicol. With modest beginnings, Architect Associates called tenders in February 1954 for a change room and toilet block at the Maccabean sports ground in Woodrow Avenue, Tuart Hill. This was followed with a larger scheme for eighteen flats at Cambridge Street in Wembley of March 1954, which Silver recalls were the first strata-titled units in WA, and extant in 2025. In June 1954, Architect Associates announced their move from 7 Malcolm Street to more prominent premises at the I.O.O.F. Building, 224 St George's Terrace in Perth. The practice continued to

produce practical, rational designs through 1954 including two shops at Albany Highway Victoria Park; a house at Armadale Crescent Mount Lawley for Mr and Mrs B. Levin; and a block of shops and flats at Mends Street South Perth.

With work for the small practice drying-up, Jeff joined the architectural division of the WA Public Works Department for 1955-1956, then relocating the family to Melbourne in 1956, where he gained a position as design architect with the prominent firm of Bates Smart & McCutcheon. It was from Melbourne that Jeff Howlett and Donald Bailey (b.1927) won an Australia-wide competition in 1960 for the design of new City of Perth administration buildings. This project brought Howlett back to Perth, where the firm of Howlett & Bailey (H&B) was established, and where he remained for the rest of his life. In December 1960, Jeff re-registered with ABWA (reg no 239 again) at the same time Don Bailey was registered in the State (reg no 349).

Howlett and Bailey set up their office in Perth and took on the appointment as architects for the new building. The third architect joining the firm from the Bates Smart & McCutcheon office was Edward 'Lindsay' Waller (1929-2020) - who described himself as the 'nuts and bolts man.' During 1956 and 1957, Waller had been the project architect in Perth for Bates, Smart & McCutcheon (with Hawkins & Sands) during the construction of the MLC building at St George's Terrace. Lindsay duly registered with ABWA in 1962 (reg no 387).



Council House at St George's Terrace Perth (*The Architect*, 1961 vol 4 no 2, p.41)

The City of Perth's Council House was opened by Queen Elizabeth II in March 1963. The civic building became a point of reference for modern optimistic Perth, which was about to embark on the process of redeveloping large parts of the CBD with the 1960s mineral boom in WA.



Jeffrey and Kath Howlett, Jan and Don Bailey at the opening of Council House in Perth on 25 March 1963 (50 Years, p.23)

Howlett & Bailey soon won another competition in mid-1962, for the Reserve Bank in Canberra, judged the best of 131 submissions. The Reserve Bank of Australia Building at 20-22 London Circuit Canberra ACT is now heritage-listed. It was built from 1963 to 1965 by Civil & Civic, and added to the Australian Commonwealth Heritage List in 2004.



1965 Reserve Bank of Australia Building, Canberra in 2009 (Wikipedia 2025)

The innovative Beatty Park Pool kiosk and manager's house was designed for the 1962 Empire (Commonwealth) Games at Perth. Unfortunately it was demolished in 1993, at a time when the City of Perth was also considering the

removal of Council House. Other 1960s H&B projects included the Channel 9 television studios, a series of very fine Modernist houses, the Onslow Street South Perth townhouses, St Columba College at The University of Western Australia, and a Century Batteries warehouse.



Interior of 1962 Beatty Park manager's house and kiosk (*An Unfinished Experiment in Living - Australian Houses 1950-65*, p.320).

In the 2000s Peter Parkinson made note of his own favorite H&B projects, including the Snell House of 1963 and Tate Street flats in South Perth 1965 – a small triangular site, four flats – ‘a brilliant solution to a small and enormously difficult problem’. One of the big H&B schemes was ‘Australian Paper’ (1964 Spearwood No 1 Mill), with Peter helping out after the collapse of Hawkins & Sands. Parkinson recalled this time with his characteristic sense of humor: ‘*The office staff consisted of Jeff who did the design, Don who did the worrying, Lindsay who did the work, and myself who did the prints ...*’

Greg Howlett provides insight to involvement with the five unit townhouse development at 36 Onslow Street, and other family investments at South Perth:

*The site was where I grew up in an old Federation house. My father decided to redevelop the site in the late 60's. Interestingly he had recently done the Tate Street flats on the triangular site and we moved there while Onslow St was being redeveloped. My brother and I had a flat to ourselves and my parents lived next door. Probably would be illegal today in particular when they went to the UK for a holiday and left us to our own devices when we were both under 16! ... We then relocated to 31 Coode St, another development in a similar style to Onslow St but with terracotta tiles. ...*

*The developer was my father and his brother Gerry. It was also owner built. They subsequently did similar developments at 31 Coode Street and 1 Jubilee Street on the corner of Douglas Avenue. They had previously done the development at 4 Tate Street. All developments were in South Perth as was the restaurant they jointly owned, the Hindquarter Steak House on the corner of Salisbury Ave and Canning Highway.*



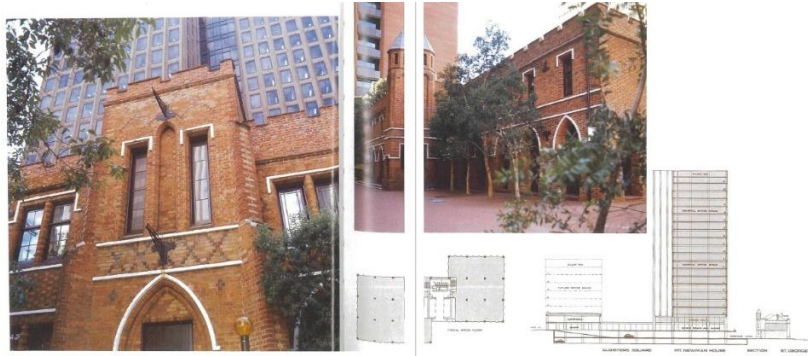
1972 Law Chambers Building centre, with St George's Cathedral at right (Fritz Kos, SLWA 160126PD)

A series of larger Perth CBD developments completed in the 1970s included the Law Chambers in Hay Street adjacent to St George's Cathedral, and Mount Newman House on St George's Terrace. The 1970s design work was ordered and axial, demonstrating an interest in classical principles - whilst definitely Modernist in appearance. The Perth Concert Hall was opened in 1973 on a site a little further to the east of Council House along St Georges Terrace. University of WA academic Geoffrey London so aptly noted: *'The grand building, with its solid opaque interior, giant projecting roof, and use of white off-form concrete, forms a counterpoint to the transparent filigree of Council House'*.



1973 Perth Concert Hall (Wikipedia 2023)

Don Bailey departed from H&B in 1974 to become national director of the Royal Australian Institute of Architects (RAIA), a position he held for 17 years. Jeff continued the practice with his two sons until his retirement after which the office was merged with Cox Architecture, as Cox Howlett & Bailey from 1995; and subsequently following a merge with Forbes & Fitzhardinge Woodland in 1998 became Cox Howlett and Bailey Woodland



Jeff won the 1972 Clay Brick Award for work on The Cloisters in front of Mt Newman House (Booklet for 21st Anniversary Clay Brick Awards, 1987, pp.23-24).



Mount Newman House, 200 St George's Terrace (Perth - The Building Challenge, 1987, p.23);  
and Jeff Howlett in later years (<https://architectureau.com/articles/obituary-10/>)

Howlett and Bailey won many design awards and commendations from the Royal Australian Institute of Architects, and in 1978 Jeff Howlett was honored by the RAIA with Life Fellowship. In 1992 a retrospective exhibition titled 'Architectural Projects, Jeffrey Howlett' was curated by Michael Markham and Peter Brew and held at the University of Western Australia, coinciding with Howlett's period there as visiting professor at the School of Architecture.

Howlett survived a major stroke in 1993 but was unable to continue practicing as an architect. Geoffrey London notes that: *Nevertheless, he again attempted to make sense of the disorder, this time through the medium of oil pastel and paper. For this, he had to learn to work with his left hand on small tray-bound pieces of paper which were later assembled into larger sheets. He used oil pastel like paint, with rich surfaces and often startling colours. Like his architecture his forms were bold and simple. Howlett's desire to express himself visually took on a new urgency. It became, for him, a major form of communication, a way of evoking memories, of making visible his past and his present, and a way of telling his stories. In 2002 an exhibition of his pastel work was held at Perth Galleries.*

One of Australia's more significant later Twentieth Century architects, Jeff Howlett's fabulous modernist design talent remains highly visible in his adopted country, and especially in the City of Perth. Jeff was presented with the Architects Board of Western Australia Award in 1996; in 2000 he was made a Member of the Order of Australia for service to architecture as a designer and educator; and in 2004 he was recognized by the WA Government as a 'State Living Treasure' for his contribution to culture and the arts, the first architect to receive such appreciation.

Jeffrey Howlett AM died 20 December 2005 at Claremont aged 77 years, survived by Kath, Deborah, and Greg. Eulogies and tributes to Jeff recalled the dynamic nature of his character, as a life-loving raconteur. The three Howlett children studied architecture; the sons became registered architects in WA during 1983 - Mark (reg no 1026), and Greg (reg no 1029). Mark passed away in 1991, aged just 36 years. Greg continues a successful career, with extensive service to the profession including as President of the WA Chapter of the RAIA 1993-1994.

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Pers. comms. Greg Howlett and Dennis Silver, January 2025.

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